“THAT PEACE AND BROTHERLY LOVE MAY ABOUND”:

KINSHIP AND THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

IN A SOUTHERN PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH, 1814-1860

by

WILLIAM BRENT JONES

(Under the Direction of Michael Winship)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the antebellum disciplinary practices of Beaverdam Primitive Baptist Church, a congregation located in Georgia’s upper Piedmont region. Like Baptists across the South, the church initially disciplined all of its members in order to purge evil elements, reclaim wayward Christians, and maintain a peaceful fellowship of faith. After revivals in the late 1820s transformed the religious context of northeast Georgia, the church increasingly evaluated its ecclesiastical health by the conduct and relationships of white male believers. The largest and most prominent kinship network also began wielding a heavier influence over disciplinary hearings. Discipline did not slow down until the late 1830s, when a number of that family had left the congregation. Despite warnings from Primitive Baptist church leaders, the new evangelical culture of the region’s late antebellum years resulted in the devaluation of local churches. Discipline declined as the neighborhood congregation became less important to evangelicals.

INDEX WORDS: Southern History, Georgia History, Southern Religion, Southern Baptists, Primitive Baptists, Oglethorpe County, Beaverdam Primitive Baptist Church, Church Discipline, Kinship, Family

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INTRODUCTION

When Nathan Johnson and his adult son, Thomas, arrived at Beaverdam Creek on September 20, 1800, over seventy people were there waiting for them. This father and son team had traveled roughly ten miles in the upper Piedmont region of east Georgia to lead in the formation of a new Baptist church. The church would be located in an isolated, farming district of northwest Oglethorpe County. Four other representatives from area churches had planned to assist, as well, two of whom had helped the Johnsons found nearby Cloud's Creek Baptist Church twelve years earlier. For the elder Johnson, the day's activities would be both a spiritual exercise and a chance to see his grandson, Henry. In addition to Henry, five other Johnsons would make it onto the original membership list, making this family the largest in the church. Various members of this kinship network would remain a part of the faith community throughout most of the antebellum period.[1]

At the founding of Beaverdam Baptist Church, the Johnsons joined other families in prioritizing their loyalty to the church's membership over the affections they felt for one another. The day's meeting opened with "fervent prayer," and the church's new members covenanted to separate from the world. They vowed to belong no longer to themselves, but "to the Lord and to one another." They committed to conduct their lives as members of a "Spiritual Body," accountable to the democratic will of the church and "Subject to its controul." Each person

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[1]Minutes of Beaverdam Primitive Baptist Church, 20 September 1800 (hereafter cited as Minutes); Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County, Georgia* (Washington, GA: Wilkes Publishing Company, Inc., 1970), 153-157, 236-237.

joining the fellowship made a covenant to meet together as often as convenient in order to worship God and, just as important, "keep up a godly Discipline."[2]

The intention of the church at Beaverdam Creek to diligently police the moral boundaries of its fellowship resembled that of many southern evangelical congregations. For antebellum Baptist churches in particular, Friday or Saturday afternoon church trials paralleled communion and Sunday morning preaching in their importance. Southern Baptist churches regularly disciplined members for a variety of offenses ranging from poor church attendance to murder, and they sought to follow New Testament guidelines for congregational accountability as closely as possible.[3]

Scholars have forwarded a variety of arguments attempting to explain the significance of nineteenth-century, Baptist discipline to southern churchgoers and their surrounding culture. Most historians explain the religious ritual in one of two ways. Since patterns of discipline appear to conform in certain ways to social hierarchies of race, class, and gender, a majority of historians describe the practice as yet another tool utilized by social elites to regulate the behavior of the South's less-privileged church members.[4] As historian Timothy Lockley puts it

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[2]Minutes, 20 September 1800.

[3]Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6, 8; As Donald Mathews has noted, church discipline was practiced by nearly every southern, evangelical church prior to the Civil War. However, Gregory Wills found that antebellum southern Baptists managed to exclude members at a rate sixty percent higher than northern Baptist churches, and they disciplined more regularly than any of the other southern Protestant denominations. See Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 46; Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 22-23.

[4]For variations of this view, see William W. Sweet, "The Churches as Moral Courts of the Frontier," *Church History* 2 (1933): 3-21; Cortland Victor Smith, "Church Organization as an Agency of Social Control: Church Discipline in North Carolina, 1800-1860" (Ph.D. diss., The University of North Carolina, 1967); Timothy Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 146-155; John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 48; Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 11-18; Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York, NY: Oxford

in his study of race and class in lowcountry Georgia, "The citing of individuals before evangelical churches was part of an attempt by ministers to control the behavior of members in wider society."[5]

Another group of scholars have tried to temper overemphasis on social control as the primary framework for understanding southern church discipline. They question the extent to which Baptists and others intended to be a force for order in the South, and they are skeptical of the degree to which the southern elite used church trials to keep disadvantaged believers in check. These historians emphasize the egalitarian ideals of Baptist theology and ecclesiology, and they stress the democratic nature of the proceedings. For instance, Gregory Wills argues that Baptist churches in Georgia sought to become "disciplined democracies." Even if the churches imperfectly accomplished this objective, every member regardless of social position participated in the quest for purity. After studying congregations in Mississippi, Randy Sparks concludes that "on the whole" evangelical discipline was "remarkably democratic; no one—white or black, deacon or minister, male or female—was exempt from the process, and equal care was shown in investigating most cases." Sparks also believes evangelicals hoped to foster self-restraint through the hearings, rather than simply use the ritual as a blunt instrument of social control.[6]

University Press, 1995), 171-212; Jewel L. Spangler, "Salvation Was Not Liberty: Baptists and Slavery in Revolutionary Virginia," *American Baptist Quarterly* 13 no. 3 (1994): 221-236; Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 159, 249-250; Janet Lindman, "A World of Baptists: Gender, Race, and Religious Community in Pennsylvania and Virginia. 1689-1825" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1994), 24, 204-205, 224.

[5]Lockley, *Lines in the Sand*, 146.

[6]Gregory Wills, *Democratic Religion*,8-9, 23; Monica Najar, "Citizens of the Church: Baptist Churches and the Construction of Civil Order in the Upper South, 1765-1815," *American Baptist Quarterly* 16 no. 3 (1997), 206-218; Randy J. Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 148, 150-151. At times, Sparks comes close to agreeing with the social control thesis, particularly when he comments on the fact that forty-five percent of the slave cases in his sample involved some sort of violation of the slave code. See p. 76; Frederick A. Bode, "A Common Sphere: White Evangelicals and Gender in Antebellum Georgia." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 no. 4 (Winter 1995): 799-801. In another article, Bode admits that authority during disciplinary hearings resided in the hands of elite white men, but he argues

Historians on both ends of this historiographical spectrum have studied church discipline with attention to race, class, and gender, and they agree that the religious ritual mirrored in some ways the social values of the South's antebellum culture. Their interpretations of the practice are separated only by the extent to which they think the procedures and results of disciplinary hearings yielded to the whims of southern masters.[7] However, previous studies have shared a common but problematic methodology. They have been too broad in their data bases, prohibiting any thorough engagement with the complex and intimate affairs of a single community of faith. By examining more closely the disciplinary hearings of an individual Baptist church, it appears that the religious ritual often operated differently than historians have previously argued.

For instance, most historians fail to adequately discuss the fact that a large percentage of the charges brought against men in southern churches were raised by the offenders themselves. In over 30 percent of the antebellum cases involving free and slave men at Beaverdam Baptist Church, the accused individuals either announced their imperfections in monthly conferences or wrote about their shortcomings in letters to the church. Sometimes the men felt unfit for membership and requested exclusion from the faith community. On most occasions, they sought forgiveness from their brothers and sisters in Christ. The phenomenon of self-accusations calls

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against Jean Friedman's assertion that church trials reflected a sexual double standard. He observes, rather, that women were brought before the church much less frequently than men, and that they had "little reason…to oppose a standard of church discipline that provided even limited sanctions against male violence and disorder." He also argues that the "effort to instill good order and godliness was color-blind." See idem, "The Formation of Evangelical Communities in Middle Georgia: Twiggs County, 1820-1861." *The Journal of Southern History* 60 no. 4 (Nov. 1994): 735-737.

[7]Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 55; Monica Najar, "Evangelizing the South: Gender, Race, and Politics in the Early Evangelical South, 1765-1815" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000), 83-84.

into question the thesis that discipline served primarily as an instrument of social control for the South's male leaders.[8]

Scholars with their broad brush have also neglected to study one of the most important social categories for understanding the way in which Baptist discipline functioned in antebellum, southern communities. In the intimate fellowship of nineteenth-century congregations, kinship relations worked in tandem with the region's other classifying distinctions to shape the character of discipline. Like many evangelical congregations, a number of Beaverdam Baptist Church's members were related by blood or marriage to each other. That trend only increased as the nineteenth century progressed. Consequently, the members practiced faith in the context of family, and these relationships left their mark on the church's struggle to monitor the moral righteousness of their fellowship. Family ties also played a role in the late antebellum decline of disciplinary hearings at the church.

Understanding Baptists' own reasons for disciplining their members should begin the process of exploring how the proceedings functioned in a local church setting. Most nineteenth-century, southern Baptists inherited a theological tradition reaching back to the Reformed theology of John Calvin. The Second London Confession of 1677, which was the major influence on the Philadelphia Confession adopted by a majority of southern Baptists in the early nineteenth century, was written to show that the only major disagreement between Baptist faith and that expressed in the Presbyterian Westminster Confession was the function and importance

[8]In this study, a case is only considered a self-accusation when a member raised a charge against himself without any evidence that the church had already been alerted to his offense. Out of 108 cases involving the church's males, thirty-five of them were self-accusations. Five of these individuals requested exclusion from the church when they confessed. An even greater number of members confessed after the church had already discovered their offenses. Gregory Wills calculated that 92 percent of defendants whose pleas were recorded in Georgia Baptist churches acknowledged their guilt either before or after they were accused. According to Wills, this figure represents the willingness of members to accept the church's authority over their moral conduct. However, he did not comment extensively on the fact that self-accusations were primarily a male trend. See Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 38-39.

of baptism. Southern Baptists conducted their religious lives with the firm belief that humans were thoroughly corrupt, and that every person was desperately in need of salvation. However, Baptists limited church membership to only those adult, baptized believers who could convince both themselves and their church that an experience of grace had shown them to be one of the elect. Salvation lay entirely in the hands of God, as did the privilege of deciding who would receive it. Unfortunately, that meant that the true identity of the elect often became a guessing game. After a believer's initial salvation experience, an orderly and moral life served as evidence of his or her elect status. Consequently, "a life of obedience to the laws of Christ's kingdom" was an "indispensable qualification" of church membership.[9]

Baptists intended to conduct their churches according to the instructions they found in the Bible. In passages like Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, it appeared that churches had been given authority both by Christ and the Apostle Paul to inflict certain punishments on its "rebellious, and unworthy members." Gospel discipline was considered a "solemn ordinance" that should be carried out in order to "purge the church, and preserve it from infection." Christ had made it clear that sin was a serious matter for the Christian, and Baptists felt under obligation to get rid of it when it reared its ugly head in their faith communities. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" declared one Baptist confession, "and therefore the old leaven must be purged out, that the church may become a new lump." Historian Gregory Wills argues that the "chief purpose of discipline…was the purity of the church," and that it remained important to Baptists because they intended to remain separate from the world. However, Baptists had a

[9]Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists* (Philadelphia, PA: The Judson Press, 1950), 74; H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), 241-242; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 31-33; Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics & Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 39; E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978), 172-175; Minutes of the Sarepta Association, "Circular Letter," 1848 (hereafter cited as Sarepta Association).

variety of larger goals for discipline, so establishing a pure church was merely the means of reaching them.[10]

Baptists disciplined first and foremost for the glory of God. The actions and principles of Christians reflected on the honor of God, so the Almighty suffered dishonor when believers did not think and act appropriately. The church was then under obligation to remove anything that sullied the good name of the Lord. By disciplining their membership, Baptists could begin to repair the damage done by a disorderly Christian to the reputation of God and his church. Beaverdam's members voiced their intention to protect God's honor when they covenanted to "keep up a godly Discipline" so that they could be "Blameless in the Sight of God and men."[11]

Baptist churches also disciplined with the intention of reforming and reclaiming true believers. Any member that broke the church's covenant or became "unsound in life or doctrine" needed to be punished in some way, even if it meant exclusion from the church's fellowship. However, if the offenders were true believers, they would "be brought to shame and repentance for their sins" and seek the forgiveness and love that only the Christian community could offer. Exclusion from the privileges of Christian fellowship, at least one minister believed, "would prove a miserable prison to a lover of God and his people." Surely a true believer would not stay away from the church too long. When the accused member returned and appeared

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[10]Charleston Baptist Association, *A Confession of Faith, put forth by elders and brethren of many congregations of Christians (baptized upon profession of their faith) in London and the country/ Adopted by the Baptist Association of Philadelphia, September 25, 1742, and by the Charleston, in 1767* (Charleston, SC: J. Hoff, 1813), Mercer University, 19, 26 (hereafter cited as *A Confession of Faith*). Baptists were not guided in their discipline by any single document, and in Beaverdam Baptist Church's surviving records there is no mention of a particular source of instruction that assisted the church in carrying out the ritual of discipline. However, some southern antebellum congregations used this confession of faith put out by the Charleston Baptist Association in 1813. It closely follows the Philadelphia Confession, which had gone out of print by that time. See the chapter entitled "A Summary of Church Discipline"; Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 31.

[11]*A Confession of Faith*, 26; Minutes, 20 September 1800.

submissive to the church's authority, they were to be "received again with all love and tenderness and to be comforted that they may not be swallowed up with over much sorrow."[12]

Another motivation for discipline has not received adequate attention from scholars. Baptists believed that keeping up diligent disciplinary practices kept the church community at peace. As the Sarepta Association declared in their Principles and Rules of Decorum, discipline "must be faithfully kept up for God's Glory, and the peace and unity of the Churches." Baptists felt sure that if church members were at odds with one another, it was because the membership had not exercised discipline diligently. In other words, purity bred peace. A pastor at Beaverdam Baptist Church warned, "One ungodly member in a church can destroy more peace; and effect more evil than a number of righteous ones can suppress." Consequently, churches needed to keep up their discipline with vigilance, and it needed to be guided by a thorough understanding of the Bible's moral requirements. "If each member would adhere strictly to the plain rule God has given in the New Testament," another pastor declared, "we should have but little cause to execute discipline for the purpose of restoring peace among ourselves."[13]

When Baptists carried out the ritual of discipline, they did not intend to allow the opinion of any single member to supersede the will of the entire church community. Theoretically, no Baptist exercised ultimate authority over any other believer. Humanity's fallen nature acted as a great leveling principle, prohibiting a single person from having a capacity for moral leadership great enough to become the church's only authority. Therefore, Baptist churches, more than many other southern institutions, often fostered a degree of intimate fellowship and permitted the active participation of diverse social groups. By relaxing the hierarchies of their surrounding

[12]Minutes of the Oconee Association, "Circular Letter," 1847 (hereafter cited as Oconee Association).

[13]Sarepta Association, "Circular Letter,"1817; Oconee Association, "Circular Letter," 1845, 1847.

culture, Baptist congregations frequently opened themselves up to a variety of voices. On occasion, this made the administration of moral discipline rather complex, and it forced church members to carefully weigh a number of priorities and authoritative sources before they made decisions. Consequently, disciplinary hearings could be rather democratic compared to many institutions of the antebellum South.[14]

In most churches, any members could level a charge either against themselves or another member. They simply had to stand up at the appropriate time in monthly conference meetings and alert the membership that a believer in their midst had violated the church's covenant in some way. When the accused was not in attendance, the church usually appointed a committee of men to deliver a message ordering the person to appear at a future meeting. The committee might also investigate the matter and report back at the next conference. If an accused member never attended to answer the allegations, he or she could be further charged with holding the church in contempt. This offense generally resulted in exclusion, the church's strongest censure, and the sentence might be administered without ever hearing the accused member's defense. The church felt free to discipline an individual with a simple majority vote of the membership after seeing or hearing enough to convince the church of a person's misconduct.[15]

Baptists preferred, and sometimes required, believers to handle their disputes with other members in monthly church conferences, rather than addressing interpersonal problems before a secular court. However, churches were limited in the extent to which they could punish a

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[14]Sarepta Association, "Principles and Rules of Decorum of the Sarepta Association," 1817.

[15]Churches like the one at Beaverdam tended to use the words "exclusion," "excommunication," and "expulsion" interchangeably in the antebellum period. However, excommunication from a Baptist church did not have the same implications that the punishment had in the Catholic tradition. Since only God truly knew the identities of the elect, exclusion from a Baptist church did not necessarily mean an individual had lost his or her salvation. In order to avoid confusion, this paper will only use the word exclusion to refer to Baptists' strongest censure. For an in-depth summary of Baptist church discipline procedures, see Wills, *Democratic Religion,* 20-25, 39-46.

member. The only disciplinary penalties they could impose were a rebuke from the pastor, suspension from church privileges, or permanent exclusion from the fellowship. These measures might cause a spiritual crisis or result in public embarrassment for the accused, but the strength of Baptist discipline largely depended on the extent to which a person valued his or her participation in the church's affairs.[16]

Such seemingly minor punishments might have been considered significant by many in the church at Beaverdam, since the institution probably served as one of the rural community's premier sources of social interaction. The church was situated near Beaverdam Creek, in a relatively isolated area between the towns of Lexington and Athens. Its original members were part of a large stream of settlers, mostly from the Carolinas, that came into the upper Piedmont when a sizable tract of land was purchased from the Creek and Cherokee Indians in 1773. The Oglethorpe region's original white population generally received an initial parcel of land between one and three hundred acres, and only a few of these early settlers were slaveowners.[17]

By the 1790s, there were so many people in the area that the exigencies of government called for new boundaries. What had originally been called Wilkes County soon became three different political entities, and Oglethorpe County gained the right to set up its own government on December 19, 1793. It was not long before Lexington, the county's political and economic

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[16]Pat Levin, "Kinships, Communities, and Conflicts: Bethel Creek Primitive Baptist Church, 1820-1840." (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1995), 410; Najar, "Citizens of the Church," 209; Lindman, "A World of Baptists," 206; Randy J. Sparks, "Religion in Amite County, Mississippi, 1800-1861," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 74; Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 20-25; Najar, "Evangelizing the South," 91, 215; C.V. Smith found evidence in the circular letter of a Baptist association that church expulsion might have social, but not necessarily economic, ramifications outside the church. According to Smith, this letter from the Green River Association advises that "expelled members were to be shut off from all social intercourse, though business relations might be continued." See Cortland Victor Smith, "Church Organization," 144.

[17]Clarence L. Mohr, "Oglethorpe County, Georgia during the Formative Period, 1773-1830" (M.A. Thesis, University of Georgia, 1970), 1, 16-17, 24, 31; James Daryl Black, "Learning the Language of Canaan: Baptist Revival and Cultural Construction in the East Georgia Piedmont, 1785-1840" (Ph.D. diss.: University of California, Irvine, 2001), 55.

seat, became an important upcountry trading center second only to Washington in nearby Wilkes County. Citizens started constructing a courthouse at Lexington in 1797, and by 1810 more than two hundred people lived in the town. Slaves constituted over half of the population. The entire county had acquired more than 6,500 people by the dawn of the new century, and that number nearly doubled in the first decade.[18]

Agriculture sustained life for Georgians in the region. It also dictated their daily rhythms. Most residents of the upper Piedmont intended to grow tobacco when they moved there. However, cotton began ascending to its economic throne in the early 1800s, and the county's citizens quickly accommodated themselves to the new cash crop. By 1820, approximately ninety heads of households had achieved enough wealth to be called part of the planter class, and the county's slave population had climbed from 2,788 to 6,444 since 1800. The number of slaves almost equaled that of whites, whose population had only risen from 6,691 people to 6,863 in the same period. Nevertheless, while cotton became the chief moneymaker, farmers never completely gave up tobacco, and they continued to grow cereal and grain in their fields, as well. Farmers also invested money and time into livestock such as sheep, cattle, and swine, which helped keep both the citizens and their looms fed.[19]

Churches showed up in Oglethorpe County almost as fast as people. By the turn of the century, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists had already established at least seven surviving congregations in Oglethorpe County alone. Presbyterians beat their religious competition when they organized Beth Salem Presbyterian Church in 1785, the denomination's first congregation

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[18]Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County,* 3, 34; Mohr, "Oglethorpe County," 1, 59, 203.

[19]J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 13-14; Clarence L. Mohr, Slavery in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, 1773-1865," *Phylon* 33 no. 1 (Spring 1972): 5; Mohr, "Oglethorpe County," 3, 89, 94-95; Southerners domestically manufactured many goods in the early antebellum period, and Oglethorpe County had over 799 looms in 1810. See Mohr, "Oglethorpe County," 95.

in upper Georgia. Itinerant Methodist preachers likely roamed the region from a very early date, but there is no mention of a Methodist church in the county until Francis Asbury preached to a few people at "Pope's Chapel" in 1796. Baptists gained the largest presence in the area, with Silas Mercer participating in the formation of Millstone Church, Cloud's Creek Church, and Bethany Baptist Church in 1788. By the end of the century, Baptists had organized at least two more nearby congregations, as well. The church at Beaverdam joined the county's religious milieu when it was established on September 20, 1800. It probably was formed in an effort to evangelize and provide religious support for the growing number of settlers near Beaverdam Creek.[20]

Almost immediately upon formation, Beaverdam Baptist Church joined the Sarepta Association. As part of a national trend of denominational growth being experienced by evangelicals, this regional body eventually provided fellowship and advice for nearly all of the Baptist churches in Elbert, Oglethorpe, Jackson, and Franklin counties.[21] Most Baptists prized the autonomy and local authority of their churches, so they jealously guarded the exclusive right to determine their own membership, discipline their own members, and choose their own ministerial leadership. Associational recommendations could be very influential in helping churches make decisions, however, and many associations expected their consultation to be followed. Historian Walter Shurden observes that associational advice "was more than objective suggestions or innocent guidelines," but often was considered "little less than a form of

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[20]Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 222-223, 228-229, 232; Mohr, "Oglethorpe County," 155-159; Minutes, 20 September 1800; Black, "Learning the Language of Canaan," 118.

[21]Like Beaverdam Baptist Church, nineteenth-century Baptists across the South increasingly had the option of turning to larger associations of churches for guidance. Following the example of English Baptists, American congregations sent delegates to association meetings in order to fellowship with other churches, cooperate in evangelistic endeavors, and provide defense for themselves against possible external challenges. See Walter B. Shurden, *Associationalism among Baptists in America, 1707-1814* (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1980), 2-4.

ecclesiastical law." The only coercive power an association actually wielded against a local Baptist church was its ability to withdraw fellowship from the congregation, leaving the church's members without the support and advice of other Baptists. The power of this possibility frequently guaranteed adherence to associational guidelines, but authority over moral behavior ultimately resided with the members of a local church. Beaverdam Baptist Church later withdrew from the Sarepta Association and joined ranks with "Primitive" Baptist churches in an effort to defend itself from what it perceived to be encroachment upon its local autonomy and authority. However, for most of the antebellum period, the Baptists at Beaverdam enjoyed the advice and fellowship offered by their co-religionists in the Sarepta Association.[22]

As Baptist churches were popping up in a number of locations and starting to establish denominational connections with one another, a few large revivals helped fill their pews. The Great Revival near the turn of the century instantaneously created large numbers of evangelicals in many parts of the South, and the citizens of Georgia's upper Piedmont experienced their share of this revival in 1802 and 1812. After totaling 388 baptisms in 1801, the twenty-five churches of the Sarepta Association reported 1,050 baptisms the following year. The number dropped back down to 375 in 1803, but it reached an antebellum record high in 1812 when it climbed from 56 baptisms to 1,265. After that year, however, Sarepta Association churches began averaging less than two baptisms a year per church. In the absence of revivals from 1814 to 1824, ministers in the upper Piedmont worked hard to gain modest numbers of adherents through evangelicalism's institutionalized religious rituals.[23]

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[22]Ibid., 118 - 119, 135, 140, 143, 148. Shurden claims that messengers to associational bodies acted on behalf of their churches at annual meetings. However, he argues that Baptist polity did not require churches to accept the actions of their messengers. See pp. 54-57.

[23]James Black argues that the upper Piedmont never saw the large numbers of conversions that were occurring just over the state line in South Carolina in 1802 and 1803. However, the Sarepta Association's records report a large number of baptisms in 1802. Between 1814 and 1824, the number of churches reporting their

While Beaverdam Baptist Church grew during the nineteenth century's first two decades, its numbers at its founding did not make up a significant portion of the community. Beaverdam's surviving church conference minutes do not begin until 1814, but an original membership list is included in the records. A review of this list reveals that in 1800 only ten of the eighty different surnames in the Beaverdam militia district held membership in the church. Furthermore, only eight out of forty-three slaveholding families in the area owned ten slaves or more, and none of these wealthier households originally had any significant representation on the church's roll. Consequently, the founders of Beaverdam Baptist probably never expected to wield much influence over the values of non-members. They did not have enough power or numbers to accomplish such an objective. The congregation's voice likely carried more weight in the area as the antebellum period progressed, but the potential for providing the entire community with a moral compass never served as the primary motivation for practicing discipline.[24]

When Beaverdam Baptist Church gathered monthly to address disciplinary concerns, they had their sights set on maintaining a pure and peaceful community of faith. As a consequence, the church handled 132 cases in its disciplinary proceedings between 1814 and 1860. Intemperance was the most popular allegation faced in the church, with roughly 19 percent of accusations involving this type of transgression. Attendance violations were the next most numerous offenses. Cases of this nature came before the church 16.1 percent of the time.

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statistics to the Sarepta Association varied between 32 and 47, but the total number of baptisms they reported never rose above 79. See Black, "Learning the Language of Canaan," 108-109, 118-119; Sarepta Association, 1802, 1811-1824.

[24]Minutes, 20 September 1800. One female member of the church named Aggy Hendrick shared a surname with a man who owned ten slaves, but she may not have been a part of that particular Hendrick household. Out of the eleven members of the church that could be identified in the Beaverdam district as a household head in 1800, no one owned more than six slaves. See Jeanne Arguelles, "The 1800 Oglethorpe County, Georgia, Census Images" (Oglethorpe County, GA: GAGenWeb.com, 2004) [database on-line]; available from Rootsweb.com.

Strained interpersonal relationships among members accounted for 15.3 percent of the accusations, and sexual violations totaled 11 percent.[25]

The character of disciplinary proceedings at Beaverdam Baptist Church changed over the course of the antebellum period, but white men were always the most vulnerable to discipline. That was true despite the fact that they were the most imposing presence during the performance of the religious ritual. White men represented roughly 28 percent of the membership, but they came before the church's court more than 70 percent of the time prior to the Civil War. In contrast, 52 percent of the church was white women, yet their cases were handled in disciplinary proceedings less than 15 percent of the time. Slaves comprised the rest of the membership, and they were disciplined in proportion to their numbers. The church's bondmen and bondwomen accounted for the final 15 percent of the cases between 1814 and 1860.[26]

Statewide revivals in the late 1820s resulted in thousands of new converts swarming into Georgia's churches, sparking the emergence of a new evangelical culture in the upper Piedmont. Beaverdam Baptist Church experienced its share of these revivals in 1825, when new conversions doubled the number of names on the church's roll. In the ten years that followed, the membership disciplined at higher rates than at any other point in its recorded history. The church strived throughout the antebellum period to handle all of its cases equitably, but discipline increasingly became a religious ritual meaningful only for white males. After the

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[25]Each person that came before the church's court was counted as an individual case, even if the church disciplined more than one member at a time. Restoration requests were included in the total number of cases, since the church had to consider an individual's moral integrity and relationships with other members before restoring his or her membership privileges. At least 118 charges were leveled against members of the church in the antebellum period, and an individual might face more than one charge in a single case. The figures for the most common charges are as follows: intemperance – 22, attendance violations – 19, interpersonal disputes – 18, sexual violations – 13, other – 46.

[26]These figures were calculated after including restoration applications in the total number of cases. The following is a breakdown by race and gender of church members facing disciplinary proceedings: white men – 70.5 percent (93/132), white women – 14.4 percent (19/132), male slaves – 11.4 percent (15/132), female slaves – 3.8 percent (5/132).

1825 revival, disciplinary hearings also became more subject to the influence of the Johnson family and their kinship network. Nevertheless, when the minutes open in 1814, no single kinship group had a weightier presence than any other family in the church's trials. The membership also was more committed than in later years to holding all of its members accountable for meeting both the expectations of their faith and those of their social station in the world.

CHAPTER 1

KEEPING UP A "GODLY DISCIPLINE"

When Beaverdam Baptist Church met for conference on January 14, 1815, Britton Stamps stood up and alerted the congregation that one of its female members, Drucilla Hail, had recently been "too familiar with a man who has a wife." In its customary fashion, the church assembled a two-man committee to go see her and order her to attend the next conference to answer the charges. Drucilla Hail did not make it to the February conference, but she relayed through a member of the committee that she planned on being at the next meeting. The church was patient with Hail, but in the meantime it collected testimony from Britton Stamps and Nancy McElroy. The two "rendered the cause of their charge" against her. When the church met again in March, Drucilla Hail finally attended. The clerk did not record what she said, but her answers to the charge apparently satisfied the church. She was acquitted of the alleged offense and the church retained her as a member of its fellowship.[1]

The participation of both women and men in Drucilla Hail's case illustrates the fact that in the earliest years of the church's surviving records, disciplinary hearings were a relatively open arena. That was particularly true for white men and women. The formal responsibilities of carrying out church discipline primarily lay in the hands of the church's white male leaders, but

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[1]Minutes, 14 January 1815 – March 1815. Nancy McElroy appears to have been misspelled as Nancy Muckleroy in the church's minutes. I have found no record in Oglethorpe, Madison, or Clarke County census reports that anyone within reasonable distance of the church spelled their name that way. Nancy McElroy is most likely the Nancy Johnson that married William McElroy on 24 May 1800. See Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 157, 268.

neither class nor gender excluded an individual from participating in the performance of the religious ritual. In fact, class differences were minimal among members before the 1830s, so the church's leaders were chosen according to standards that had little to do with economic standing. Every member of the church also was vulnerable to charges, but all white members faced similar accusations. Slaves tended to face charges reflecting their subordinate roles, but like their white sisters and brothers, their cases did not differ significantly according to gender.

No kinship group dominated discipline in the early antebellum period, despite the fact that family allegiances in the antebellum South could be very strong. Kinship networks provided a degree of social, emotional, and economic stability for both blacks and whites. The practice of visiting, either for short or extended stays, helped white families maintain intimate connections with one another, and relatives often expressed a high level of sentimentality toward children and siblings. In frontier areas, these networks were harder to maintain and frequently fell apart. Nevertheless, settlers reestablished familial support structures as quickly as they could, and maintaining relationships with kin became easier when transportation and communication improved in new areas of settlement.[2]

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[2]Joan E. Cashin, *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 9-31, 78-98; Lorri Glover, *All Our Relations: Blood Ties and Emotional Bonds among the Early South Carolina Gentry* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 1-58; Robert C. Kenzer, *Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina*, 1849-1881 (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 6-28; A number of authors have also explored the dynamics of family relationships and the importance of kinship among blacks in the South. Examples include Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Jon Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Philip Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Scholars debate the extent to which evangelical conversions in early America disrupted families and engendered resentment toward churches. Christine Heyrman, for instance, emphasizes the disharmony that religious conversions tended to cause among members of southern families. In contrast, Peter Moore points out that religious conversions during the Great Revival "frequently served to conciliate and heal" and were "at least as likely to reconcile parents and children as to divide them." Since so many members were related by blood or marriage, it is unlikely that Beaverdam Baptist Church represented any dire threat to familial stability in the area. See Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 117-160; Peter Moore, "Family Dynamics and the Great Revival: Religious Conversion in the South Carolina Piedmont," *Journal of Southern History* 70 no. 1 (Feb. 2004): 40-41; On the importance of the family to evangelical faith, see Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 44, 97-101.

Scholars have observed that certain families constituted a majority of the membership in southern faith communities, and Beaverdam Baptist Church was no exception. Almost seventy-five percent of those who formed the church in 1800 joined with one or more relatives, and a large number of those believers shared membership with the male heads of their households. Conversions over the course of the antebellum period usually came through kinship connections of people already associated with the church. Consequently, these family relationships often provided the primary context through which the members of Beaverdam Baptist Church interacted with one another.[3]

For families like the Johnsons, Carters, and Lesters, the church at Beaverdam acted as an adhesive. It provided opportunities for spiritual nourishment and served as a focal point for scattered farm families to come together and stay in relationship with one another. However, when it came time to discipline, churches also expected believers to disregard their affections for kin in order to maintain the purity and peace of the fellowship. As one minister declared in a circular letter distributed by the Sarepta Association, "When it becomes necessary to bring a brother under church discipline, we should lose sight of every consideration." He argued that even if the accused member is "our personal friend, our brother according to the flesh, our father or son," all of these ties "should be sacrificed to our duty."[4]

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[3]Both Robert Kenzer and Jean Friedman claim from their findings that certain kinship networks made up a majority of members in southern churches, and Beaverdam Baptist Church exhibited the same trend. It appears that fifty-six of the approximately seventy-six founding members of the church shared membership with another member of their kinship network. At least twenty-six of the original members were white men, and many of them were probably the heads of their households. See Kenzer, *Kinship and Neighborhood*, 11-12; Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden*, 7-9; Minutes, 20 September 1800; These findings somewhat differ from Susan Juster's study of eighteenth-century, northern Baptist churches. She found that most of the women in her research sample did not join churches with spouses or other family members. Rather, they often became lone members of Baptist fellowships. See Juster, *Disorderly Women*, 99.

[4]Sarepta Association, "Circular Letter," 1850.

At Beaverdam Baptist Church, white men were the members most responsible for making sure that discipline functioned as it should. White heads of households kept the practice of church discipline alive and oversaw its usefulness to the community of faith. They controlled all of the formal channels of authority in both the church and the association. The officers, deacons, messengers, and ministers were all white males, and while there were no formal rules against white women and slaves bringing up charges against other members in the church's court, there is no evidence that any group other than white men participated in discipline in this way.[5]

In his study of race and class in lowcountry Georgia, historian Timothy Lockley argues that even among southern Baptist men, significant class divisions separated church leaders from other members. According to Lockley, the "men who held offices in church were often the richest and most powerful in their locality." These men took responsibility for "regulating the private affairs of less privileged members."[6] While class divisions seem to play a role later in the antebellum period, prior to 1825 the disparity of wealth was not great enough among the membership of Beaverdam Baptist to support the argument that the wealthiest members controlled discipline. Georgia's 1810 census was destroyed, but out of the eleven church members who could be identified in the Beaverdam militia district as heads of households in 1800, Daniel Dupree had the largest amount of slaveholdings with six. Four of the eleven men

[5]The clerks did not always record the name of individuals who alerted the family of faith to possible offenses, but only white males were mentioned as having assumed this role in the church.

[6]Lockley, *Lines in the Sand*, 150. Lockley observes at the First Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia, that nonslaveholding men were twice as likely as slaveholders to be excommunicated from the church for various violations. However, he also notices that up to half of the white male members of the church were nonslaveholders. It is likely that First Baptist Church of Savannah allowed all of its white male members to vote, and possibly even its women. Therefore, his own findings call into question his argument that the rich and powerful men regulated the private affairs of the church's members through discipline. While First Baptist Savannah may have been more likely to exclude nonslaveholders, this punishment was not exacted only by the church's elite white males. Disciplinary hearings were subject to a number of different influential factors. Class dynamics alone cannot explain the trends of southern church trials. Idem, 148, 150.

owned no slaves at all. Furthermore, from 1814 to 1825, no member having reached planter status ever served the church as a leader in disciplinary hearings.[7]

The church did not write down its voting requirements, but all white male believers probably voted on discipline cases. A number of these men also utilized the proceedings to bring charges against fellow members. In fact, while the clerk only recorded the name of the prosecutor in eight cases between 1814 and 1825, six of those charges were brought by different people. It appears that alerting the membership to moral offenses remained the prerogative of the church's white male members, but the proceedings were accessible to any of these men that cared to venture a charge.[8]

The church also appointed any white male believer to discipline committees. These committees were charged with investigating cases and requesting members to attend conferences. The church appears to have considered men for these roles according to their geographical proximity or relationship to an accused individual. Their potential for accomplishing a committee task likely affected such decisions, as well. In many cases, the church's religious officers moderated church trials and received committee appointments. In other words, wealth was not the most important consideration when the church chose men to meet certain leadership needs, particularly during the early antebellum period.[9]

In her study of a church in Illinois, Pat Levin argued that antebellum Baptists did not tend to distinguish themselves along economic lines. Rather, prestige among the church's

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[7]William M. Stokes had acquired twenty-five slaves by 1820, and he served on a disciplinary committee on 18 November 1826. See Minutes; Arguelles, "The 1800 Oglethorpe County, Georgia, Census Images."

[8]Minutes, 14 January 1815, 15 April 1815, 19 August 1815, 15 September 1815, 19 July 1817, 27 December 1819.

[9]For examples of regular members of the laity participating on discipline committees, see Minutes, 14 January 1815 – March 1815, April 1815 – June 1815, 19 August 1815 – 15 September 1815.

membership was based on gifts and talents useful to the community's religious life, as well as personal characteristics such as "honesty, age, hard work, wisdom, dedication and endurance." That seems to have been the case at Beaverdam Baptist Church, as well. For instance, Isham Goss, the first pastor mentioned in the church's records, usually served as the moderator for conferences prior to 1826. Under the authority of the church, he frequently helped appoint the congregation's song leader, Henry Johnson, to serve on discipline committees. In 1820, both of these men owned only seven slaves each. The church also appointed one of its deacons and licensed preachers, Mark Ragan, to join Johnson on many investigations. As of 1820, Ragan still owned no slaves at all. Wealth alone did not distinguish a Baptist leader from the rest of the laity. Besides, class distinctions between members were not great enough in the church's early years for them to make a significant difference.[10]

Prior to 1825, the members also paid less attention to gender distinctions than they later would. The church did not create a formal attendance policy until 1828, but before that all members were responsible for attending regularly. It is unclear from the records whether or not the church's attendance expectations applied both to Saturday conferences and Sunday worship, but believers were ordered to receive permission from the church if they anticipated a long absence. They could apply for a letter of dismission if they had a good reason for changing churches or expected to be away for an extended period of time. When they failed to do so, they

[10]Levin, "Kinships, Communities, and Conflicts," 391, 395; In this study, wealth and class standing are measured by the amount of slaves owned by an individual. While slaveholdings alone do not determine meaningful social power in the South, this factor became more and more important as southern planters increasingly acquired larger numbers of slaves.; Ancestry.com, *1820 U.S. Federal Census* (Provo, UT: MyFamily.com, Inc., 2004) [database on-line]; available from Ancestry.com; For examples of Mark Ragan and Henry Johnson serving on discipline committees together, see Minutes, 19 July 1817 – 16 August 1817, 20 June 1818 – 15 August 1818, 27 December 1819 – 15 January 1820; An example of the church appointing slaveholders to serve on committees with men who owned no slaves can be found as late as 1837, when Wiley Carter and Isham Cheatham served on a committee to investigate a woman's "departure from the strict rule of virtue." Isham Cheatham owned seven slaves in 1840, and Wiley Carter had no slaveholdings. See Minutes, 18 November 1837 – 16 December 1837; E. Annette Rose, "The 1840 Oglethorpe County, Georgia, Census Images" (Wichita, KS: S-K Publications, 1999) [database on-line]; available from Rootsweb.com.

needed to satisfy the membership with an excuse or apology in order to avoid exclusion for neglecting their faith community.

In the church's earliest records, both men and women faced attendance-related charges. John Goodman missed several conferences in 1819. When he returned, he was forced to make an "acknowledgment" before the church and apologize for his absence. He complied with the wishes of his faith community, so he was forgiven and retained in the church's fellowship. On another occasion, a white woman named Cassa Prescoat and a slave named Phillis failed to satisfy the church when they came up on charges. The church brought allegations against both of them for "absenting themselves from us without permission," and the two members apparently never sought letters of dismission or offered explanations for their absences. The clerk was directed to "race out their names" from the membership lists after the church excluded them for not consulting the fellowship before being gone so long. A white woman named Amy Bridges faced a similar charge two years later when she moved away without notifying the church. She was excluded as well.[11]

Since the entire membership was under obligation to keep the church at peace, all white members were expected to maintain harmonious relationships with one another. Men and women faced charges when they refused to resolve their arguments before having them brought up in conference. On occasion, members assumed responsibility for alerting the congregation to their own interpersonal disputes. In 1810, Archer Norris confessed that he had gotten angry with James Burroughs, another member of the church, but that he and Burroughs had not yet

[11]Minutes, 17 October 1818, 20 November 1819, November 1820; Janet Lindman found that at least one church in her study accused white women more often than white men of violating religious expectations prior to 1820. These charges included occasions when members avoided following proper procedural mandates. Lindman documented five cases of women leaving the church without acquiring a letter of dismission. See Lindman, "A World of Baptists," 212-213.

recovered from their feud. The matter apparently concerned a trunk that Norris had bought. Burroughs carried the trunk up from the county seat of Lexington for Norris, but somewhere in the exchange of the item the two men had gotten upset with each other. As with all severe disagreements among its members, the church took the matter seriously. It assigned Henry Johnson and Mark Ragan to accompany Norris on a visit with Burroughs. The men managed to work out their differences, and Burroughs eventually confessed in a Saturday conference that he had also gotten angry during the dispute. In its usual fashion, the church forgave both of the men for their anger and for the argument that resulted from it.[12]

Five years later, in August 1815, the church cited Jenny Barn and Lucy Busbin to attend the next conference in order to answer charges. The two apparently had been at odds, but neither member volunteered to bring their dispute before the congregation. Consequently, another member of the church exposed the feud, and the women faced allegations of "improper conduct and treatment towards each other." Both women attended the next conference when requested, but the church noticed that "no mark of a Reconciliation" had taken place. Therefore, the members excluded the two women from their fellowship. Neither men nor women were permitted to disrupt the peace of the faith community.[13]

Although white men and women faced similar charges, females appear in the church's disciplinary records most often as defendants. The extent of their involvement in other capacities is elusive. In 1828, the Sarepta Association advised all of its member churches to allow suffrage for female believers, and other historians have found that some congregations in the antebellum South appear to have permitted both women and slaves to vote in matters of

[12]Minutes, 27 December 1819 – 15 January 1820, 19 February 1820.

[13]Ibid., 19 August 1815 – 15 September 1815.

discipline. Unfortunately, however, the church's clerks never recorded the suffrage requirements at Beaverdam, and there is no evidence that leads to a decisive conclusion regarding who received voting privileges.[14] Historian Frederick Bode observed that the religious activity of women in the old South often goes unnoticed in the historical record because their efforts were frequently "obscured by a religious discourse that affirmed their difference and subordination to men." As a consequence, male and female cooperation in the achievement of religious goals has been hidden "behind a veil of helplessness."[15]

At Beaverdam Baptist Church, Bode's observation seems particularly true in the period prior to 1825. On at least two occasions in the church's early years, the veil blew back and revealed that women may have participated in church conferences much more actively than the official records disclose. When they did, their blood and marriage ties may have afforded them the opportunity. For instance, tucked into the church's minutes is a sheet of paper listing some of the Johnson kin who were members. On this extra document, Nancy Johnson is listed as the congregation's clerk from 1819 to 1827. This is roughly the same period that the official minutes of Beaverdam Baptist list her husband Henry holding the position. Her efforts in the church's service may have been shrouded behind her husband's official title. If so, Nancy

[14]Sarepta Association, 1828; Historians debate the extent to which southern Baptist women voted in disciplinary hearings during the antebellum period. Gregory Wills asserts that associations often advised churches to permit women to vote on discipline cases, and he believes churches "generally followed this advice." Jean Friedman, on the other hand, argues that the "male-dominated trials all but excluded women from the proceedings." She admits, however, that women did vote in some of the more lay-oriented congregations, such as Primitive Baptist churches. Most historians admit that some churches in the antebellum South permitted women to vote, but they hesitate to overemphasize the extent of this practice. See Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 52; Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden*, 13; Bode, "A Common Sphere," 783; John Crowley, *Primitive Baptists of the Wiregrass South: 1815 to the Present* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998), 47; Sparks, "On Jordan's Stormy Banks," 160.

[15]Bode, "A Common Sphere," 785.

Johnson's membership in the prominent Johnson kinship group provided her with access to this leadership role.[16]

Sister Nancy McElroy's family name perhaps enabled her to participate more actively in hearings, as well. When she testified in 1815 that Drucilla Hail had been "too familiar" with a married man, McElroy was the only member of the church with that particular surname. However, prior to marrying her husband William in 1800, Nancy McElroy had been a Johnson. In fact, she was the sister of Henry Johnson, one of the church's founders and most active members. Again, it is very possible that blood or marriage ties to the Johnson family emboldened McElroy to participate in the proceedings as a witness against another member.[17]

The case against Drucilla Hail points to another interesting trend regarding female participation in church trials. Women were slightly more vulnerable to allegations when they did not share membership with any other family members. Female blood and marriage ties are harder to establish in the historical record, but evidence suggests that a lack of kinship connections increased the chances that a woman would face charges of immorality or other offenses. Drucilla Hail had apparently joined the church without the rest of her family, because her surname is the only one of its kind on the membership lists. She was able to defend herself well against the first set of charges in 1815, resulting in one of the few acquittals found in the church's records. She possibly resented the allegations, though, because another member brought charges against her again in 1817 for having circulated "Scandallous Reports" and for "Wishing some bad wishes." Unfortunately, the clerk did not record the offenses any more clearly than that. At some point Hail denied saying anything particularly outrageous, because the

[16]See Minutes.

[17]Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 157, 268; Minutes, 18 February 1815.

church was also offended by her unwillingness to confess to the allegations. She was requested to attend conference to answer the claims against her. When Hail never showed up, the church excluded her.[18]

Ten of the nineteen women whose cases were handled in the antebellum period had situations similar to Drucilla Hail. They did not share membership with another family member when they were disciplined. While the absence of kin in the church did not guarantee eventual discipline for women, it may have made some easier targets for accusations. After all, these cases could be handled without damaging many other relationships in the faith community, making it even easier to maintain a peaceful community of faith through discipline.[19]

Although white men and women were accused of similar offenses in the church's earliest records, slave accusations usually reflected their servile status in southern society. Biracial churches of the antebellum South provided an environment where blacks and whites could come together in celebration of mutually esteemed ideals, participating with each other to form church covenants, engage in worship, and exercise church discipline. As Monica Najar points out, through the privileges of church membership southern blacks "found a form of citizenship that eluded them in the new nation."[20]

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[18]Minutes, 14 January 1815 – March 1815, 19 July 1817 – 16 August 1817.

[19]Both Cassa Prescoat and Amy Bridges mentioned above appear to have been the only members of their kinship group holding membership in the church, as well. For these examples and more, see Minutes, 14 January 1815, 19 August 1815, 19 July 1817, 17 October 1818, 15 September 1820, 16 June 1821.

[20]Monica Najar, "Citizens of the Church," 214; Scholars vary in their perspectives on the degree of equality that slaves and free blacks enjoyed in southern churches led by whites. On one side of the argument, historians like Timothy Lockley and Larry James emphasize that whites and blacks experienced a degree of "genuine fellowship" in evangelical churches that they may not have experienced otherwise because such fraternization violated socially sanctioned racial restrictions. See Lockley, *Lines in the Sand*, 147; Larry James, "Biracial Fellowship in Antebellum Baptist Churches," in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870*, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 38; On the other hand, Robert Hall writes that "too much can be made of biracialism in southern antebellum churches, for it was usually tempered both by the fact of slavery and by the effective disenfranchisement of black members within the polity of the local churches." See Robert L. Hall, "Black and White Christians in Florida, 1822-1861," in *Masters*

Nevertheless, despite the extent to which evangelicalism's egalitarian principles loosened the stiff racial hierarchy that characterized the South, slaves were always considered subordinate members of churches. Some southern Baptist churches allowed slave members to vote on discipline cases, but it is unclear whether or not slaves were allowed suffrage in Beaverdam Baptist Church's hearings. Bondmen and bondwomen only appear in the records as defendants. Scholars have found that blacks seldom voiced opinions during disciplinary proceedings that differed from those of the church's white male leaders. A partial explanation for that may rest in the fact that slave members probably seldom attended conferences anyway. The scheduled Saturday meeting times were considered workdays on southern farms. The subordinate status of slaves did not mean that they were disciplined more frequently, as their low number of cases reveals, but it did mean that they came before the church's court for different offenses than free members.[21]

White church members expected slaves to fulfill the expectations of their temporal station and, like their secular counterparts, whites were particularly concerned with slave deceit. Both male and female slaves were usually charged with deceiving their masters in some way. On September 15, 1815, a slave named Milendy was accused of having hidden the clothes of a runaway slave. She had been questioned at some point, but her refusal to confess to the offense only resulted in an additional charge for lying about it. When the church followed up on the

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and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870, ed. John B. Boles (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 85; Jewel Spangler argues that blacks never enjoyed much equality with whites in the governance of Baptist churches, even during the revolutionary period. See Jewel L. Spangler, "Salvation Was Not Liberty," 222, 233; Finally, Christine Heyrman believes that the elevated status of blacks in biracial southern churches was taken away from them over time when white church leaders began "erecting barriers to interracial intimacy" in order to gain a greater degree of social acceptance. See Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 69.

[21]Najar, "Citizens of the Church," 214-215; Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 53.

allegations, Milendy finally confessed. She was forgiven and the church retained her in its fellowship.[22]

A slave might face charges regardless of whether or not his or her master was a member of the faith community. Two months after the church forgave Milendy, it cited a slave named Will to attend the next conference and answer the allegation of running away. Will's master had never joined the church, but that did not keep a disciplinary committee from following up on his behavior. The slave eventually attended and confessed to the offense. In its usual manner, the church forgave him. After having experienced the church's grace on that charge, Will may have decided that confession was the best policy. Several years later, in 1822, he stood up in church conference again and admitted that he had stolen some of his master's cotton. Since he acknowledged the "impropriety of his Conduct," the church forgave him once again.[23]

Historians Janet Lindman and Timothy Lockley argue that black members of the church faced harsher treatment than whites when they appeared before disciplinary councils. It is true that the church never charged any of its masters with failing to treat their workers properly, while slaves were punished for not living up to the expectations of their social station. However, when slaves were accused of various offenses, their cases were not handled differently than those of free church members. An effort was made to investigate all allegations that were not common knowledge to the faith community, and even enslaved members usually had an opportunity to defend themselves in conferences. Between 1814 and 1860, far fewer slaves than whites faced

[22]All but one of the church's slave cases prior to 1825 dealt with some sort of deceptive action. The attendance-related case involving a female slave named Phillis was the only one that did not fit this pattern. See Minutes, 15 September 1815.

[23]Ibid., 18 November 1815 – 20 January 1816, 17 August 1822. Will's master, Lewis Lester, did not join the church until nine years later on 4 July 1825.

charges, and the church almost achieved parity between the races in the percentage of exclusions that it handed out.[24]

The church came closer to exhibiting a double standard in the severity with which it treated its females, both black and white. Both black and white women were more than twice as likely as men to be excluded. However, a close study of their cases reveals that women also were more inclined to strengthen the initial charges against them by further offending the church. They often did not show up when requested or failed to display the proper amount of humility. The church interpreted disregard for the fellowship as contempt of its authority, and it excluded members for this offense nearly every time it happened. However, the church likewise appeared willing to forgive its members for almost anything. It evaluated a person's feelings about an offense, as well his or her posture toward the fellowship's authority. Except in the case of sexual improprieties, which will be discussed in detail later, members were always forgiven regardless of race, class, or gender. That is, unless they refused to confess, show remorse, and appear submissive to the democratic will of the church. At Beaverdam Baptist Church, women chose to forego these measures more often than men.[25]

The tendency of white women to avoid properly displaying deference to church authority may be explained, at least in part, by the fact that so many of the disciplined women did not share membership with another family member. Churches provided important mediums of social interaction for southern women, and their majority of the membership in Beaverdam and

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[24]See Lindman, "A World of Baptists," 227-227; Lockley, *Lines in the Sand*, 153; In cases involving whites, 36.6 percent (41/112) ended in exclusion. Slaves were only excluded 35 percent (7/20) of the time.

[25]Cases involving men ended in exclusion 30.6 percent (33/108) of the time, while 62.5 percent (15/24) of female cases ended that way. Of course, when women were excluded, at least 66.7 percent (10/15) of them had shown contempt for the church's authority. Only 48.5 percent (16/33) of the men responded to the church in this way.

other churches testifies to that fact. However, the household served as the primary context for identity formation and emotional support for southern females, particularly in rural areas like the Beaverdam district. If fellowships of faith did not also provide women with opportunities to further develop important family relationships, church membership could be sacrificed when it demanded too much. Some of these women also may have been moved away by husbands or masters who had little concern for the church membership status of their dependents.[26]

An initial display of contempt for church authority did not deem a person forever ineligible for restoration to the community of faith. Throughout the antebellum period, Beaverdam Baptist Church was very willing to restore its members to fellowship after they had been excluded. Unanimous consent of the membership was required, but every man or woman that applied for restoration between 1814 and 1860 eventually received it. As long as the offending member "made an acknowledgment," appeared submissive to the church's authority, and maintained good relations with the church's members, they could again enjoy the fellowship of their faith community.[27]

Social station made no difference in the determination of whether or not a member could receive restoration, but race and gender dictated to some extent a person's likelihood of asking for it. Contrary to the findings of several church discipline studies, the men of Beaverdam Baptist Church were the most likely candidates to apply for restoration. Less than 8 percent of

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[26]Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 102. Jean Friedman and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese have both written extensively on the importance of kinship connections and domestic relationships to southern women. See Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden*; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

[27]Every member who sought restoration eventually received it, but there were occasions when the church hesitated to give it. All of the church's conditions had to be met. For examples of cases in which the church had reservations about reinstating a member to the fellowship, see Minutes for the following dates: 20 July 1833 – 17 August 1833, 13 September 1833 – 15 February 1834, 13 September 1833 – October 1833, 17 September 1836 – 17 December 1836, 20 July 1839, 15 June 1850 – 19 October 1850.

excluded white women sought reinstatement of their membership privileges between 1814 and 1860. However, in the same period, almost 36 percent of excluded white males asked for their membership privileges back. Slaves received restoration at even higher rates. No less than 80 percent of excluded black males were reinstated. The church restored 50 percent of its excluded female slaves, but those numbers are not very telling since the church only punished two slave women with its strongest censure during the antebellum period.[28]

The higher percentage of white male restoration requests can be explained by the fact that many Baptist men rested their reputations on their public involvement in the affairs of the church. They evaluated themselves and other men based on public performances of Christian leadership and behavior. As Donald Mathews puts it, the evangelical male ideal required "responsible action in the exercise of power in a public world from which women were barred." Mathews overstates the extent to which the power of white women was circumscribed in southern Baptist churches, at least in the early antebellum period, but his analysis explains why southern men who cared intensely about fulfilling religious obligations would find exclusion from membership privileges intolerable. The pain of exclusion may have been even more unbearable in a rural context like that of northwest Oglethorpe County, where Beaverdam Baptist Church provided one of the few social mediums for men to compare themselves to their peers.[29]

Slaves probably applied for restoration for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the fact that church gatherings provided them with occasions to get off the farm, share

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[28]Both Christine Heyrman and Janet Lindman found that white men were the least likely members of southern churches to ask for restoration. See Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 215; Lindman, "A World of Baptists," 228; At Beaverdam Baptist Church, white men were more likely to request restoration than white women, and slaves had the highest rates of restoration. Ten out of twenty-eight excluded white males requested restoration (35.7%), while only one out of thirteen excluded white females wanted their membership privileges back (7.7%). Four out of five excluded male slaves were granted restoration upon their requests (80%), compared to one out of two excluded black females (50%).

[29]Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 122.

significant religious experiences with other slaves in the area, and give and receive news over longer distances. Despite their subordinate role in the churches, slaves also enjoyed the spiritual benefits of church membership that evangelical Christianity guaranteed as much to them as to their white superiors. Their lack of mobility likely afforded Baptist slaves few opportunities to replace their church membership with similar meaningful and enjoyable activities, so the added pressure of their circumstances may have prompted slaves to petition for restoration. Of course, for both slave and free members, a desire to respond to their sins in a Christian manner probably provided enough motivation for many to humble themselves and ask for the return of their membership privileges.[30]

Most of the members who suffered the pains of the exclusion and restoration processes had little desire to remain in the church. Those who achieved restoration frequently asked for letters of dismission soon afterward. Some former members waited until they had moved away and were ready to join another church before even asking for restoration, which probably made the process a little easier since it could be done by letter. Others endured the humbling experience with the intention of leaving and joining the next closest church as soon as possible. Perhaps excluded members felt that their reputations had suffered too heavily from the charges they faced, or they may have been humiliated by having to appear submissive to church authority. Whatever the case, as much as 50 percent of the members who were restored prior to the Civil War received permission to change churches on the same day that they regained their membership privileges. In other cases, requests for letters of dismission often came within

[30]Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 204-205; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), 314-315.

months. Since whites had the freedom to be more flexible in their choice of a church, they were more inclined than blacks to leave their community of faith after being restored.[31]

While the church always demonstrated a desire to handle all of its cases equitably, white males faced more charges than anybody else. Leadership apparently required a higher level of accountability. White men appeared before the church's court almost twice as often as white women and four times as often as slaves. The disparity between male cases and those of other groups only increased in the years leading up to the Civil War. White men and women endured similar allegations in the early antebellum period, but men seem to have been a bit more concerned about keeping themselves and other men accountable for their behavior.[32]

Unlike in the cases involving white women, kinship connections apparently provided men little insulation against charges prior to 1825. Allegations against members of the Gallaway family illustrate this point. This family enjoyed prominence in the church during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, and four members of their kinship network helped constitute the fellowship in 1800. Nevertheless, in January 1816, Matthew Gallaway was charged with drinking too much. He was forgiven and retained as a member after confessing to the offense, but the very next month deacon Mark Ragan risked offending the family again when he charged Anderson Gallaway with stealing a knife from General Bill's Store. Ragan revealed no hesitation in making the accusation, and William Gallaway even joined him in summoning the suspected thief to answer the allegations. After refusing to attend conference at the church's request, Anderson Gallaway was excluded from the membership roll without protest by any

[31]The percentage of whites requesting letters of dismission immediately after being restored more than doubled that of black slaves. At least 55.6 percent (10/18) of whites asked for permission to leave the church on the same day they received their restoration, while only 28.6 percent (2/7) of blacks did so.

[32]In the period between 1814 and 1825, thirty-three people appeared before the church's disciplinary court. nineteen of those were white men, while only ten were white women. Slaves were involved in four cases, two each for men and women.

other member of the church. Sharing church membership with family members, even male heads of households, apparently did not affect the vulnerability of men to accusations.[33]

In most of the cases prior to 1825 involving white males, the offenders themselves brought the allegations. Scholars have failed to emphasize the large number of self-accusations in Baptist churches. Fourteen out of the nineteen white men that came before the church's court between 1814 and 1825 confessed to various offenses on their own volition. These episodes of voluntary submission to congregational authority reflect no significant family, class, or race patterns, but slave and free men were the only members of the church who ever participated in disciplinary proceedings in this way.

Alcohol abuse was the most popular self-accusation. White men were the only group disciplined for intemperance in the entire forty-five years under study.[34] Henry Johnson came before the church court more frequently than any other member, and most of his confessions revolved around his inability to remain sober. Despite his prominent role among the membership, Johnson accused himself of minor moral violations no less than nine times before he left the church in 1836. Nevertheless, during his years with the congregation he continued to serve from time to time as the song leader and clerk. He also accepted appointment to various discipline committees and was chosen to care for the church's meeting house for a number of years. None of his moral failings appear to have tarnished his reputation as one of the church's lay leaders. In fact, all of his self-accusations related to intemperance were forgiven.[35]

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[33]Minutes, 20 September 1800, 16 January 1817, 14 February 1817 - 15 March 1817

[34]Apparently Oglethorpe County's citizens could make and access liquor easier than they could control their use of it. As early as 1806, when Lexington was populated by no more than one hundred people, at least eight of those residents already had licenses to sell alcohol within the town limits. See Mohr, "Oglethorpe County," 72.

[35]Minutes, 20 November 1819 - 16 September 1836; The extent of forgiveness offered in cases of intemperance differs markedly from data collected by C.V. Smith. His figures for Baptist churches in North

Henry Johnson also accused himself on a couple of occasions of "giving in" to anger. As early as 1804, the Sarepta Association had advised the churches that anger was sinful unless it was kept within certain boundaries. The association did not venture to delineate those boundaries, but the members of Beaverdam Baptist drew their own conclusions and sometimes felt obligated to confess their anger before the church. After all, like the problems associated with intemperance, inappropriate anger threatened to disrupt the harmony of the congregation or result in actions that damaged the reputation of the church and its message. The church invariably forgave this particular offense, though, and it retained all of the members that confessed to it. [36]

By voluntarily seeking forgiveness for their sins, men were responding not only to the expectations of evangelical faith but also to the code of southern honor. Bertram Wyatt-Brown argues that "policing one's own ethical sphere was the natural complement of the patriarchal order." "It was a matter of personal reputation," says Wyatt-Brown, "to prove oneself a master of events to one's family and household." Even if a Christian man had little control over certain sinful passions, he could still reveal to the community through his self-accusations that he had mastered the ability to respond appropriately to his fallen condition. Consequently, minor self-accusations only contributed to a man's reputation as an upstanding individual. The church proved very willing to forgive and retain male members who confessed to wrongdoing, and

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Carolina reveal a 47 percent exclusion rate for those accused of intoxication, an offense that would have been considered minor at Beaverdam Baptist Church. See Cortland Victor Smith, "Church Organization," 201.

[36]Minutes, 19 February 1820, 19 August 1820, 20 April 1822.

minor self-accusations did not damage a member's potential for leadership among the congregation.[37]

Free and slave women did not feel as heavily as men the burden of securing social and ecclesiastical status by accusing themselves of offenses in the public arena of church discipline. They were household dependents who faced different social and ethical expectations than men. Many southern women lived in rural environments and lacked mobility, so they often were forced to internalize personal struggles and issues. When they were able to make important emotional connections, they tended to earn their reputations and determine rank in the more private, domestic fellowships of female kin and friends. They probably did not feel like it was quite as necessary to expose their sins before the entire faith community. Even in the 1830s, when evangelicals began lifting up southern women more vocally as the "ultimate model of Christian discipleship," the home rather than the church was extolled as the primary location for a woman's most important work. Theoretically, any member of the church could stand up in conference and seek the faith community's forgiveness for moral improprieties. However, at Beaverdam Baptist Church, free and slave men were the only ones who volunteered to handle their failings that way in the public arena of church discipline.[38]

Since white men provided most of the leadership, their behavior and relationships with one another came under greater scrutiny. In other words, their offenses posed a greater threat to the church's reputation and its capacity to remain a peaceful faith community. However, it is not a coincidence that prior to 1825, when there are glimpses of a higher level of female

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[37]Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1982), 371. Other historians have observed the same trend of forgiveness. See Levin, "Kinships, Communities, and Conflicts," 146; Lockley, *Lines in the Sand*, 153.

[38]Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 230; Jean Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden*, 9, 25-26, 39-53, 84; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 112; Deborah Gray White, "Female Slaves: Sex Roles and Status in the Antebellum Plantation South," in *Half Sisters of History: Southern Women and the American Past*, ed. Catherine Clinton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 63-64.

participation in hearings, the church also handled more cases involving women. At this early stage, the church still considered the behavior of white women essential to the purity and peace of the fellowship.

The church was never very vigilant in monitoring the actions of its slaves. Their behavior passed beneath the radar of most white members, reflecting a trend that Bertram Wyatt-Brown observed in his study of southern honor. "White southerners seldom forgot the presence of blacks," Brown says, but "what mattered most to them was the interchanges of whites among themselves." Only when slaves violated the essential expectations of their servile status did the church bother to discipline them, and those cases usually revolved around the capacity of slaves to deceive their masters. Nevertheless, prior to 1825, the church came closer than it ever would to achieving parity in its discipline of various social groups.

Antebellum disciplinary proceedings at Beaverdam Baptist Church clearly were never democratic, but it is also unfair to characterize them as a tool used by elite white men to control more dependent members. While social station always determined a person's vulnerability to charges, no member was immune to allegations in the church's earliest years. All believers were held accountable for meeting certain expectations, and they were expected to appear submissive to the church's authority. The same standards of fairness were applied to almost every case. Members also were not inclined to pay much attention to a man's economic value in the community. That was a bit easier in the early antebellum years, since the disparity of wealth between members was minimal.

No family dominated discipline between 1814 and 1825, but kinship connections do appear to have affected white men and women differently. Ties to certain families may have enabled some white women to take on a larger role in church conferences. On the other hand,

lack of kinship connections probably made them more likely to face charges. For men, vulnerability to accusations was unrelated to kinship networks, and a number of men took advantage of the opportunity to address the behavior of others in the church's court. As the antebellum years progressed, disciplinary hearings would change in a number of significant ways, not the least of which was the influence that certain members and their families had over the proceedings.

CHAPTER 2

MORE FAMILY, MORE MEMBERS, MORE DISCIPLINE

On June 17, 1826, Cary Johnson stood up in church conference and alerted the congregation that William Gallaway had "for some time since" been involved in an "affray" with James Etcheson. Etcheson was not a member of Beaverdam Baptist Church, but Johnson still felt that Gallaway was responsible for his own behavior in the dispute. The church records reveal little more about the feud, but the membership determined in August that it had no reason to discipline Gallaway. Nevertheless, this case represented the first time Cary Johnson had raised charges at Beaverdam. He and his relatives would come to be very familiar with the role over the next nine years, as the Johnson kinship network wielded a heavier influence over the church's disciplinary hearings. Between 1826 and 1835, the Johnsons and their relatives were responsible for half of the sixteen allegations raised by someone other than the offenders themselves. Cary Johnson brought charges in five of those cases.[1]

In addition to helping found the church, the Johnson men assumed a number of important leadership roles. That should be expected, since antebellum membership lists reveal that at least twenty-three Johnsons had become members of Beaverdam's faith community before the Civil War. The Lesters and Carters both had at least thirteen family members in the church during the antebellum period, but no other surname in the forty-five years under study is represented by as

[1]Minutes, 17 June 1826 – 18 September 1835.

many people as the Johnsons.[2] From time to time, Johnsons served on discipline committees, acted as messengers to other congregations, and helped direct church business as moderators and clerks. At least two of the Johnsons frequently participated in the leadership of worship, as well. Luke Johnson was "set at Liberty" by the membership "to exercise his gift" in singing, praying, exhortation, admonition, and lecturing from any passage in the Bible. Henry Johnson was appointed to lead the singing at one point, and for at least a year he also was elected to be the congregation's "Door Keeper" during its meetings.[3]

The Johnson men accepted responsibility for helping maintain the church's meeting house, as well. For many years, Henry Johnson agreed for a small fee to regularly oversee both the church building and the nearby spring. When the meeting house needed some larger repairs in 1818, Henry Johnson and one other member superintended the job to make sure that it got done. In 1822, the church needed work on its roof, so it appointed Henry Johnson again. This time he was joined in the effort by his brother-in-law Cary Johnson and another member. The church also put Henry and Cary Johnson on a committee to repair the bonnet above the meeting house door when it needed fixing in 1830. In 1831, the membership decided to build an addition to their building. James Johnson, whose relationship to Henry and Cary remains unclear, served on the five-man committee organized to raise money and insure the completion of that job. The Johnson family participated in some of the church's most important roles, and their efforts on behalf of the congregation promoted and supported their stature in the faith community.

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[2]Five slaves from the Carters' households, four slaves from the Johnsons' households, and three from the Lesters' households also were members of the church.

[3]Minutes, 16 March 1816, 19 July 1817, 20 June 1818, 29 September 1819, 14 September 1821, 18 September 1826, 10 January 1827, 17 February 1827, 16 June 1827, 6 July 1827, 3 October 1828, 20 March 1830, 16 September 1831, 16 August 1834; Luke Johnson was Henry Johnson's uncle. See Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 154-157.

Consequently, when it came time to discipline, the family's numerical strength and authoritative role in the church gave the Johnsons greater license to raise charges against other members.[4]

Prior to the Civil War, Cary Johnson raised more allegations in discipline trials than anyone else at Beaverdam Baptist Church. He first notified the church about William Gallaway's dispute with James Etcheson in 1826. Two years later, Johnson alerted the church to another "Matter of difficulty or contradiction" between two members. Sister Polley Spratling said she had heard Berry Thompson call someone a "Damed Liar," but Thompson denied the charge. Spratling and others had already taken "Gospel Steps" to resolve the quarrel, but the offended members were not content with Thompson's response. When the case made it to the church's court, Robert Farmer backed up Spratling by confirming that he had heard Thompson use the epithet. With two witnesses against him, Thompson relented but decided he would go ahead and request exclusion. The church obliged his request.[5]

In July 1829, Cary Johnson stood up again in conference and encouraged the church to question Patsey Dupree about her "Long absence." He, his brother-in-law James Stamps, and another member accepted appointment as a committee to visit Dupree. They were to report the reasons for her absence at the next conference. When the church met again in August, the committee relayed that they had seen Dupree and that she expected to be at the next meeting. If not, she promised to apply for a letter of dismission. According to the clerk, Dupree's promise

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[4]Minutes, 19 January 1822, 16 April 1823, 20 March 1830, 18 March 1831, 18 June 1831; Cary Johnson married Henry Johnson's sister, Mary. James Johnson may have been Henry Johnson's son, and he also may have been the same James Johnson that married a member of the pastor's family, Melita Goss. See Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 157; Jordan Dodd, *Georgia Marriages to 1850* (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com, 1997) [database on-line], available from Ancestry.com.

[5]Minutes, 17 June 1826 – 19 August 1826, 15 March 1828. Neither Robert nor George Farmer were members at the time, but they may have attended the church regularly as a part of the larger congregation. Baptist churches were not always opposed to accepting testimony from non-members. It is unclear exactly how they were related, but at least one genealogist contends that Robert Farmer was George Farmer's son. See the genealogical records for R.W. Smith on Ancestry.com.

was "Satisfactory to the Church at the present." Patsey Dupree was not heard from for months and never again attended, but the church waited in the hope that she would respond. In October, Dupree provided a reason for her absences and applied for a letter of dismission. The church pardoned her for not attending and, since she had followed proper procedures, dismissed rather than excluded her.[6]

In 1834, Cary Johnson exposed to the church that "unfavorable reports" about member Frederick Vernon had been circulating around the community, and Johnson joined a committee appointed to investigate the rumors. Frederick Vernon had been an active member of Beaverdam Baptist, helping lead worship and conducting church business as moderator from time to time. He even served on a discipline committee at one point to assist in the reconciliation of two feuding members. After Johnson and others finished their investigation of Vernon, they revealed to the church that he had exhibited "inconstancy in his weded vows." Vernon confessed that the rumors were true, and he asked to be excluded. The church granted his request, but it probably would have revoked his membership privileges even if he had not asked. Sexual sins were the only violations that warranted exclusion whether the member confessed or not.[7]

Several other members of the Johnson family were willing to bring allegations before the church, as well. In 1834, Cary Johnson's son, Reubin, followed in his father's footsteps. He charged Henry Colquitte with being "in disorder By using unchristian Language…in a passion." An investigating committee looked into the matter and returned to the church a "satisfactory report," so Colquitte was retained as a member. Likewise, in 1831, Cary Johnson's uncle, Luke Johnson, stood up in conference and notified the membership that "unpleasant reports" were

[6]Minutes, 18 July 1829 – 17 October 1829.

[7]Ibid., 18 January 1834 – 15 February 1834.

circulating about James Pinson. The clerk failed to record the nature of the rumors, but when Pinson never showed up to answer the charges, the church excluded him. It happened that Luke Johnson was the only convert from the 1825 revival who ever got up enough nerve to bring charges against another member. His ties to the Johnson family probably explain why.[8]

In her study of a Baptist church in Illinois, Pat Levin found that "family disagreements, conflicts and strained relationships" frequently found their way into church courts. Levin observed that "most" of the cases handled in the church she studied involved disputing family members. However, at Beaverdam Baptist Church only one case appears to have involved two members of the same family. In 1826, James Stamps charged his brother-in-law, Henry Johnson, with intemperance. Johnson confessed to the offense and, in its usual fashion, the church retained him in its fellowship. This was not the first time he had faced this charge, and in most cases he had brought allegations against himself. However, this case was the only time someone else accused Johnson of wrongdoing. It may be significant that the person willing to do it had the social security of being related by marriage to the Johnson family. With the exception of Henry, no close member of the Johnson kinship network ever faced allegations in the church's court. Connection to the family by blood or marriage appears not only to have given people greater license to participate in disciplinary hearings, it also may have provided the family with a certain level of security against accusations.[9]

As the Johnson men became the primary facilitators for church discipline, the religious ritual also seemed to be transforming into a practice predominantly meaningful for white males.

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[8]Ibid., 16 April 1831 – 18 June 1831, 16 August 1834 – 19 September 1834; Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 154 – 157.

[9]Levin, "Kinships, Communities, and Conflicts," 398; Minutes, 17 June 1826 – 19 August 1826; James Stamps married Henry Johnson's sister, Sarah, in 1788. See Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 156-157.

Female slaves faced charges at the same low rate. Slave women only appeared before the church's court twice between 1825 and 1835. In the same period, cases against white women dropped from nine a decade earlier to only two. Male slaves exhibited the exact opposite trend, but their numbers were still relatively low, rising from two cases to nine. The vulnerability of white males eclipsed that of all other groups. Between 1814 and 1824, roughly 58 percent of the cases involved white men. After 1825, that number shot up almost eighteen percentage points. Over the next ten years their cases came up in the church's court nearly 76 percent of the time. The raw numbers are even more telling. Prior to 1825, the church handled nineteen cases involving white males, but the total for the next decade rose to forty. Keeping the church pure and peaceful increasingly meant monitoring the morality of white men.[10]

In 1824, the church probably wondered if there would be any more men left to discipline. At the close of the eighteenth century, Oglethorpe County had exhibited all the marks of a frontier settlement, but it quickly became a permanent farming community. Less than 250 of the county's 6,863 inhabitants in 1820 were employed in manufacturing and mercantile pursuits. Presumably all of the others were farmers or members of farm families. Over time, family plots became more firmly established in the region and the soil began to lose its virgin fertility. When relatively low cotton prices in the 1820s worsened conditions for farmers, a number of the county's citizens began migrating toward new land in west Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Between 1820 and 1830, one-fifth of the county's white population had sought prosperity elsewhere.[11]

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[10]The following is an exact breakdown of discipline cases that came before the church between 1825 and 1835: white males – 75.5 percent (40/53), white females – 3.8 percent (2/53), black males – 17 percent (9/53); black females – 3.8 percent (2/53).

[11]Mohr, "Oglethorpe County," 83, 99-100; It is difficult to calculate the membership numbers of Beaverdam Baptist Church prior to its involvement in the Oconee Baptist Association in the late 1830s. At that

Beaverdam Baptist Church began losing members as early as 1815, presumably to migration, and by 1824 it had lost almost half of the people that had attended a decade earlier. The congregation's changing circumstances impacted its disciplinary hearings. The number of cases began to drop in 1821, and in 1824 the church did not bother to discipline anyone for an entire year. Some of the decline may have been natural, since the membership numbers themselves had been slumping, but the church also may have been hesitant to risk losing any more of its body.

In 1825, an unexpected revival relieved the church's concerns by more than doubling the size of the membership. Forty-eight people joined the church between April and November of that year. In many cases, whole families became believers within months of one another. Almost 65 percent of the new members joined with another member of their household. For instance, William M. Stokes joined after two female relatives and one of his slaves became a part of the church in the early part of the summer. Soon afterward, at least two more members of his household also related their experience of conversion and were accepted into the fellowship. Such a huge number of conversions apparently overwhelmed the congregation, distracting it from its usual religious exercises. The church had doubled its numbers, but the membership did not discipline a single person the entire year. When it did find a need to discipline again, it had to monitor the behavior of at least twenty-four more male members.[12]

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point, the membership statistics it reported to the association are available in the historical record. It is nearly impossible to count the number of deaths that occurred in the church prior to 1840, since the church's clerks did not record this information very closely. Nevertheless, for those years estimations are based on the number of dismissals, exclusions, and occasional deaths mentioned in the minutes. Unfortunately, the church's records are also incomplete for some years. Nevertheless, I estimated that it had about ninety-one members in 1814. That number had dropped to about forty-five members by 1824. The years are calculated from October to September, since messengers would report their numbers for the previous year at October association meetings.

[12]Minutes, 17 June 1825, 30 July 1825, 31 July 1825, 20 August 1825, 16 September 1825, 17 September 1825. The church gained forty-eight new members in 1825. Thirty-one of them appear to have joined with another member of their household. That figure includes slaves that joined with members of their masters' families. In her

The church at Beaverdam could not have known it at the time, but they were seeing in their 1825 revival the opening of a new era for evangelicals in the region. The churches of Georgia's upper Piedmont recorded large numbers of conversions throughout the late 1820s. The number of baptisms reported to the Sarepta Association jumped from 68 in 1824 to 216 the following year, and it would not fall below one hundred again until religious controversy in 1836 resulted in the departure of several churches. The revival peaked in 1827 and 1828. One historian counted more than seventeen hundred baptisms in the area's evangelical churches during those years, and the Sarepta Association reported 509 baptisms in 1828 alone. At least fourteen new churches had been formed, as well.[13]

Georgia's new religious climate may have provoked a need among Beaverdam's church leaders to formalize their procedural guidelines and clarify membership expectations. The church constructed a Rules of Decorum in September of 1828 that partially accounts for the rising number of male discipline cases. For the first time, the fellowship had a formal attendance policy, and only free male members were required to be at conferences. Two absences would be accepted before the absentee needed to provide a good excuse for being away. The Rules of Decorum also demanded that no member engage in "Whispering or Idle talking" during public debate, leave the gathering without first seeking permission from the moderator, or be absent

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study of Baptist churches in eighteenth-century New England, Susan Juster found that recent revival converts were considered "unstable and unreliable," which justified a higher volume of cases against them. However, Beaverdam Baptist Church did not discipline its new converts more diligently than anybody else. Only nine of the forty-eight new members appeared before the church's court in the ten years following the revival of 1825. Their cases represent only eleven of the fifty-seven total cases during that period, even though their numbers account for nearly half of the church's membership. While the church may have felt a need to express its expectations for membership through a Rules of Decorum, it was not inclined to discipline recent converts more than anybody else. See Juster, *Disorderly Women*, 158.

[13]Sarepta Association, 1824-1836; Black, "Learning the Language of Canaan," 186-188; Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 31.

from communion. The church decided that anyone "Idly Stalking about the yard" during communion "Shall be judged Worthy of reproof by any observer or the whole Conference."[14]

The establishment of a formal attendance policy in the Rules of Decorum lends some explanation to the higher number of discipline cases in the church after 1828. The church had not handled any more than five cases annually in the two years following the revival of 1825. However, in the same year that the church constructed its decorum, the caseload soared to ten. Five of the cases that came before the church within a year after it established a Rules of Decorum were related to attendance. That number was equal to the amount of attendance-related cases handled in the previous thirteen years. Apparently the church made its point, because only ten more cases of that nature were tried after 1829. The membership had always cared about attendance at conferences, but the new decorum laid out explicit ground rules that encouraged an increasing number of charges against men who neglected to attend often enough.[15]

When it came to attendance, the church applied its standards equally to all of its white, male members. On March 15, 1828, both John Goodman and Lewis J. Dupree faced charges in the same church conference for having missed too many meetings. The church respected "Old" John Goodman and his wife, Sally, but the members did not need to be concerned about offending them. It appears that they did not have any other family members in the church, own any slaves, or serve the church in any official capacity. John Goodman also previously faced charges in the church, both for poor attendance and intemperance. Lewis Dupree, on the other hand, was a slaveholder and possibly a relative of another prominent church member named

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[14]Minutes, 14 June 1828.

[15]In three of the five cases prior to 1828, the church may have been mostly concerned about the members moving away without asking for letters of dismission. Nevertheless, these cases were included in the total number because they represent occasions when the church brought charges against members who neglected to attend without permission.

Daniel Dupree. Lewis Dupree was a distinguished lawyer in the community, as well, and was elected in 1828 to serve the county as the Justice of the Inferior Court. The church was very patient with the two men and pursued both of them for a number of months. In June, the church expressed through its "Rules of Decorum" how seriously the members viewed attendance, but Goodman and Dupree remained absent from conferences. The following September, John Goodman finally showed up at church conference and "gave Sattisfaction" for his absences. The church lost its patience with Dupree, however, and in October it decided to exclude him. After all, he had ignored the church's authority after being "again and again" requested to attend.[16]

The church had the same attendance expectations for both Goodman and Dupree, but their disparate economic status points to a new trend in the county that started to affect class dynamics at Beaverdam Baptist Church. While a number of Oglethorpe County's citizens could not find enough reason to stay in the region during the 1820s, those who were well established tended to prosper. Between 1815 and 1830, the number of planters in the county almost doubled from 55 to 109. Most of them owned fewer than fifty slaves, which represents a much smaller investment than some central Georgia planters boasted of having at the time. Nevertheless, by 1830 these wealthier slaveowners made up 15 percent of Oglethorpe County's slaveholding families.[17]

The region's potential to create wealth can be seen in the fortunes of several of the church's members. Daniel Dupree's circumstances illustrate the point. Dupree was a founding member of the church, and in his time there he served on a number of discipline committees. He occasionally took the liberty of bringing up charges against wayward members, as well. When

[16]Minutes, 15 March 1828 – 3 October 1828, 5 December 1828 – 14 February 1829; Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 35.

[17]Mohr, "Oglethorpe County." 85.

he helped form the church in 1800, Dupree owned only six slaves. However, his farming years in Oglethorpe County were good to him. By 1830, Dupree owned twenty-seven slaves and consequently had reached small planter status. Another member of the church, Lewis Lester, saw his own fortunes increase even more quickly. Prior to converting in the mid-1820s, Lester owned four slaves. By 1830 he had increased his holdings to twenty-one.[18]

Disciplinary hearings at Beaverdam Baptist Church started to reflect the changing social and economic circumstances of its members. As the antebellum years rolled on, economic disparities impacted the church a bit more. When William Stokes served on a discipline committee in 1826, he became the first person of planter status to participate in the church's trials.[19] Between 1826 and 1860, most of the members who served on discipline committees owned at least a small number of slaves.[20] Furthermore, out of the nine cases between 1826 and 1860 in which the slaveholdings of both the accused and the accuser could be determined with a significant degree of certainty, not a single person brought charges against a member who owned more slaves than the accuser. During the first two and a half decades of the nineteenth century, there were few slaveholders with more than twenty slaves on the membership rolls. Consequently, differences in wealth were minimal between members. However, as the fortunes of southern farmers grew, most members seemed unwilling to bring charges against anyone

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[18]Arguelles, "The 1800 Oglethorpe County, Georgia Census Images"; Ancestry.com, *1820 U.S. Federal Census*; Ronald V. Jackson, Accelerated Indexing Systems, comp. *1830 United States Federal Census* (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com, 1999) [database on-line]; available from Ancestry.com; Minutes, 15 March 1823 – 19 April 1823, 15 December 1826, 17 November 1827 – 15 March 1828, 1 August 1828, 3 October 1828, 2 January 1829.

[19]Stokes's status is determined by the customary indicator for those in the South who had reached planter status, which is the ownership of at least twenty slaves. William M. Stokes had acquired twenty-five slaves by 1820. See Ancestry.com, *1820 U.S. Federal Census*; Minutes, 18 November 1826.

[20]This evaluation is impressionistic. Not all of the men serving on committees could be identified in the census records with a strong degree of certainty, and some of them were not listed because they lived in households headed by an older family member. Nevertheless, it appears that more slaveowners served on discipline committees in the later antebellum period than in the first ten years of the church's records.

better off than themselves. To some extent, class status increasingly influenced the willingness of members to initiate cases in the church's court.[21]

The effects of class on church discipline should not be overemphasized, however. Wealthier members can be seen becoming more involved in disciplinary hearings, but any free male member was allowed and expected to participate. The church's more affluent believers were never the only members bringing up charges, and they never completely controlled the investigative processes that often followed accusations in a church's court. Throughout the antebellum period, the men chosen to serve on discipline committees had varying numbers of slaveholdings. Church discipline remained an inclusive religious ritual executed by and for every white man. These men assumed responsibility for maintaining the peace and purity of the church, and they primarily targeted each other. A series of cases involving the pastor from 1826 to 1829 illustrates the fact that Beaverdam Baptist Church pressured its male members to conform to certain expectations for leadership, regardless of family connections, wealth, or status. Neither the pastor nor some of the church's most noteworthy men could ultimately escape having to bow to the majority will of the church.[22]

In the fall of 1826, member Daniel Dupree informed the church's pastor, Isham Goss, that "a report was in circulation" that Goss had gotten drunk. In a November conference, the pastor made the entire membership aware of these rumors, and the church postponed the case for further investigation. The committee appointed to investigate reported at the next conference

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[21]The slaveholdings of both the accuser and the accused could only be determined in one case prior to 1826. The accuser owned five slaves while the accused owned only one. However, not only is that a relatively small disparity of wealth, one case is not enough to draw a firm conclusion that class was a factor in church discipline during the early antebellum period. The church's members originally owned few slaves, so class only played a minor role in disciplinary hearings until disparities of wealth increased during the late 1820s and early 1830s. See Appendix, Table 1.

[22]For examples of discipline committees composed of men with various levels of wealth, see Minutes, 16 August 1834, 18 September 1834, 17 September 1836 – 17 December 1836, 18 March 1837 – 17 June 1837.

that there was no proof to substantiate the rumor about the pastor, but some of the members still felt certain that Isham Goss was guilty of the charge and needed to "lay down his gift" of preaching. Goss never explicitly admitted to the offense, but he did apologize "for any thing that he might have done or said to wound the good Cause of God or any of his Brethren." A majority of the members appear to have been satisfied both with Goss's display of humility and the lack of evidence to convict him, because the church voted to retain him as its pastor.[23]

At the following month's conference, Daniel Dupree stood up and stated to the church that he was still "dissatisfied." The church's decision to keep its pastor did not sit well with Dupree, and several "Expressions of Brother Goss" since the last conference caused him to question whether or not the church had acted rightly in the case. Dupree's concerns provoked another small investigation into the matter, but most of the members remained content with the prior ruling on the pastor's charge. The church concluded that the decision it had made in November would stand.[24]

In May of 1827, Goss finally revealed to the church that he indeed had a tendency to drink too much. He accused himself of having "Drank to Excess at least so far as to wound the good Cause of God and to bring distress upon his own Soul." He expressed that he was "truly Sorry" for the offense, and he begged for "prayers and forgiveness." Goss had already asked the church to dismiss him as pastor, but it is unclear whether or not his drinking had anything to do with it. This request may have been due to a number of factors. There had been times in his ministry when Goss felt as if the congregation was not very supportive of him. He also may have provided leadership for other churches in addition to this one, which could have limited his

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[23]Ibid., 18 November 1826, 24 November 1826.

[24]Minutes, 15 December 1826.

time and availability. Nevertheless, his membership still lay with Beaverdam Baptist, so Goss continued to be responsible to the faith community for his conduct. Upon his confession, the church forgave him for intemperance and allowed him to remain a member.[25]

Despite the church's willingness to patiently handle its former pastor, Isham Goss still had a hard time staying away from the bottle. In November 1827, he rose and alerted the church that more alcohol-related gossip about him had been floating around the community. It was rumored that Goss recently had been drunk at Palmer's Store, and that during his stupor he was "Cheated out of a good Horse and could not conveniently get Home." The rumors also alleged that Goss's intemperance accounted for his recent poor attendance, as well as the church's failure to appoint him as a messenger to the October meeting of the Sarepta Association. The clerk wrote in the minutes that Goss "does not think that he…has given occasion for such reports." Nevertheless, the former pastor admitted that "in his affliction he may have done things that might wound the good cause of God and the feelings of his brethren." If so, Goss said, he "begs their forgiveness [and] craves their prayers."[26]

This time the church responded more emphatically. Not only was Goss a repeat offender in the disciplinary hearings, he was also an ordained minister who had committed a moral violation threatening to damage the church's reputation in the community. On top of that, Goss could not even remember whether or not he had committed the alleged offense, so he was unable to offer a humble apology. The church put together a committee of ten people to investigate the

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[25]Minutes, 17 August 1816, 17 February 1827, 17 March 1827, 19 May 1827. In August 1816, Goss threatened to resign as pastor from the church for several reasons. He felt inadequate for the task and wondered whether or not his ministry efforts were being blessed by God. When he also expressed that the church did not seem "satisfyed with his labour," both the membership and the larger attending congregation affirmed their support for Goss with a unanimous vote of approval. Goss may have been serving as pastor for other congregations, as well, even though his membership appeared to reside at Beaverdam Baptist Church. In Adiel Sherwood's entry into his memoir for 26 June 1819, Goss is mentioned as the pastor of Trail Creek Church. See Julia L. Sherwood, *Memoir of Adiel Sherwood, D.D.* (Philadelphia, PA: Grant and Faires, 1884), 130.

[26]Minutes, 17 November 1827.

matter, and the former pastor was required to give up preaching until the case was closed. Two months passed without any resolution. The church's records do not reveal why the church was taking so long to make a decision, but the membership eventually decided that other Baptist leaders should be called on to help resolve the case.[27]

Finally, in two more special meetings in February 1828, men from five area churches joined the membership of Beaverdam Baptist Church to deliberate further on Goss's case. After all of the relevant minutes since November 1826 were read to those attending, six of the church's men, which included Daniel Dupree, Cary Johnson, Luke Johnson, and two more male members of the Johnson family, admitted that they had seen Goss drunk on several occasions prior to the initial charge against their pastor in 1826. A number of these men also confessed that they had witnessed Goss drink excessively since that date. Since some of these men appear to have been on the original committee appointed to investigate the case, it seems that they conspired to protect the reputation of both Goss and the church when they met with him in his home in 1826. In that first meeting, they had given Goss a certificate "certifiing that there was no proof against him to establish the reports" that he had been drunk.[28]

Just as the church started to discover the apparent conspiracy, most of the members of the original committee acknowledged that they had "acted unfaithful with Brother Goss" in the pastor's initial intemperance cases. Although Daniel Dupree had earlier expressed his reservations about the church's decision on Goss's 1826 case, he was not automatically absolved from having to acknowledge his part in letting his pastor get off too easily. Likewise, two members of the prominent Johnson family, Cary and Luke Johnson, also had to confess that they

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[27]Minutes, 17 November 1827, 20 November 1827, 19 January 1828.

[28]Ibid., 14 February 1828, 15 February 1828.

had acted "unfaithfully" in the matter. The church forgave the members of the initial investigating committee in its customary fashion, but this time only after a considerable amount of discussion.[29]

As for Isham Goss, the church decided that his "repeated habits of intemperance" had been the "cause of his Insanity," and that he was not well enough to be dealt with at that time. Goss was instructed not to preach again until he was "restored to his right mind" and was able to "give Satisfaction for his past conduct." The church appointed another committee to "labour" with Rev. Goss, but none of the men who had confessed to mishandling the pastor's case in 1826 served on it. The committee's instructions were to report back to the membership when Goss had sobered up enough to realize exactly how he had offended the church. The pastor was sufficiently sober by the following month, but he still failed to acknowledge the offense. The members had no choice but to exclude him.[30]

The church's actions against both its pastor and the original committee that conspired to save his reputation reveal that the membership still expected its male leaders to meet certain expectations. The men were required to submit to the democratic authority of the church, regardless of their stature as members. Isham Goss's case also supports the observation that discipline at Beaverdam Baptist Church had become almost entirely a male ritual by the late 1820s. The new religious environment of the upper Piedmont reinforced the congregation's desire to become a respectable, southern institution whose reputation in the community rested on the conduct and commitment of its male leadership. The church merely responded to their new

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., 15 February 1828, 15 March 1828.

social context through the religious medium that had always been designed to protect a Baptist fellowship's reputation – church discipline.

Some historians have argued that the offenses alleged against men in antebellum discipline cases were relatively minor, while women tended to face more serious charges like adultery and fornication. These scholars also maintain that churches exhibited a double standard in the way they disciplined sexual offenses.[31] At Beaverdam, however, female members of the church only faced charges of sexual violations five times in a forty-five year period. Male cases, on the other hand, almost doubled that number, with men appearing before the church's court eight different times on allegations of sexual impropriety. The charges leveled against women certainly represent a higher percentage of the total female disciplinary cases, but they also represent a rather low percentage of the total female membership. The church accused almost 5 percent of its men for these kinds of violations between 1814 and 1860. Meanwhile, less than 3 percent of women faced similar allegations during the same period. In other words, if Beaverdam Baptist Church exhibited a tendency toward a sexual double standard, the rod of discipline fell more heavily on men.[32]

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[31]Jean Friedman found that 44 percent of the female cases in her sample were sexual offenses. Her findings are supported by several other historians who also claim that southern churches exhibited a double standard when they prosecuted cases involving sexual improprieties. See Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden*, 14-15; Bode, "A Common Sphere," 799; Lindman, "A World of Baptists," 210, 221-222; Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, 189.

[32]Eight out of approximately 164 male members faced charges for sexual offenses. However, while the church had roughly 286 women on its membership rolls, it only heard five cases related to their sexual misconduct. All of these figures include four cases that had vague references to "lewd conduct" or "unpleasant reports," but these anomalous instances do not skew the numbers because men and women both had two of these kinds of cases. It is significant to note that neither Gregory Wills nor Randy Sparks found evidence of a sexual double standard, either. Wills claims that Georgia Baptist churches "achieved parity" when they disciplined men and women for sexual improprieties. In his study of Mississippi churches, Randy Sparks argues that "evangelicals were as ready to exclude men as women for sexual offenses." What these two historians did not acknowledge, however, was that when Baptists heard roughly the same number of sexual offense cases for both men and women, it meant that men were more vulnerable to charges of this nature since there generally were far fewer men than women in southern churches. See Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 65; Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks*, 162.

The church came closer to exhibiting a double standard in its prosecution of cases involving the sexual offenses of slave members. The church continued to deal with few slave disciplinary issues, but male slave cases increased from two to nine in the period between 1826 and 1835. Four of these cases involved sexual violations. That means that 10 percent of the church's entire male slave membership in the antebellum period faced allegations related to sexual misconduct. This finding differs from the claims of some historians, who found that churches were more likely to accuse its female slaves of sexual offenses.[33] At Beaverdam, 20 percent of the total number of cases involving female slaves dealt with some sort of sexual impropriety. However, the church disciplined slave women so infrequently that such a seemingly large percentage only represents one case out of a small total of five. Only one of the fifty female slaves who joined the church during the antebellum period faced such charges. Since this figure equals only 2 percent of their population at the church, they were the least likely group to endure allegations related to sexual offenses. The church's male members, regardless of race, were more vulnerable to these kinds of charges.

Southern churchgoers enforced their marriage values strictly, and they tried to apply the same standards to both free and slave members. According to Donald Mathews, "In the evangelical view, the disruption of family life was by far the greatest threat to community order." Consequently, churches took sexual offenses seriously, and they appear to have been the only charges that could earn exclusion regardless of a person's willingness to confess and show remorse. The institution of slavery did not make it easy for many slaves to fulfill their marriage commitments, since they could be sold off and moved away without the consent of their husband or wife. Many in the slave community also maintained different sexual standards than white

[33]Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, 188.

evangelicals, deriving their values both from traditional West African morality and the conditions they found in the South's slave culture. Some southern churches struggled to accommodate their marriage expectations to the complexities of the slave system, but Beaverdam Baptist Church appears to have applied the same marriage and sexual standards to all of its members. There is no significant variation in the way free and slave offenders were treated after the discovery of sexual violations, but the church disproportionately targeted men, particularly slave men, for these kinds of charges.[34]

Even though the church's bondmen faced more charges of sexual immorality than any other group, the slaves brought the accusations against themselves in two of the four cases. In 1828, a slave named Arch stood up in church conference and confessed that "it had been reported that he was guilty of the sin of adultery." Seven years later, in 1835, a "Black Brother" named Sam also admitted he had committed a sexual "Transgression." The church later discovered his sin was adultery, too. In both cases, a committee of white male leaders were appointed to investigate the self-accusations. Both slaves were found guilty and excluded from membership privileges. There is no evidence that Baptist slaves were ever coerced by southern masters into confessing their sins before the church, so the relatively small number of slave cases and the willingness of male slaves to bring accusations against themselves further complicates the argument that discipline primarily served as a means of social control, even in the cases of slave sexual violations.[35]

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[34]Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 44. Donald Mathews also observes that southern evangelicals displayed a "stern" commitment to "responsible behavior" between the sexes, and that they especially monitored the sexual abuse of women. See idem, 107; For information regarding the sexual and marriage standards churches applied to their slave members, see Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, 183-190; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 183-187.

[35]Minutes, 1 August 1828 – 5 September 1828, 17 July 1835 – 15 August 1835.

At Beaverdam Baptist Church, discipline largely became an arena where white males monitored the moral and religious behavior of each other. These men both dominated the disciplinary proceedings and were the members most vulnerable to allegations. That fact only became truer as the antebellum years progressed. The church hoped to maintain both purity and peace through discipline, but it began regarding the actions of its white males as the primary indicators of whether or not it had achieved those values.

It is not coincidental that male cases skyrocketed when both the congregation at Beaverdam and a number of churches in Georgia's upper Piedmont region experienced tremendous growth, ushering in a new era of evangelical authority in the region. The church quickly formalized its institutional procedures and set up an attendance requirement that only valued the participation of free males in conferences. The congregation's religious character increasingly relied on the extent to which its free male membership fulfilled their moral and ecclesiastical obligations. Eventually, however, even cases against white males began to decline, as the state of the local church itself became less important to the faith and practice of southern evangelicals. At Beaverdam Baptist Church, that trend began when the Johnson family left the fellowship.

CHAPTER 3

KINSHIP AND THE DECLINE OF DISCIPLINE

When Cary Johnson brought charges against his neighbor, Henry Allen, on August 15, 1835, he had no idea that the case would eventually backfire on him and his adult sons. Henry Allen privately had accused Johnson of shearing some of his sheep, and thereby stealing his wool, but he may never have intended for the case to go public. However, Johnson always alerted the church to potential problems between its members, and he had every intention of allowing the membership to resolve this one, as well. He probably thought he would have the upper hand if the dispute ever came before the church, since the Johnson family had earned the community's respect and provided a considerable degree of leadership over the years. By the time it was all over, the church's rulings ended up weakening the influence of the Johnsons over disciplinary hearings and starting the ritual's decline at Beaverdam Baptist Church.[1]

In the late antebellum period, the church stopped disciplining its members with the same level of vigilance. From 1815 to 1835, Beaverdam Baptist Church handled eighty-seven cases in its conferences. During the next twenty-four years that number would drop by almost half, with only forty-six cases coming before the church. Churches all over the South experienced a similar decline in discipline around the same time. Disciplinary proceedings briefly revived in the 1870s, and they did not completely disappear in the southern states until the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the roots of the religious ritual's demise reach back into the antebellum period. In

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[1]Minutes, 15 August 1835.

the church at Beaverdam, discipline numbers did not begin to fall significantly until a number of the Johnsons left the fellowship, but the neglect of discipline can also be attributed to complex theological, ecclesiological, and cultural changes that were transforming southern, evangelical churches and the environment with which they interacted.[2]

The nineteenth-century decline of church discipline has remained somewhat of a mystery to historians. Each Baptist church was responsible for handling issues involving its own members, so individual believers in a variety of locations decided to stop accusing each other at roughly the same time. No mass movements urged an end to the practice. In fact, many ministers bemoaned the decline and pleaded through denominational newspapers and association circular letters to remain attentive and vigilant in condemning moral improprieties through the formal channels of the churches. The occasional pleas did not help much. Gregory Wills observes that discipline "simply faded away, as if Baptists had grown weary of holding one another accountable."[3]

Few historians have ventured to account for the decreasing use of the ritual, and explanations by those who have tried do not quite fit the historical realities of Beaverdam Baptist Church. For instance, Christine Heyrman argues that white discipline cases disappeared because evangelicals were becoming less and less willing to interfere in the domestic affairs of others, particularly as southerners sought a foundation for the defense of slavery in the privacy and sanctity of households headed by white males. Sexual and domestic violence cases were the first

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[2]Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 117; Randy Sparks argues that the decline of discipline in Mississippi churches started as early as 1820. See Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks*, 151.

[3]Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 9.

ones to go, as churches concentrated their efforts primarily on the more public violations of white men.[4]

Black church members, Heyrman points out, "did not enjoy the same reprieve." Instead, evangelicals continued to monitor both the private and public behavior of slave members, and these efforts kept discipline alive longer than it might have survived otherwise. Randy Sparks makes a similar observation regarding the discipline of slaves. While Sparks observes that the procedures of church trials were rather democratic in nature, he also says that "discipline…was a useful tool in the maintenance of a closer 'watchcare'" over a church's slave members. "It is no coincidence," Sparks speculates, "that cases of discipline dropped dramatically after blacks left the biracial churches during the Reconstruction period."[5]

There is little evidence at Beaverdam Baptist Church to support the claim that evangelicals grew to fear intruding into each other's households. The sexual offenses appearing before the church certainly do not bear out that conclusion. While the members of Beaverdam Baptist heard more cases involving the public misdeeds of its male members than any other kind, they also were willing throughout the antebellum period to exclude men for sexual improprieties. The church excluded two white men and two white women for sexual offenses long after it had stopped disciplining its slave members. Furthermore, if any group enjoyed a "reprieve" from the ritual, it was slaves. The church dramatically slowed down its discipline of whites after 1835, but cases involving blacks dropped from the records altogether. Slaves continued to join

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[4]Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 149, 249-250.

[5]Ibid., 250, 301n57; Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks*, 151.

Beaverdam Baptist Church throughout the antebellum period, and a few applied for restoration in the late 1830s. However, after 1835 not a single slave faced charges in the church's court.[6]

One could argue that slaves were considered part of the southern household, and therefore their declining discipline rates reflected a certain hesitation to interfere into the domestic affairs of white heads of households. Heyrman does not make her argument that way, however, and even if she did, there is no evidence that the church simply began to shy away from discipline as a result of the social strength of its white members. In fact, while the total number of male discipline cases declined in the twenty-four years leading up to the Civil War, the church actually excluded a larger percentage of those men than in the period between 1814 and 1835. That is not the behavior of a church that is scared to discipline its most important members. The church had no intention of dropping its religious ritual out of fear that some of its white heads of households might get upset.[7]

Randy Sparks offers another argument for the decline of discipline that does not match the experience of church members at Beaverdam. He believes discipline's most dramatic decline came when slaves left biracial southern churches after the Civil War, but he also argues that evangelicals started disciplining less when they moved further away from congregational ministry. Since churches frequently used discipline against their ministers, Sparks explains that a new generation of "modernist" pastors wanted disciplinary authority placed in the hands of state synods, conferences, or associations, where proceedings could be monitored by the clergy.

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[6]The last time a slave faced charges in the church's court was in a case that lasted between 17 July 1835 and 15 August 1835. See Minutes for this period.

[7]Minutes, 18 November 1837 – 16 December 1837, 17 June 1842, 12 July 1851 – 9 August 1851; The church excluded 30.2 percent (16/53) of white men facing accusations between 1814 and 1835, but it excluded 46.2 percent (12/26) of the white men who were charged with offenses between 1836 and 1860. These calculations were made after restoration cases were removed from the total number of discipline cases involving white men.

These modernist ministers were less willing than their "traditionalist" forerunners for the laity to hold the power of conducting disciplinary proceedings.[8]

Sparks provides little evidence for his theory, and while the argument may be plausible for the more hierarchical Methodists and Presbyterians, the nature of Baptist discipline at Beaverdam and across the South does not support it. Any member could stand up and bring accusations against another individual in the church. Ministers often acted as moderators in Baptist church conferences, but Beaverdam's pastors showed little enthusiasm for initiating cases themselves. Only once did a pastor at Beaverdam bring charges against another member, and that case came as late as 1851. In fact, there were many occasions when one of Beaverdam's pastors, George Lumpkin, did not even attend conference. The church was very patient with him, so he may have given a good reason for most of his absences. The church eventually sent a disciplinary committee after him, however, and Lumpkin's failure to attend apparently provoked Luke Johnson to request in May 1828 that the church choose a different pastor. When Lumpkin finally showed up, Johnson rescinded his motion. The persuasive influence of Baptist pastors was considerable, but they did not control disciplinary hearings at Beaverdam Baptist Church. They also never joined any large movement to kill the ritual or wrestle control of it from the local churches. A power grab by the clergy does not explain discipline's decline either in the church at Beaverdam or in most Baptist fellowships.[9]

Besides, in 1836 the church became Primitive Baptist, aligning itself with a number of congregations that decried any perceived loss of lay authority. The Sarepta Association had decided in 1835 to join an even larger Baptist body, the Georgia Baptist Convention, through

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[8]Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks*, 151.

[9]Minutes, 20 July - 13 September 1833, 15 February 1834, 17 May - 14 June 1834, July 1834, February – 16 April 1836, 19 May – June 1838, 18 January 1851. George Lumpkin became the church's pastor on 2 January 1829.

which it would funnel contributions "for Missionary or other Benevolent purposes." Beaverdam and several other churches opposed the decision to no avail. The following year, Beaverdam's Rev. George Lumpkin and deacon James O'Kelley joined representatives from four other congregations in a formal protest. Fearing the loss of their local autonomy to a larger religious authority, they argued that when the Sarepta Association chose to join the state convention she "transcended her delegated powers" and "infringed upon the liberty or internal rights" of the member churches that opposed the idea. The protest warned that the Georgia Baptist Convention had been founded "upon anti Republican principals and may someday be the overthrow of our denomination." Consequently, Beaverdam Baptist Church refused any longer to be a member of the Sarepta Association, and it joined with other protesting churches to form a new fellowship called the Oconee Association.[10]

When the Baptists at Beaverdam cut their ties to the Sarepta Association, they became one of many churches across the nation whose collective protests in the antebellum period led historians to call them Anti-missionists. They called themselves "Primitive" or "Old Order" Baptists because they believed their values and organizational traits resembled those of the original apostolic churches. Doctrinal deviation was their primary complaint against the Baptist mainstream. Primitive congregations held firm to Calvinist views that salvation lay entirely in the hands of God. Consequently, they charged "Missionary Baptists" with supporting Arminian ideas that placed too much emphasis on the ability of human effort to accomplish salvation, and the evidence for their charge lay in the extent to which many churches were growing more and

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[10]Sarepta Association, 1835, 1836; James O'Kelley had been the church's deacon since 18 July 1829. The church also licensed him to preach from its pulpit, declaring on 19 April 1828 that he was "set at Liberty to exercise in any religious Way he may Be impressd with as a duty in the Bound of this Church." See Minutes, 19 April 1828, 18 July 1829.

more willing to fund the activities of state and national denominational agencies, Bible and tract societies, Sunday schools, and theological seminaries. Adhering to a strict Biblicism, Primitive Baptists could find no evidence for these organizations in the Bible, so they found no need for them. They defended the local church as the only evangelical institution God had deemed necessary.[11]

Anti-missionists like those at Beaverdam resented appeals for money from pompous, educated clergymen who controlled the denominational agencies supporting missionary and reform enterprises. Primitive Baptist churches remained skeptical of people or institutions that threatened to supplant the authority of the local church. They chided the laity for not watching their pastors carefully enough, charging that many church members "were worshiping their preachers instead of the God of Israel." Eventually, these admired preachers became "rulers or Lords over God's heritage." When they begged "like greedy dogs" for financial support to keep the efforts of their "unscriptural institutions" alive, members felt obligated to give them money in order to keep the peace. Primitive Baptists defended congregational autonomy and the right of each church to oversee the moral and religious decisions of its members. That meant refusing to participate, or even associate, with ministers and other believers whose religious aspirations led them to support para-church organizations. Primitive Baptists' protective posture over congregational authority made believers like those at Beaverdam unlikely candidates for being controlled by the clergy, and there is no evidence that the decline of discipline in the church was initiated by its ministers.[12]

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[11]For the emergence of anti-missionism in southern churches, see John G. Crowley's *Primitive Baptists of the Wiregrass South* and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "The Antimission Movement in the Jacksonian South: A Study in Regional Folk Culture," *Journal of Southern History* 36 (1970): 501-529.

[12]Oconee Association, "Circular Letter," 1842.

Historian Gregory Wills offers the most comprehensive explanation for the diminishing numbers of Baptist discipline cases over the course of the nineteenth century. However, while he admits that Baptists began hearing less cases in the 1840s, he concentrates his explanation and his evidence on the slumping discipline numbers of the postbellum years. According to Wills, city congregations bore most of the responsibility for discipline's demise. He argues that hearings became a hassle in the larger churches, where budget concerns and the stresses of growing pains eventually replaced disciplinary proceedings as the primary focus of church conferences. Churches hesitated to accuse prominent members, because these cases kept the pot stirred and often took a long time to resolve. Postbellum city churches also balked at accusing younger members of pursuing the pleasures of dancing and other forms of worldly entertainment, since this demographic added the most growth to southern congregations in the late nineteenth century. Country churchgoers, who simultaneously resented and admired the wealthier, educated clergy of the town setting, followed the lead of urban congregations in disciplining their members less and less often.[13]

Wills contends that as the twentieth century approached, many Baptists also fell under the influence of an "individualism and subjectivism" that reflected itself in a new emphasis on Baptist "distinctives." By highlighting certain doctrines like believer's baptism by immersion and soul liberty as historic Baptist principles, church leaders espoused "toleration as an ecclesiastical virtue" and further undermined the confidence that originally gave believers the authority to hold each other accountable for their actions. According to Wills, this individualism

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[13]Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 117, 119-120, 121-127, 127-131.

worked in tandem with the lax discipline of city churches to erode the practice of the religious ritual all over the South.[14]

Wills's evidence for the impact of these factors on church trials comes almost entirely from the late nineteenth century, and very little of it applies to the rural, isolated context in which Beaverdam's members disciplined one another. The church at Beaverdam even cut off its fellowship with most of the urban congregations in the area when it left the Sarepta Association in 1836. However, at least one trend that he observes may help account for the initial drop in disciplinary cases prior to the Civil War. According to Wills, "moral progress" began to characterize evangelicals' new ecclesiastical vision, and congregations consciously aimed to expand their influence in the late antebellum era to effect the moral reformation of the entire social order. He makes no significant distinction between rural and urban churches when he explains the impact of this new religious agenda. The desire to reform society affected congregations in both locales, and churches across the South increasingly advocated legislation that served their interests, such as temperance and Sabbatarian reform.[15]

This broader, evangelical vision also required a different kind of church. Over time, the desire for an "efficient," "activist" church supplanted Baptists' concern for maintaining morally pure faith communities. Wills observes that churches eventually established standing committees, changed the way they handled money, and aimed to provide social and recreational activities for their members. Meanwhile, fewer Baptists faced charges for moral and religious violations. Discipline receded in the face of these new priorities. "The more evangelicals

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[14]Ibid., 137. Beth Barton Schweiger also observed a new religious mentality emerging in the antebellum era that tied evangelical morality to social progress and improvement, but she does not connect it explicitly to the decline of discipline. See Beth Barton Schweiger, *Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[15]Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 10, 131-134.

purified the society," Wills explains, "the less they felt the urgency of a discipline that separated the church from the world."[16]

There is truth to Wills's claim that evangelicals gradually broadened their interests. Many southern churchgoers hoped the standards of Christian fellowship could extend beyond the walls of the meeting houses to include the whole of southern society. Their expanded vision was encouraged, at least in part, by their burgeoning numbers and experience with denomination building. Christine Heyrman estimates that in 1790 less than 15 percent of whites and less than 4 percent of blacks over age sixteen shared membership together in southern Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian congregations. By 1835, that number had climbed to more than 25 percent of whites and almost 12 percent of blacks. Even more southerners attended these churches without ever joining. Using contemporary accounts of church attendance, Heyrman guesses that almost 66 percent of whites and 28 percent of blacks could claim to be an "adherent" of a southern evangelical church by 1835. In Georgia, churches experienced conversion throughout the early antebellum period, but their numbers increased dramatically after the revivals of the late 1820s.[17]

New institutional structures accompanied the growing number of churches, providing them with avenues for advice, instruction, fellowship, and cooperative religious efforts. Baptists had established no less than 125 associations by 1814, and Methodists and Presbyterians were constructing denominational hierarchies, as well. Many of these organizations pooled their money and resources to fund a variety of benevolence and reform efforts. By 1828, for instance, the Presbyterian synod of Georgia and South Carolina had decided to raise funds for a seminary

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[16]Ibid., 131-134. John Lee Eighmy concludes similarly, suggesting that Baptists were "not content with trying to order the lives of their own members." Therefore, they "sought to control the morals of the whole community." See Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 48.

[17]See Tables VI and VII in Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 265; Black, "Learning the Language of Canaan," 55.

in the town of Lexington, Georgia. The school held classes there for two years, before it eventually moved to Columbia, South Carolina. However, a number of new academies popped up in Oglethorpe County around the same time. Temperance reform also found support among evangelicals in the upper Piedmont, as interest in it swelled across Georgia during the 1820s. In 1829, churchgoers in Lexington worked together in an ecumenical effort to form the Oglethorpe County Temperance Society. For evangelicals in the South, cultural influence came by way of institutional effectiveness and numerical strength. Their membership figures not only made denominations wealthier and able to tackle larger objectives, they also made churchgoers the caretakers of the southern social order. Sermons fell on more and more listening ears, and as ministers aligned the interests of the church with the agendas of an emerging southern nationalism, the religious and moral values of evangelicals became entangled with state, regional, and national loyalties.[18]

For churchgoers in Oglethorpe County, improvements in transportation and communication may have contributed to their new custodial posture over the faith and morality of their region, as well. For most of the antebellum period, the county's citizens had a difficult time maintaining their roads. Transportation and communication over long distances required real effort. Consequently, the church at Beaverdam sat in a rather isolated farming community until the 1840s, when a spur from the new Georgia railroad connecting Athens to Augusta ran through the county. Mail also became more reliable at that point, since it could be carried by

[18]Shurden, *Associationalism*, 39; Mohr, "Oglethorpe County," 160-161, 168-170; Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 18. F.C. Smith records at least two other academies forming in the Cherokee Corner area of the county. One of these was a boarding school for girls named Bethlehem Academy.

rail. As the citizens of the upper Piedmont found it easier to make contact with the world away from their farms, their interests increasingly became tied to a larger market of goods and ideas.[19]

Wills rightly observes that the priorities of a majority of southern evangelicals, Baptists included, changed in the middle of the nineteenth century. The South's religious culture was different. Yet it is not readily apparent from his analysis how these changes affected the decline of discipline in Primitive Baptist Churches like the one at Beaverdam. Primitive Baptist leaders rejected the opportunity to influence larger southern society through the new initiatives espoused by many evangelicals. They remained firmly opposed to the broader social objectives of the congregations aiming to be what Wills would call "efficient" churches. There is no evidence that Beaverdam Primitive Baptist Church ever tried to emulate such efforts. They created no temperance society, Sunday school, or benevolence projects during the antebellum period. They required no significant degree of financial support from their members for anything other than the compensation of pastors, the printing of association minutes, and the maintenance of their meeting house.[20]

The social context, religious affiliations, membership trends, and attendance records of Beaverdam Baptist Church tell the congregation's own story about the falling number of discipline cases. In the early national period, church membership still separated believers from the world. New Christians were initiated into a family of faith distinctly different in its values and priorities from anything they knew outside the walls of the meeting house. Therefore, keeping a pure and peaceful fellowship mattered because the fellowship itself was so important

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[19]Mohr, "Oglethorpe County," 129; Jonathan M. Bryant, *How Curious a Land: Conflict and Change in Greene County, Georgia, 1850-1885* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 14-15; Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 8.

[20]Oconee Association, "Circular Letter," 1842.

to the South's evangelical minority. After the revivals of the late 1820s, however, the boundary between the church and the world started to fade. In conjunction with a trend that occurred across the South in the antebellum period, an increasing number of upper Piedmont citizens adopted the moral norms and values of evangelicalism. As Bertram Wyatt-Brown observes, "by the 1830s…religious precept, somewhat democratic in character, transformed the ideal of gentility."[21]

Baptists and other evangelical denominations began shifting their focus away from the simple maintenance of local church communities to the conversion and reformation of a much broader audience. Consequently, individual churches became less and less important to southern churchgoers. Those who needed to find their identity in religious affiliations could take pride in growing denominational umbrella organizations and the cooperative missionary and reform efforts they facilitated. Most churches were relegated to a lower status in the eyes of their members, becoming merely neighborhood expressions of larger, denominational institutions. Primitive Baptist leaders noticed these new trends, and they continually warned that scriptural neglect and doctrinal deviations espoused by the anti-Christian "Missionary" Baptists chipped away at God's most beloved institution – the local fellowship of believers. Yet they were powerless to stop the impulses of the South's new evangelical culture, even as it led to the devaluation of their own communities of faith, the relationships they nurtured, and their

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[21]Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 102. At least three historians believe the South's overwhelming adoption of evangelical values occurred at least a decade earlier. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese claim that "from at least 1820 to the [Civil] war southerners viewed Christianity as the moral foundation of their social system." John Boles agrees, asserting that by the 1820s "evangelical values and attitudes had become normative in what was considered respectable southern society." While these estimations might be true for other parts of the South, they are a little early for Georgia. It was not until the late 1820s that so many Georgians accepted the values of evangelicalism. See Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Religious Ideals of Southern Slave Society," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 70 no. 1 (1986): 16; John B. Boles, *The Irony of Southern Religion* (New York, NY: P. Lang, 1994), 34.

significance to the spiritual life of Primitive Baptist parishioners. Church discipline became the first casualty of the declining importance of the local church to the average believer.

Churchgoers did not simply drop their desire for purity and peaceful relationships. Evangelical faith always required that Christians reach for both of these objectives. However, evangelicals now expected to pursue and achieve them in a different location – among the members of their own families. Baptists and other southerners joined together in attaching a new importance to the household. As the South fortified itself in defense of slavery, it also began to solidify its own unique conceptions of how the family should work in a functioning republic. By the late 1830s, ministers and politicians looking for a broader base on which to support proslavery arguments began using new analogies that equated the inequalities of the slave system with that of marriage and family. A hierarchical understanding of the entire household order and the relations of its members eventually served as the firm foundation on which the South's slave system would stand. Participation in a democratic republic became inextricably tied to and reliant upon male authority over a household of dependents. As Peter Bardaglio and others have observed, a variation of southern republicanism emerged that was "based more on hierarchy and dependence than on egalitarianism and consent." This understanding of the organic relationship between the political structure of domestic and civic life enabled southerners to simultaneously uphold the otherwise mutually exclusive ideals of democratic politics and social elitism. It also gave the South more reason to elevate the household as the most important social unit.[22]

[22]Peter W. Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), xi-xii; Stephanie McCurry, "The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina," *The Journal of American History* 78 no. 4 (1992): 1252; Genovese and Fox-Genovese, "The Religious Ideals of Southern Slave Society," 1-16.

In keeping with the new importance attributed to the sanctity of the southern household, most evangelical clergymen argued louder than ever for the primary importance of the Christian family to the lives of believers. The resolutions and circular letters of the Sarepta Association reveal the new significance given to fireside devotionals among mainstream southern Baptists. In 1824, the association began recommending for the first time through its resolutions that "Daily worship be kept up by all heads of families," and it called these family devotionals a "duty" in 1842. The association urged that household heads "read, or cause to be read, the Scriptures in their families regularly," so that "children and Servants may be taught the word and will of God." A circular letter in 1846 again urged Baptists to pay more attention to their devotionals at home, since the family was the "nursery of the church." While evangelicals had always been interested in their objectives being supported by domestic prayer and devotional practices, Donald Mathews observed that the promotion of "family religion" was "transformed by the publishing revolution of the 1830s into a long and persistent public campaign." A stronger emphasis on the practice of faith in a domestic setting resulted in the southern household gaining a status among evangelicals that it had never had before.[23]

While the clergy still expected the churches to keep up their disciplinary practices, ministers began to believe that the achievement of peaceful, Christian lives resulted less from the maintenance of discipline in the church than from active benevolence and the good government of the household. "These are the most peaceful families," one minister argued on behalf of the Sarepta Association, "where every member has the whole time usefully occupied" in doing good. He wrote that churches should strive for peace the same way, since the most peaceful congregations are ones in which the "whole membership is absorbed in the blessed…unselfish

[23]Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 100; Sarepta Association, 1824; idem, "Circular Letter," 1842, 1846. See also Jesse Mercer, *The Christian Index*, "Family Religion," 21 October 1834.

work of doing good to others." One of the primary motivations for church discipline – the maintenance of peaceful fellowships of faith – disappeared as the church granted an ever greater degree of importance to the Christian family and its benevolent works. Of course, that was the proper order of things. After all, the family was "the foundation of every institution, social, civil, and religious."[24]

Primitive Baptist church leaders could feel the importance of their local faith communities eroding out from under them, giving way to denominational enterprises on the one hand and the Christian family on the other. The "Old Order" clergy in the Oconee Association reminded their congregations that "Christ has loved his own bride, the church, from everlasting." The ministers maintained that "the only religious institution or society authorized by the word of God in this wide world is the Gospel Church." God had declared only that body to be "the ground and pillar of the truth." One minister remarked that "the popular doctrine of the present age is, that God's ministers are called and sent under impressions mostly for the salvation of the world, while the church and its safety seems to be a matter of minor consideration." This minister warned against neglect of the church, calling on other pastors to remember to "feed the flock of God," since "the chief object of the primitive ministry was not the salvation of the world, but the glory of God, and the peace and safety of his church."[25]

Primitive Baptist leaders made it very clear that spiritual warfare characterized the relationship between Primitive and Missionary Baptists. Ironically, the divide they aimed to widen was not the gap between the church and the world anymore, but the one between true and

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[24]Sarepta Association, "Circular Letter," 1853, 1858; Donald Mathews first noticed the fact that churches started yielding the task of religious and moral oversight to the family. He even suggests that the importance of the church declined at the same time, musing that "whereas for Christians the analogue of heaven had once been the church, it now became the home." Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 100-101.

[25]Oconee Association, "Circular Letter," 1842, 1843, 1857.

false churches. Rev. D.W. Patman assured members of the Oconee Association that "other denominations differ in many things, yet they all agree in raising their united voice from the pulpit" against Primitive Baptists, calling them "close-fisted hardshells, uncharitable iron jackets, and almost every other contemptible name they can invent." He warned that "the whole host of anti-christ are now uniting all their forces" against the true church of Christ, which "stands aloof from the many new institutions and popular plans falsely benevolent." Although Primitives understood themselves to be members of the persecuted minority, church leaders still had to remind the faithful that "it is wrong and even treating the Lord with contempt, for one of his children to unite and partake with [Missionary Baptists] in their formal religious devotion." It is "much more wrong to have membership and communion with them," since concessions of this sort end up "encouraging them in their anti-christian course."[26]

The outsider status that Primitive Baptists promoted as their new identity in a world full of heretical evangelicals perhaps replaced, to some extent, the practice of discipline as the primary catalyst for identity formation. The community's conception of themselves did not depend as heavily on maintaining distinctive moral values from their surrounding culture. After all, respectable southern society had adopted the moral norms of evangelicalism, which undermined the need to continually use church discipline to distinguish the values of believers from those of their neighbors. Instead, Primitive Baptist leaders crystallized the identity and unity of their churches by asserting doctrinal correctness over and against Missionary Baptists and other evangelical groups that espoused more Arminian beliefs. "We believe we are the true church connected with all others of the same faith and order," declared the Oconee Association in 1842, and "the remainder of the professing world is the false church…for they all differ from

[26]Oconee Association, "Circular Letter," 1856, 1860.

us either in faith or practice." Since Primitive Baptists attended the only "true" faith communities, the Oconee Association even advised churches not to accept baptism in a Missionary Baptist congregation as valid.[27]

Theological distinctiveness supposedly characterized Primitive Baptist identity more than a unique moral code, so the church at Beaverdam began to pay a little more attention to the views of its new converts. On at least one occasion, the membership backed up its theological position by excluding a new member who was not in compliance with the stances of the rest of the faith community. George Farmer had probably attended the church for many years, but he finally "related his hope in Christ" in May 1849. Before the church could baptize him at the next meeting, he "expressed sentiments and views contrary to the faith of the Primitive Baptist Church of Christ." After "reasoning" with him and trying to "instruct him" that his beliefs were wrong, the church deferred his baptism with the hope that he would eventually come around. A committee of members visited George Farmer between conferences, but one of their number later reported that he had "seen and talked with brother Farmer [and] obtained no satisfaction." The church decided to "recind" its offer of membership, and it excluded Farmer from the fellowship.[28]

While they felt that Farmer needed to be excluded, the Baptists at Beaverdam usually found unity by assuming that everyone was in agreement on the most important matters. There is evidence that their identity as Primitive Baptists, or the "true church," only served to unify the members of Beaverdam when they neglected to patrol too heavily the theological border that separated their fellowship from those of Missionary Baptists. In a case involving the doctrines of

[27]Oconee Association, "Circular Letter," 1842, 1841.

[28]Minutes, 20 May 1849 - 15 September 1849.

the church's pastor, the church revealed that it ultimately was not willing to divide its Christian community over questions related to doctrinal heterodoxy.

In 1851, Rev. George Lumpkin accused one of the church's deacons, James O'Kelley, of having "circulated false reports against him." His initial charges revolved around a recent election campaign that O'Kelley had lost. Lumpkin had neglected to vote for O'Kelley, despite asking him to run for the seat of tax collector, and the pastor believed O'Kelley was paying him back for this slight by defaming his name among the rest of the community. The pastor counted on several other members of the church to support his testimony, but they all denied having heard O'Kelley say the things Lumpkin was accusing him of saying.

That did not deter the pastor, however, and he proceeded to bring more charges against the deacon, this time for allegedly spreading rumors about his theological positions. O'Kelley supposedly told another member of the church that Lumpkin "had departed from the faith of old School Baptist[s]." According to the pastor, the deacon said that his preaching "might do for missionary preaching but that it would not do for old School Baptist[s]." This time one other member of the church, Isham Cheatham, testified that he had witnessed O'Kelley make the comment, but confusion followed when other individuals questioned whether Cheatham had heard the comment correctly. O'Kelley never confessed to making the statements for which he was being charged, but he admitted that he had indeed heard Lumpkin say that he would soon join either the Missionary Baptists or the Methodists. The conference closed without resolving the matter, and the case was postponed to a later date.[29]

Rev. Lumpkin came to the next conference ready to debate. The clerk recorded that he took the moderator's seat without beginning the meeting in the usual way, and he immediately

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[29]Ibid., 18 January 1851 – 15 March 1851.

opened an investigation "on the Subject of instrumentality." Lumpkin began by arguing that "ministers of the Gospel [were] intermediate agents in quickening and saveing sinners." Some of the church's men countered that the entire salvation process was the work of God from beginning to end, and that ministers had no role in it. The debate continued until several members protested that the contest was unnecessary and out of order. The church eventually voted by a "large majority" to "Drop the subject and never mention it any more in the Church nor let the difference of opinion interfere with the fellowship of the Brethren." The pastor and six other members of the church, including three of the men's wives, requested letters of dismission, declaring that they no longer desired the church's fellowship. The church initially granted the letters, but it decided the following month to revoke them. Rev. Lumpkin and the other departing members formulated a letter of protest and submitted it, but their efforts were to no avail. He and his party were excluded from the membership rolls.[30]

When the church voted to shut down this 1851 debate before it was resolved, they revealed that certain values took precedence over the necessity of clarifying hair-splitting theological positions. Their willingness to drop a discussion that rested at the heart of the differences dividing Baptists revealed their desire to subordinate theological disagreements to the higher goal of maintaining a peaceful fellowship. Prior to its separation from the Sarepta Association, the church had not handled a single disciplinary case related to an individual's personal opinions about God, but correct theology still had not become the hill church members were willing to die on. That was especially true if theological debate stirred up significant controversy or threatened to divide the church. At that point heterodoxy had to be sacrificed in the interest of maintaining harmonious relationships. The church had once expected to arrive at

[30]Ibid., 19 April 1851 – 16 June 1851.

peace by expelling its impurities, but now it felt that peace could be better achieved by ignoring them.

Neither Primitive Baptists' theology nor their morality could halt the detrimental effect of the new evangelical religious culture on the will of the members at Beaverdam to discipline each other. In fact, churches appear to have been less diligent even in holding church meetings. Ministers noticed a trend of poor attendance in the late antebellum period, and they made appeals for members to come to church more often and stop neglecting the practice of discipline. Rev. D.W. Patman, who was Lumpkin's successor at Beaverdam, fretted in 1859 that "church members often neglect their regular meetings under pretence of not having time, or…on account of their poverty." Meanwhile, they "attend other public meetings for worldly,…[or] sporting purposes." When they fail to show up to church, it causes "distress [for] those who do assemble," and it "throw[s] a burden on their preacher." The following year, another minister commented on poor attendance in the Oconee Association's circular letter, letting his readers know that when ministers attend meetings faithfully and then leave to find church members "partaking with the riotous and drunken…or at home in close pursuit of worldly gain," such discoveries "interrupt the mutual enjoyment" of Christian fellowship for both clergy and laity.[31]

If the attendance records of the church at Beaverdam resemble that of other congregations in the years leading up to the Civil War, ministers had good reason to worry. Despite doubling their numbers in the 1820s and adding over thirty more believers in the late 1830s, Beaverdam's members slowly lost their desire to diligently hold conferences and carry out the fellowship's business.[32] When the church established attendance policies in their 1828

[31]Oconee Association, "Circular Letter," 1859, 1860.

[32]In addition to the revival of 1825, Beaverdam Baptist Church also had a smaller revival in 1838 that brought thirty-three new members into the church.

Rules of Decorum, they may have been hoping not only to protect the church's reputation by keeping its men in line, but also to counter a rising trend of poor attendance. Over time, discipline cases related to attendance disappeared like all the others.

The members of the church also stopped prioritizing conferences as they once did. When the weather was bad, meetings frequently were called off. Between 1815 and 1839, the clerk only recorded six occasions when the members did not meet for conference. From 1840 to 1860, at least thirty-three different meetings were cancelled for various reasons. Sometimes the church went for long periods of time without gathering. In 1841, five conferences were skipped. In the winter of 1859-1860, the membership did not meet to discuss church business for four consecutive months. The value of the local fellowship of faith waned in its importance to the members of Beaverdam Primitive Baptist Church, and their regard for the regular maintenance of the church family was reflected in their frequent unwillingness to attend conferences.[33]

While the church held fewer conferences, the greatest factor resulting in the decline of discipline was the departure of the congregation's most prominent family – the Johnsons. Although a few family members had asked for letters of dismission prior to 1835, the church never disciplined as heavily after a flurry of cases that year resulted in the departure of Cary Johnson and his sons. Cary Johnson alerted the church that he and Henry Allen had been feuding ever since Allen accused him of shearing sheep that did not belong to him. Henry Allen may never have intended to mention the dispute to the church, but in the discussion that followed Cary Johnson's accusations, Allen proceeded to enter a charge against Johnson's son, Burton. The nature of the charge against Burton Johnson is unclear in the minutes, but it appears that Allen accused him of deceiving the church in a matter related to his having been in Augusta,

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[33]Minutes, 17 January 1841, 19 March 1841, 17 April 1841, 17 July 1841, 18 December 1841, December 1859 – March 1860.

Georgia at some point. The church investigated both cases, and while it decided to retain Burton Johnson in its fellowship, it excluded Cary Johnson.[34]

The church thought the case was finished, but the Johnson family apparently still resented Henry Allen and held him responsible for Cary Johnson's exclusion. A year and a half later, in March of 1836, Henry Allen reported to the church that he had tried to talk to Reubin and Burton Johnson, Cary's two sons, but neither of the men were willing to speak to him. The church investigated the case and sent a committee to "labour" with Allen and the Johnson family in order to resolve their differences. In May of that year, the feud was still alive, and the church discussed the matter in their conference meeting. Henry Allen stated to the church that Reubin Johnson had accused him of "persecuting" his father Cary, and that the younger Johnson had said he wanted "nothing to do" with him. Allen then charged Reubin's brother, Burton Johnson, with stating that he had "no more fellowship for [Allen] than for a creek Indian." Burton admitted to making that statement, and confirmed that he still felt the same way. The church postponed a decision on the case again, hoping that the situation could be resolved outside of the meeting house. However, when the membership met for conference the following month, they discovered that Reubin and Burton Johnson no longer desired membership in the church. They asked to be excluded, and the church obliged them in their requests.[35]

The Johnson kinship network had wielded a heavy hand in disciplinary hearings during the 1830s. The church never simply complied with the family's wishes, but they respected the Johnsons' influence and appreciated their leadership efforts on behalf of the congregation. Consequently, offending the Johnson family could result in certain social repercussions that

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[34]Ibid., 15 August 1835 – 18 September 1835; Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 157.

[35]Minutes, 18 March 1837 – 17 June 1837; Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 157.

Henry Allen hoped to avoid. After the church had finished the disciplinary process that resulted in the exclusion of Cary Johnson and his sons, Allen felt somewhat responsible for the discord and hoped to maintain harmonious relationships with the kin that remained in the church. He never apologized for his various charges against the three excluded men, but he confessed his sorrow for having made at one point during the hearings a "Broad charge" against the Johnson family. By begging for the church's forgiveness, Allen reaffirmed his allegiance to the membership's authority. The church's vote to retain him in its fellowship rewarded his effort at trying to reestablish harmony and reconcile with the family he had offended. Allen remained in Beaverdam's fellowship for the time being, but the church would never hear the same volume of discipline cases after this series of trials.[36]

Cary Johnson and his sons were not the only members of their family who left the church. Most of the Johnsons' leading men were no longer members by 1840. Henry Johnson had asked for a letter of dismission in October 1836. Luke Johnson and his family moved to Texas shortly after leaving the church in September 1839. By 1852, at least seventeen members of Johnson households either had been dismissed or excluded. Their leaving signaled not only the end of the family's prominence in the church, but also a generational changing of the guard. The departure dates of twelve of the sixteen people who brought charges against another member between 1814 and 1860 could be identified in the church's records, and at least nine out of the twelve were no longer members by 1845.[37]

By the 1850s, much of the church's membership had never known a time when evangelicals comprised only a small minority of the southern population. They had never

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[36]Minutes, 17 June 1837.

[37]Ibid, October 1836, September 1839; Florrie Carter Smith, *The History of Oglethorpe County*, 154.

practiced their faith in a setting where their own moral standards differed significantly from those who did not attend church. Consequently, after the Johnson family and their generation of churchgoers left the congregation, the remaining members did not feel as inclined to distinguish their faith community from the surrounding culture by diligently disciplining moral and religious violations.

In conclusion, important theological and ecclesiological changes altered the religious objectives of many evangelicals during the antebellum period. Their rising numbers led them to imagine the possibility of making a larger impact on their culture. To some extent, new initiatives in pursuit of this goal worked. Increasing numbers of southerners subscribed to the values and norms of evangelical faith, even if they never formally joined a church. A result evangelicals never intended, however, was the changing importance of congregational life. As the lines marking the boundaries between the local fellowship of faith and the larger civic community faded, the significance of the individual congregation to the religious and social life of average believers declined. Evangelicals found their religious identity in larger denominational efforts, and church leaders turned the attention of their parishioners to the development of good Christian homes. Churchgoers did not depend so heavily on the fellowship of a single faith community, so keeping up a "godly Discipline" in a formal, ecclesiastical setting no longer mattered as much, either.

During the revivals of the late 1820s, the men of Beaverdam Baptist Church initially responded to their new religious environment by clarifying their membership expectations and keeping a closer eye on the church's male population. Eventually, a number of Baptist clergymen started to decry evangelicals' changing religious priorities. They also railed against the biblical hermeneutics supporting denominational enterprises that promoted missionary efforts

and benevolent reform. The church at Beaverdam joined the anti-mission movement that developed out of these complaints, partly in an effort to defend the primacy and autonomy of independent Baptist churches. Beaverdam's membership exhibited no desire to become an "efficient" church with programs and activities designed to persuade large audiences of the superiority of its values and beliefs. Yet "Old Order" Baptists and their ministers were powerless to stop either the impact of evangelicalism's new status in the South or the ecclesiological transformation that occurred with it.

The earlier generation that had kept discipline alive slowly left the church at Beaverdam over the course of the antebellum period. Their numbers included the Johnson family who had initiated most of the disciplinary cases during the 1830s. The next generation did not feel the same need to sustain the religious ritual. While the church still hoped to keep a peaceful and pure community of faith, these priorities became less essential as the significance of the neighborhood church to the average believer declined. Changes within the church, its denomination, and the entire culture of the South had diminished the importance of the local Baptist fellowship in the eyes of its members, and discipline became the first casualty of its new status.

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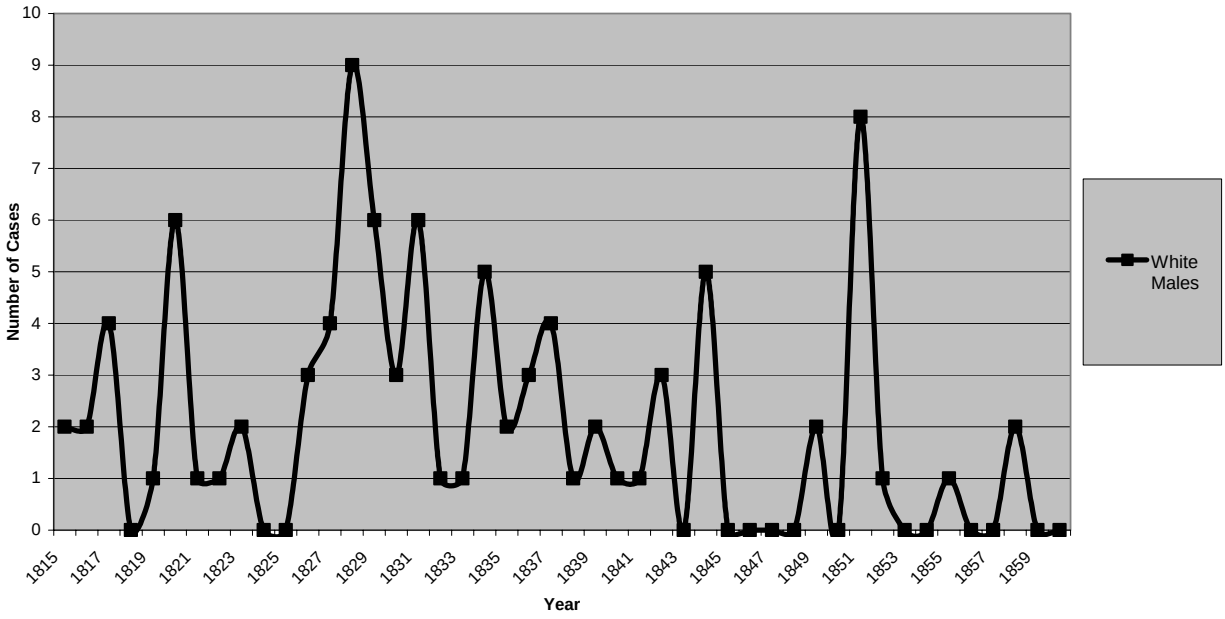
FIGURES

FIGURE 1

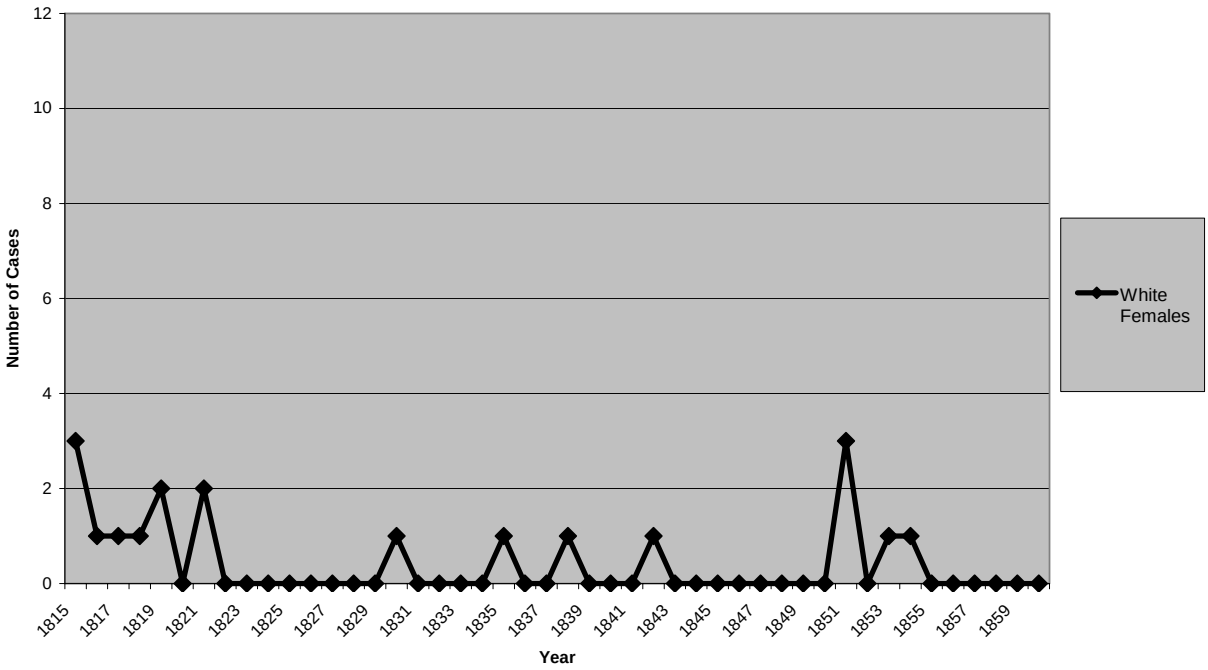
TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES INVOLVING WHITE MALES, 1815-1860
(BEAVERDAM PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH)



NOTE: These numbers include self-accusation and restoration cases, and each person that came before the church was counted as an individual case, even if the church disciplined more than one member at a time. The numbers were calculated from October of one year to September of the next. This method was applied in order to match the numbers with the statistics of the Sarepta and Oconee Associations, which were collected in October of every year. Most of the cases in 1851 represent a single dispute in which one white man was acquitted and four were excluded. Two more of the cases that year were closely related to the dispute, as well.

FIGURE 2

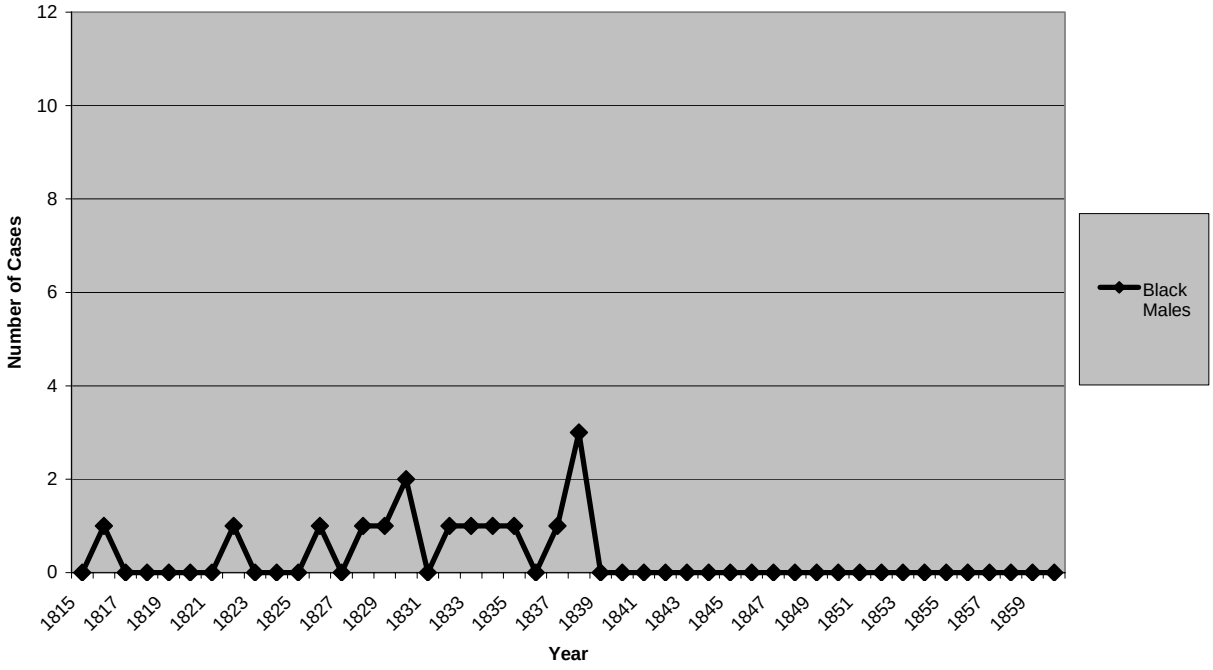
TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES INVOLVING WHITE FEMALES, 1815-1860
(BEAVERDAM PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH)



NOTE: These numbers include self-accusation and restoration cases, and each person that came before the church was counted as an individual case, even if the church disciplined more than one member at a time. The numbers were calculated from October of one year to September of the next. This method was applied in order to match the numbers with the statistics of the Sarepta and Oconee Associations, which were collected in October of every year. Most of the cases in 1851 represent a single dispute in which seven members were excluded at the same time. Three of these were white women. One of the women asked to be restored in 1853.

FIGURE 3

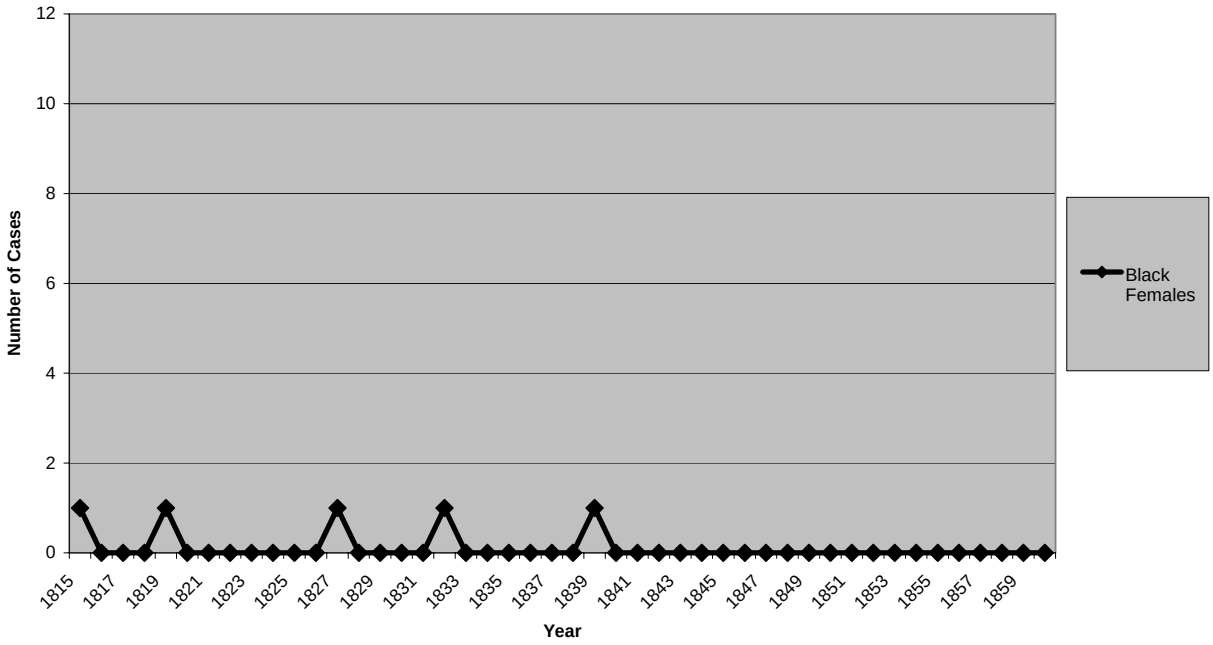
TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES INVOLVING BLACK MALES, 1815-1860
(BEAVERDAM PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH)



NOTE: These numbers include self-accusation and restoration cases, and all of the slave cases after 1835 were restorations. Each person that came before the church was counted as an individual case, even if the church disciplined more than one member at a time. The numbers were calculated from October of one year to September of the next. This method was applied in order to match the numbers with the statistics of the Sarepta and Oconee Associations, which were collected in October of every year.

FIGURE 4

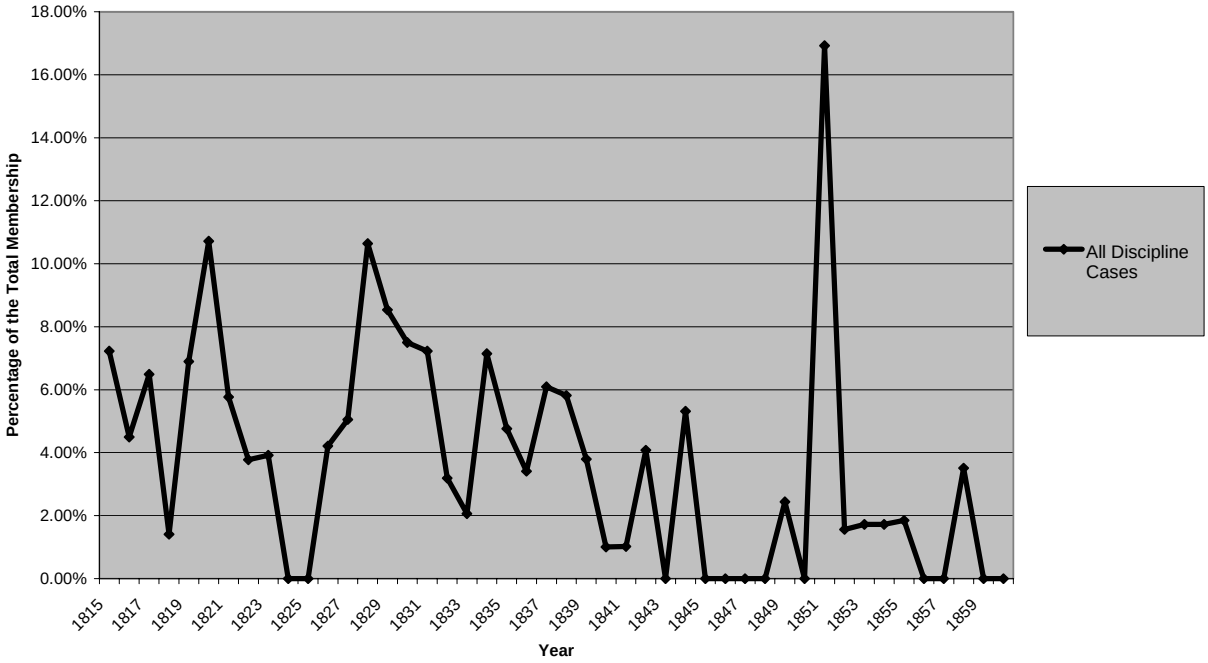
TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES INVOLVING BLACK FEMALES, 1850-1860
(BEAVERDAM PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH)



NOTE: These numbers include self-accusation and restoration cases, and all of the slave cases after 1835 were restorations. Each person that came before the church was counted as an individual case, even if the church disciplined more than one member at a time. The numbers were calculated from October of one year to September of the next. This method was applied in order to match the numbers with the statistics of the Sarepta and Oconee Associations, which were collected in October of every year.

FIGURE 5

PERCENTAGE OF MEMBERSHIP FACING CHURCH DISCIPLINE, 1815-1860
(BEAVERDAM PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH)



NOTE: These percentages include self-accusation and restoration cases. Each person that came before the church was counted as an individual case, even if the church disciplined more than one member at a time. The numbers were calculated from October of one year to September of the next. This method was applied in order to match the numbers with the statistics of the Sarepta and Oconee Associations, which were collected in October of every year. The high percentage in 1851 represents a single dispute in which seven church members were excluded and one was acquitted. Two more of the cases that year were closely related to the dispute, as well.

TABLES

TABLE 1

SLAVEHOLDING COMPARISONS BETWEEN
THE ACCUSERS AND THE ACCUSED, 1814-1860
(BEAVERDAM PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH)

Year	Accuser	Number of Slaves	Accused	Number of slaves
1819	Archer Norris	5 (1820)	James Burroughs	0 (1820)
1826	Cary Johnson	4 (1820)	William Gallaway	3 (1820)
1826	Daniel Dupree	17 (1820)	Isham Goss	7 (1820)
		27 (1830)		
1828	Cary Johnson	12 (1830)	William Briant	0 (1830)
1829	Daniel Dupree	27 (1830)	Isham Goss	7 (1820)
1829	Archibald Hart	1 (1830)	Josiah Clarke	1 (1830)
1831	Luke Johnson	14 (1830)	James Pinson	0 (1830)
1834	Cary Johnson	12 (1830)	Frederick Vernon	4 (1830)
1835	Cary Johnson	12 (1830)	Henry Allen	3 (1840)
		16 (1840)		
1851	George Lumpkins	52 (1840)	James O'Kelley	5 (1840)

Note: The dates in parentheses clarify the years that the individuals held that particular number of slaves.