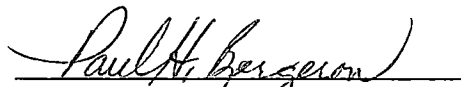
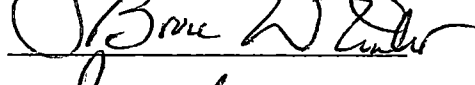


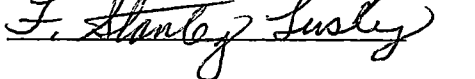
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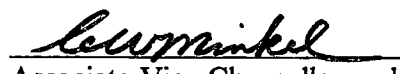

Paul H. Bergeron, Major Professor

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Associate Vice Chancellor and
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THE GENTLEMEN SABBATARIANS:
THE SABBATH MOVEMENT IN THE UPPER SOUTH, 1826-1836

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Forrest L. Marion
August 1998

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DEDICATION

To my family

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have incurred debts to a number of individuals and institutions for whom I would like to think this dissertation represents some small compensation for their investment in me: my parents, (the late) Professor Jerry and Dee Marion, who instilled in me the interests and values I still hold; Jim Haber, who twenty years ago showed me a passage in the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah respecting the Sabbath which, in God's providence, became the starting point for this dissertation; Colonel Joe Dettori (U.S. Army) and the Rev. Randall Yelverton, both of whom opened my eyes to the Reformed faith; Professor Dan Feller, who on the first evening of my only seminar class at the University of New Mexico mentioned something called "Sabbatarianism" from an era called "Jacksonian" and later encouraged my consideration of this topic; fellow University of Tennessee Jacksonian colleague Clint Clifft, who brought an important essay (by Richard John) to my attention which became the starting point for my own research; the Reverends Dave Howe and Tom Nash, and my father-in-law, Lieutenant Colonel (U.S. Army, Retired) Jim McCready, with whom I shared a number of encouraging and stimulating talks concerning the Sabbath; Professor Bruce Wheeler, who guided me during my early days at the University of Tennessee and later served on my dissertation committee; a seemingly indefatigable Professor Paul Bergeron, who took me on as one of several doctoral candidates and who since then has directed me through every step of the dissertation process with the utmost of scholarly expertise, judgment, and patience; Professors Stan Lusby and John Muldowny, both of whom helped me prepare for comprehensive exams and later served on my committee; Professor John Finger, who willingly joined my committee at a late date; the staffs of various archives and libraries, especially Ron Bryant of the Kentucky Historical Society; Bill Bynum and John Walker of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Department of History; Tim Duskin of the National Archives; and, Bill Smith of Union

Theological Seminary; the Virginia Military Institute and the University of Tennessee, both of whom provided research grants; several family members and friends, who rescued me on numerous occasions from the "electronic jamming" inherent in computer technology; Mark and Kathryn (nee Marion) Meyer, whose home in northern Virginia became my headquarters for many trips to Washington and Richmond; and my dear wife, April, and our precious children, Nathan Douglas, Timothy Lee, and Hannah Kim Mee, whose love and encouragement sustained me in this labor of love.

ABSTRACT

The Christian Sabbath constituted a pillar of American society from the colonial era through 1865. Yet its importance as an institution and its place in the context of the moral reform movements of the Jacksonian era have been neglected, especially in the South. Consequently, the perceived fundamental importance of the Sabbath to Christianity on the part of most evangelicals, and to the maintaining of peaceful, prosperous, and orderly communities on the part of both evangelicals and some non-evangelicals in the region, has been but dimly understood.

This study examines the Sabbath movement in the Upper South during the period 1826 to 1836. Chapter One examines the initial controversy resulting from the Postal Law of 1810 requiring Sabbath day labor by postal workers. This phase served as a precursor to the late 1820s and illustrates that greater continuity existed among Sabbatarian leaders than has been perceived. Chapter Two examines the late 1820s phase of the same controversy, focusing on the "Sabbath mails" reports of Richard M. Johnson. Johnson has been treated favorably by historians, in part because many of them have accepted the views of *Anti-sabbatarians* regarding Sabbatarians' intentions, assuming Sabbatarians to have been "coercive" or desirous of a "union between church and state." Chapter Three focuses on the Sabbath's role in the controversy between Calvinists and Campbellites in Kentucky. Whereas mainly Presbyterians and Calvinist Baptists petitioned Congress to halt Sabbath mails, the followers of Alexander Campbell were responsible for most of the state's Anti-sabbatarian sentiment. Chapters Four and Five examine the Sabbath in Virginia, where Presbyterian influence on behalf of the Sabbath was relatively strong and where the best example of a Southern Sabbath society existed during the period. Although Sabbath observance by whites was primarily a *moral-religious* concern, its observance was also a *social-economic* issue, especially as whites viewed its observance

by blacks. Chapter Six concludes that the Sabbath movement in the Upper South was moderate, even conservative, in nature, and that it witnessed the coinciding of moral-religious and social-economic priorities for a number of evangelicals, county justices of the peace ("gentlemen justices"), and some merchants and bankers.

PREFACE

A Wesleyan missionary, the Rev. James Buller, wrote of the Sabbath observance of the Maori people of New Zealand during the 1830s as follows:

The Sabbath with its worship, rest and joys was now observed by them. Before all days had been alike; now they 'Remembered the Sabbath Day to keep it holy'. They prepared for it on the Saturday: they took no journey but spent the day in public and private worship, and in reading the Word of God. . . . When they saw white men shooting, pig-hunting and travelling on the Lord's Day they enquired, what was the religion and who was the God of those white men.¹

Perhaps surprisingly, the remarks of this missionary to the Maori people regarding the observance of the Sabbath expressed a view identical to that which was held by many "Sabbatarians" in the Upper South, and throughout America. Whether in far-off New Zealand, the Bluegrass region of Kentucky, or the tobacco fields of the Old Dominion, many evangelicals would have been in perfect agreement with the Rev. Buller regarding the fundamental importance of the Sabbath to genuine Christianity. Furthermore, most evangelicals and even a number of non-evangelicals perceived the Sabbath as no less essential to the welfare of communities.²

This study grew out of a desire to research a topic relevant to the Reformed faith during the early years of the republic which other historians had neglected. Early Jacksonian era Sabbatarianism in the Upper South seemed to fit such criteria. To my

¹ Peter Best, "Sabbath Observance Among the Maori People of New Zealand," *Banner of Truth* 345 (1992): 21.

² During the early nineteenth century, the term "Sabbatarian" generally referred to one who observed the seventh day, or Saturday, as the Sabbath. In keeping with the convention of modern historians, I use the term to refer to those who observed the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath, or Lord's day.

knowledge, no study of Sabbatarianism during this period has emphasized the South. Even New England and the Middle Atlantic regions--where Sabbatarians were far more active--generally have been neglected. In fact, thus far only *New York* Sabbatarians have received any focused attention, which has led to the assumption (by those historians inclined to address the issue at all) that Sabbatarianism in general was simply "New York" Sabbatarianism transplanted.

This study challenges that assumption, as well as the related and unspoken one that true Sabbatarians resided *only* where there existed auxiliaries of the New York-based General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath. In the Upper South, Calvinist churches--mainly Presbyterian but also Regular (Calvinist) Baptist--constituted the core of Sabbatarianism in the region. Such evangelicals perceived the Sabbath as utterly indispensable to genuine religion. Yet, even a number of non-evangelicals--especially justices of the peace, but also merchants and bank directors--viewed the Sabbath, along with their evangelical partners, as necessary to the maintaining of peaceful, prosperous, and orderly communities. Thus, the Sabbath was an institution in which *moral-religious* and *social-economic* priorities, coincided; with the former priority the primary concern of evangelicals and the latter the primary concern of non-evangelicals.

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SYMBOLS

KDLA	Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Ky.
KHS	Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Ky.
NA	National Archives, Washington, D.C.
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Department of History, Montreat, N.C.
UK	University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky.
UTS	Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.
UVA	University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.
VHS	Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.
VSLA	Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, Va.
WKU	Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Ky.

Chapter 1

The Sabbath and the Sabbath Mails Controversy, 1809-1825

On September 7, 1814, the Rev. James Blythe delivered the sermon at the opening of the Presbyterians' Synod of Kentucky meeting in Lexington. The long-time (acting) president of the Presbyterians' Transylvania University in the same town, Blythe recounted the developments which many professing Christians perceived to herald the dawning of the millennium. Foremost among these "signs" was the recent military defeat of Napoleon, whose regime Blythe viewed as utterly opposed to Christianity and the spread of the gospel of Christ. In the course of the minister's diatribe against the French revolutionaries, he declared,

When did such fiend-like fury debase the human character? Have barbarians ever acted thus? Did ever a nation before rise up *en masse* against God, against his sabbaths, against his altars and his worship? Can we account for the horrors of the French revolution upon the ordinary principles of human actions? 'Did not the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? . . .

Although Blythe had mentioned the Sabbath only in passing, the context of his statement indicated the perceived fundamental nature of that institution which the "infidel" revolutionaries had abolished in the year 1793 in favor of their experimental ten-day week, or "decade." Furthermore, a passing reference was all that was required for an audience of Presbyterian ministers and ruling elders to understand completely the significance of the remark. Indeed, the Presbyterians' *Westminster Confession of Faith*--to which all officers in the church subscribed as expressing the teachings of the Bible--placed a high value upon the Christian Sabbath, or Lord's day.¹

¹ James Blythe, *A Portrait of the Times; Being a Sermon . . . Synod of Kentucky . . .*

The Sabbath is an issue of such ancient origins that a particular difficulty for a work on Sabbatarianism may be the choice of a proper starting point. Given the focus of my study, the late 1820s and early 1830s, and the fact that Calvinists--mainly Presbyterians but also Regular (or Old School) Baptists--constituted the largest identifiable body of Sabbatarians in the Upper South during the period of concern, a logical introductory point is the seventeenth century. Not only did that period encompass the earliest permanent British settlements along the Atlantic seaboard, but it also included the adoption of the doctrinal standards by many of the ancestors of Upper South (Sabbatarian) Presbyterians and Regular Baptists in the nineteenth century Jacksonian era. More than anything else, those doctrinal expressions--the Presbyterians' *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the Baptists' *Philadelphia Confession of Faith*--accounted for the consistency with which generations of Calvinists approached the issue of the Sabbath.

Drawn up in the 1640s and formally adopted in the 1780s by the newly-formed Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* considered Sabbath observance as utterly indispensable to the proper worship of God. In the nineteenth century, the principles espoused by many American Presbyterians such as James Blythe and other Calvinists regarding the Sabbath were virtually identical to those expressed in the *Westminster Confession*.²

Sept. 7th, 1814 (Lexington, Ky., 1814), 24. G.I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* (Philadelphia, 1964), 158, 170. For biographical information on Blythe, see James Blythe, Biographical File (typescript at PCUSA); Robert Stuart Sanders, "Ministers in the Presbyteries of West Lexington (1799-1935), Ebenezer (1820-1935), Lexington-Ebenezer (1935-1957)," (PCUSA). An earlier work by a Presbyterian in the South with a similar focus upon revolutionary France is Samuel E. McCorkle, *A Discourse, on the Doctrine and Duty of Keeping the Sabbath* (Salisbury, N.C., 1798).

² Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 158, 170. The best published work on the Puritan Sabbath in colonial America is Winton U. Solberg, *Redeem the Time: The*

Written a generation after the *Westminster Confession* and paralleling it in many respects, the confession which later became known as the *Philadelphia Confession* borrowed the wording nearly verbatim from Westminster in its chapter dealing with religious worship and the Sabbath. The Baptist Association of Philadelphia used the confession for some time as its doctrinal standard--at least informally--and in 1742 showed formal adoption of the *Philadelphia Confession* when it ordered the printing of a new edition. In the years following, many Baptist churches and associations adopted the *Philadelphia Confession*, to which one author refers as having "influenced Baptist thought generally" in the South, and as "perhaps the most influential of all confessions" in the region.³

While Presbyterians and Regular Baptists in the South constituted the core of those professing Christians holding a high view of the Sabbath day, the region was beset with several factors making organized religious life--not to mention Sabbath observance--difficult. Perhaps of greatest importance was the fact that community life in general--not only that associated with corporate religious observance--was hardly to be found in many parts of the South. As late as 1824 during a tour of the South the evangelical Boston attorney Jeremiah Evarts observed that families often *chose* to live well apart from one

Puritan Sabbath in Early America (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1977). The best work on the observance of the Sabbath in America during the antebellum era is still Frederick L. Bronner, "The Observance of the Sabbath in the United States, 1800-1865" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1937). On page 9, Bronner identifies the "Puritan Sabbath" or "American Sabbath" with "the law of the Westminster divines."

³ *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (Sterling, Va., 1977), 43-45; William Cathcart, ed., *The Baptist Encyclopaedia. A Dictionary of the Doctrines, Ordinances, Usages, Confessions of Faith . . . of the Baptist Denomination . . .* (Philadelphia, 1881), 264. The above quotation is from William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia, 1959), 347-49, 352 (quote).

another. To a New Englander like Evarts it was somewhat incomprehensible that inhabitants rarely met to "confer together for community purposes," whether those purposes were specifically religious or not.⁴

Yet another disadvantage in many parts of the South was the reluctance of inhabitants, especially Baptists and, later, Methodists, to support a minister with a regular salary. Such a situation was related in part to the lack of community life. As Evarts observed, the division of the populace into small pockets of Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists in certain locales acted *against* a sense of community. At least one contemporary of Evarts agreed with the influence of the Puritan Sabbath in the South. Austrian-born journalist Francis J. Grund, who was especially impressed--and favorably so--with the observance of the Sabbath in New England, wrote that in "some parts of the Southern states I have seen the sabbath kept in a manner still more rigorous than in any town of New England." Unfortunately, Grund failed to specify the locales he had in mind. In any case, most observers of Southern Sabbath practices reported laxity in general, although the Sabbath laws of most Southern states did reflect a degree of Puritan influence.⁵

Evarts' observation was a tacit allusion to the prevalence of Baptists and Methodists in the South and West. Indeed, in the 1810s and 20s--and throughout the early nineteenth century--of those in the Upper South who "professed" the Christian faith, the vast majority were affiliated with one of those two groups.

⁴ J. Orin Oliphant, ed., *Through the South and the West With Jeremiah Evarts in 1826* (Lewisburg, Penn., 1956), 31.

⁵ Ibid.; Solberg, *Redeem the Time*, 107; Richard R. John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously: The Postal System, the Sabbath, and the Transformation of American Political Culture," *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (1990): 530; Francis J. Grund, *The Americans in Their Moral, Social and Political Relations* (New York, 1971 [1837]), 64, 72; Bronner, "The Observance of the Sabbath in the United States," 24-33.

Massive increases in the numbers of both denominations as well as migrations took place in the Upper South. Walter Brownlow Posey notes that the 1780s saw the first significant increase of Baptists in Kentucky, and that between 1791 and 1810, "one-fourth of the Baptists in Virginia moved to Kentucky." Incidentally, Posey also affirms the "mutual Calvinism" which, in many cases, produced harmony between Baptists and Presbyterians on the Southern frontier. Having been organized as a denomination in America only in the 1780s--and dependent upon an itinerant, rather than a settled, ministry well-suited for the frontier, Methodists experienced a westward migration similar to the Baptists, but at a later date. William Warren Sweet observes that the decline of Virginia Methodism during the decade after 1815 was due to "the steady and growing migration of Virginians westward," to which the formation of the Methodists' Kentucky Conference in 1820 attested.⁶

Unfortunately, the scarcity of primary materials and the lack of denominational periodicals in the region make it extremely difficult to judge Baptist and Methodist activity on behalf of the Sabbath in the early national period. Most likely, at least a few Baptists and Methodists participated in Sabbath mails petitioning, but beyond that, little is known. At least one early Methodist leader in Kentucky, John Kobler, later settled in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and in 1829 signed a local memorial against Sabbath mails.⁷

⁶ Walter Brownlow Posey, *Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861* (Lexington, Ky., 1966), 8; Walter Brownlow Posey, *Religious Strife on the Southern Frontier* (Baton Rouge, La., 1965), 24; William Warren Sweet, *Virginia Methodism: A History* (Richmond, Va., 1955), 171; W. [William] E. Arnold, *A History of Methodism in Kentucky* . . . (2 vols., Louisville, Ky., 1936), 2: 11-12.

⁷ William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1840: The Methodists* (Chicago, 1946), 53; petition of inhabitants of the town of Fredericksburg, Virginia, January 19, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA).

Thus, very little is known of Upper South Baptist and Methodist involvement in the "precursor" to the Sabbath mails controversy of the late 1820s. Yet, this precursor is of special significance for this study. Although the Jacksonian phase of the issue generated more activity on the part of Sabbatarians than did the earlier phase--in addition to witnessing the first organized Anti-sabbatarian activity--the first phase involved many of the same issues, arguments, activities, and even some of the same leaders as did the better-known phase which took place in the late 1820s.⁸

One of the few historians who has addressed the first phase of the Sabbath mails controversy is Richard John, who views it as extending from 1809 to 1817. The oft-neglected controversy revolved around the postal policy of the federal government and its implications for American society: specifically, for the perceived prospects of genuine religion, the well-being of communities, and for the American experiment in self-government.⁹

In the pre-revolutionary period, most, if not all, of the colonial legislatures had passed laws restricting secular labor and unnecessary travel on the first day of the week. These laws were still in force following the adoption of the Constitution, and, as John notes,

⁸ The best-known leader who was involved in both phases of the Sabbath mails controversy was Congregationalist minister and moral reformer, the Rev. Lyman Beecher. But other, lesser known, leaders also were active in both phases. For example, in Virginia such leaders included the Reverends John Holt Rice and Conrad Speece; in Tennessee, the Rev. Charles Coffin; in Kentucky, the Rev. James Blythe; and in Tennessee and Kentucky, the Rev. Gideon Blackburn, the five of whom were Presbyterians. See *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States . . . from A.D. 1789 to A.D. 1820* (Philadelphia, n.d.), 565-67.

⁹ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously, 518. The most recent work addressing both phases of the Sabbath mails issue is John G. West, Jr., *The Politics of Revelation and Reason: Religion and Civic Life in the New Nation* (Lawrence, Kan., 1996), who views the first phase as running from 1811 to 1816.

some New England states renewed their efforts to enforce Sabbath laws during the early national period--none more so than Connecticut. For example, in 1798 an incident in Connecticut demonstrated that at least some of the state's authorities were intent on enforcing the laws respecting travelling on the Sabbath. Foreshadowing *both* phases of the Sabbath mails controversy between 1809 and 1830, the incident in the heart of Puritan New England involved the carrying of the mails on the Sabbath day.¹⁰

The case involved a mail stage that was stopped for violating the state's law restricting travel on the Sabbath. The acquittal of the drivers precipitated a petition to the Connecticut assembly which, in language similar to certain memorials three decades later, complained that the running of Sabbath day mail stages disturbed public worship, grieved many "sober inhabitants," and that the state was rendered powerless to restrain breaches of God's law by the Congress allowing the mails to be carried on that day, in violation of state law.¹¹

As the foregoing case indicates, the events of 1809 and 1810 which precipitated the first phase of agitation over Sabbath mails were not without precedent. As John notes, it was the predicament of a postmaster in the western Pennsylvania town of Washington, who also was an elder in his local Presbyterian church, which "set the ball rolling." As a Presbyterian, Hugh Wylie was obligated to refrain from unnecessary labor on the Sabbath, but as a postmaster, he was under a directive from Postmaster General Gideon Granger to sort any mails which might arrive at his post office on any day of the week. Perhaps understandably, Wylie chose to follow Granger's instructions: a market town like

¹⁰ Ibid., 528; Oliver W. Holmes, "Sunday Travel and Sunday Mails: A Question Which Troubled our Forefathers," *New York History* 20 (1939): 413-14.

¹¹ Holmes, "Sunday Travel and Sunday Mails," 413-14.

Washington, which also was a "critical transshipment point" for western-bound mails, made the postmastership a very well-paid position by the standards of the day.¹²

John concludes that Wylie's awkward situation might have continued without attracting much notice had the postmaster not taken the step of opening his office to the public on the Sabbath. Wylie reasoned that churchgoers residing outside town would be able to pick up their mail in conjunction with attending worship, saving a trip later in the week.¹³

"Wylie's conduct provoked a heated controversy," according to John, in part due to the actual or perceived disruption of public worship and the sacredness of the day created by Wylie's opening of the post office. To settle the matter, the session of Wylie's church requested the counsel of the Ohio Presbytery, which, in turn, sent the case to the next higher court, the Synod of Pittsburgh. In October 1809, the Pittsburgh synod ruled that Wylie should be barred from the privileges of the Lord's table, presumably until resigning his postmastership, whereupon Wylie appealed the decision to the general assembly. At its annual meeting the next year, the assembly upheld synod's ruling, "in effect expelling Wylie from the church."¹⁴

Although by no means minimizing the degree or the genuineness of moral-religious conviction respecting the Sabbath--especially by a synod with a "national reputation for doctrinal orthodoxy and missionary zeal," John surmises that the action of the Pittsburgh synod in censuring Postmaster Wylie may have had another and complementary purpose. In the same meeting in which Wylie was disciplined, an "unusually bitter controversy"

¹² John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 520-21.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

took place with Scottish Presbyterian minister Thomas Campbell over the issue of infant baptism. Later, Thomas and his son Alexander would leave the Presbyterian fold and would be instrumental in fostering the Disciples of Christ movement. John writes, "Though fervently evangelical, the Campbells were fiercely anti-Sabbatarian, suggesting that, in censuring Wylie, the synod may well have been attempting to define the permissible bounds of dissent."¹⁵

John further indicates that the 1810 federal postal law may have been designed, in part, to assist the predicament of postmasters such as Wylie, who might find themselves under church discipline for performing their official duties on the Sabbath. Another, perhaps equally important, reason for the legislation was to prevent the possibility of "certain favored customers" being allowed to receive their letters ahead of the general public and, in some cases, thereby gain the latest market information ahead of their peers. In any case, the law, passed in April 1810, stated, ". . . it shall be the duty of the postmaster at all reasonable hours, *on every day of the week*, to deliver, on demand, any letter, paper, or packet, to the person entitled to . . . receive the same." Never before had Congress passed legislation requiring postmasters to maintain certain hours, and, as John observes, never before had Congress acted so as to *require* certain behaviors from persons located in communities nationwide. As the resulting Sabbath mails controversy demonstrated, some Americans in communities nationwide felt outraged that Congress had acted immorally and against the laws of God by requiring postal employees to perform secular labor on the Sabbath. Moreover, as John states, federal postal policy threatened the heritage of the Sabbath, which "provided an opportunity for collective self-renewal, for the

¹⁵ Ibid., 526. As shown later in Chapter 3, the followers of Alexander Campbell were responsible for the majority of the Anti-sabbatarian petitions from Kentucky in 1829-1830.

encouragement of those ties of family and kin so vital to the emerging cult of domesticity, and for the ritual reaffirmation of the transcendent reality of sacred time."¹⁶

Meanwhile, Postmaster General Granger chose to interpret the law "in the narrowest possible way," ruling that the law only required post offices to be opened at those locations at which the mails actually arrived on the Sabbath. At such locations, Granger decided, postmasters were required to open their offices for only one hour following the sorting of the mails, unless such an hour would interfere with the time of public worship. In those cases, the office was to be opened following the completion of worship services. John notes that the 1810 law probably affected all the post offices "on the east-west line between Washington and the Missouri territory; the north-south line between Portsmouth, New Hampshire and Savannah, Georgia; and the south-west lines between Washington and New Orleans."¹⁷

Church officers of several denominations--including Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Baptists--responded vigorously to the new law, precipitating "the first bombardment of Congress with petitions in the cause of Sunday observance." As would be repeated with many memorials twenty years later, identical petition texts indicated the organized nature of the action. Leading ministers in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, ranging from Presbyterian James P. Wilson to Universalist William Ellery Channing, formed a broad coalition intent on demonstrating the disapprobation of many of the nation's sober-minded citizens to the law and urging its

¹⁶ Ibid., 522, 529, 531; Holmes, "Sunday Travel and Sunday Mails," 415-16; William Addison Blakely, comp., *American State Papers Bearing on Sunday Legislation*, rev.ed. (New York, 1970), 176.

¹⁷ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 522.

repeal. John highlights the fact that the aforementioned petition activity was a moderate response "intent on redressing the shortcomings of a specific piece of legislation."¹⁸

However, the Pittsburgh synod took a far more radical stance when, in October 1810, it asked Congress not only to repeal the offensive postal law but also, more importantly, to eliminate all regulations requiring postmasters and their clerks as well as stage drivers and post riders to labor on the Sabbath. If taken, such action would not merely have caused an inconvenience for patrons wishing to claim their letters and packages on the Sabbath; it would have had the far greater consequence of forcing unnecessary layovers and threatening the normal flow of the mails--already agonizingly slow on some routes--on routes nationwide. John notes that because, on some routes, the mails had probably been transported on the Sabbath even before the Constitution had been ratified--and the practice had become generally accepted as being in the best interests of the nation--the Pittsburgh synod's action brought "a central premise of American postal policy under attack."¹⁹

At that point, according to John, "the battle lines hardened." In 1812, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church appointed a committee to draw up a petition to Congress "on the subject of the mails being carried and opened on the Sabbath day." The assembly adopted the petition which declared,

They who carry the mail and they who open it, together with those to whom letters or papers are delivered, under the sanction of civil law, neglect the public worship of God in part or whole. Besides this, the noise and confusion attending the carrying and opening of the mail in post towns, too frequently . . . disturb the devotion of those who prefer their spiritual to their temporal interests.

¹⁸ Ibid., 523; Holmes, "Sunday Travel and Sunday Mails," 415-16.

¹⁹ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 523-24.

Emphasizing biblical principles and requirements respecting the Christian Sabbath, the Presbyterian memorial also addressed the Sabbath's importance "in promoting true morality" and "individual and social happiness;" and, with the prospect of war with Great Britain looming, reminded Congress that "God honours those who honour him, and casts down those who forget him."²⁰

As the Presbyterian memorial had anticipated, war with Britain came shortly, providing the defenders of Sabbath mails with a rationale for maintaining the existing postal arrangements. In a time of national crisis, rapid communications throughout the country was deemed to be of the utmost importance. Thus, the mails must travel as quickly as possible, without resting on the Sabbath.²¹

Despite the war, in 1814 the Presbyterian general assembly renewed its petition effort. Unlike in 1812--when its single memorial was identified as "The petition of the General

²⁰ Ibid., 524; *Minutes of the General Assembly*, 513-14.

²¹ At least during the 1828-30 phase of the Sabbath mails campaign, many Sabbatarians considered the transportation of the mails on the Sabbath during a time of war or national crisis to be a "work of necessity" to which they would not object. For example, petitioners from the town of Greenville and Augusta County, Virginia, stated, ". . . altho' it [Sabbath mails] may be considered a matter of necessity in time of *War*, yet in time of *Peace* your memorialists cannot think it is so." Petition of inhabitants of the town of Greenville and Augusta County, Virginia, (received) January 12, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). Also, Barren County, Kentucky, memorialists requested "to have Such a Law [no longer requiring the mails to be transported and delivered on the Sabbath] passed for the time of peace but by no means to Continue [*sic*] in time of war. . . ." Petition of inhabitants of Barren County, Kentucky, (dated) January, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). And, Sullivan County, Tennesseans, argued that "the transmission [of Sabbath mails] in time of peace is partial, and that the continuance of the practice then, merely because it is essential in time of war, is a maxim as antirepublican as it would be to say, We ought to maintain a large Standing Army in time of peace, because it could not be dispensed with in time of war." Petition of inhabitants of Sullivan County, Tennessee, (received) March 2, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA).

Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America"--in 1814 the assembly adopted the use of pre-printed, mass-produced petitions which left a blank space for memorialists to fill in the names of their towns and states of residence. An examination of the texts of the Presbyterian memorials in 1812 and in 1814 hints that, even at that early date, a shift in emphasis in the type of arguments deemed appropriate might have been taking place. Whereas in 1812 the petition had opened with an expression of the petitioners' "deep regret [over] the infraction of the *Lord's day*, occasioned by the opening of the mail on that day," the 1814 memorial began by expressing the petitioners' conviction that Sabbath mails are "injurious to the *morals and civil welfare of this nation*." Drawing on the thesis of John West's *Politics of Revelation and Reason*, the 1812 petition could be said to have emphasized "revelation"; the 1814 memorial, "reason."²²

Yet, even such a perceived shift did not necessarily indicate rationalization or rhetoric because to the Calvinist, as West notes, "... reason and revelation [said] the same thing when it [came] to the civil protection of the Sabbath." As the present study argues, the Calvinist obligation to uphold one's--and the community's--covenant relationship with God by obedience to His moral law went hand-in-hand with the upholding of those social institutions deemed essential to maintaining a peaceful, prosperous, and orderly community. Whether one's perspective emphasized "revelation" or "reason," it was the institution of the Sabbath, above all others, which met the requirements of both sets of priorities. Besides, to the Calvinist, the distinction between the "religious" (revelation) and "secular" (reason) areas of life was a false distinction, for *every* area of life was to be

²² *Minutes of the General Assembly*, 513-14, 565-67 [emphasis added]; West, *Politics of Revelation and Reason*, 146-48.

lived in obedience to, and for the glory of, God. Still, the revelation-versus-reason issue was merely a matter of emphasis, not one of mutual exclusion: like many later memorials, *both* the 1812 and the 1814 petitions employed elements of *both* types of arguments. In any case, the assembly ordered two thousand copies of the 1814 petition produced, to be sent to presbyteries nationwide, each of which was to circulate the copies in order to procure signatures among the churches under its care. Moreover, the assembly appointed one minister or elder in each of thirty-nine presbyteries as an agent to oversee the petition effort within the bounds of his presbytery.²³

Significantly, some of the Presbyterian ministers appointed in 1814 to coordinate petitions again served as local or state leaders on behalf of the Sabbath some twelve to twenty years later. Among the three Upper South states in which there was the most activity on the Sabbath issue--Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky--no less than five Presbyterian ministers were active in both the 1810s and late 1820s-early 1830s phases of the Sabbath movement. They were the Reverends John Holt Rice and Conrad Speece in Virginia; the Rev. Charles Coffin in Tennessee; the Rev. James Blythe in Kentucky; and the Rev. Gideon Blackburn in Tennessee in 1814 and in Kentucky in 1827.²⁴

The two Virginians, Rice and Speece, each were active in a Sabbath society, but not the same one. Furthermore, while Rice was a national figure and the South's leading Presbyterian divine, Speece labored in relative obscurity for many years in the Shenandoah Valley. Rice organized several Virginia churches, including the First Presbyterian Church in Richmond (1812); edited several religious periodicals; organized the Virginia Bible Society (1813); served as the moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian

²³ Ibid.; John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 525.

²⁴ *Minutes of the General Assembly*, 565-67.

Church (1819); and, in the words of Presbyterian historian Ernest Trice Thompson, was the "virtual founder of Union Theological Seminary" in Prince Edward County, Virginia. Thus, Rice's regard for the Sabbath was likely to have influenced a number of Virginia Presbyterians. In May 1828, Rice was one of only a handful of Southern members to the organizational convention of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath in New York City, and two years later he addressed the annual gathering. In January 1829, his signature appeared on the Sabbath memorial from Prince Edward County, which petition bore more signatures (over 230) than any other from the Upper South states of Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky, if not from any Southern state. Fellow Virginian Speece had pastored Augusta Presbyterian Church in the Shenandoah Valley for twenty years by the early 1830s, when he served as a vice-president of the Virginia Society for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath.²⁵

Coffin, Blythe, and Blackburn took leadership roles in Tennessee and Kentucky. Coffin moved from Greeneville (Tennessee) to Knoxville in 1827 to accept the presidency of East Tennessee College. In January 1829, he wrote president-elect Andrew Jackson to encourage him to set a godly example of Sabbath observance, and a year later Coffin

²⁵ For Rice, see *First Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Va.: Its History . . .* (N.p., 1923), 5-6; Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J., 1962), 93; Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South* (3 vols., Richmond, Va., 1963-73), 1: 277; *The Address of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath . . .* (New York, 1828), 5; *Second Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1830), 3, 14; petition of inhabitants of Prince Edward County, Virginia, January 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). For Speece, see William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit . . . to the Close of the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Five* (4 vols., New York, 1858), 4: 284-89; E.H. Gillett, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, rev. ed. (2 vols., Philadelphia, n.d.), 2: 28; *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 5, 1833, and April 11, 1834.

published a two-part sermon on the subject of the Sabbath. James Blythe, whose sermon opened the Synod of Kentucky meeting in September 1814, served the Presbyterian Church, mainly in Kentucky, for over forty years. He was held in high esteem by Presbyterians nationwide, evidenced by his election to moderate the Presbyterian Church's 1816 general assembly. Whereas in 1814 he coordinated the petition effort in West Lexington Presbytery as directed by the general assembly, in 1826 he was appointed to a three-member committee of West Lexington Presbytery to report "to this Presb. with respect to the profanation of the Sabbath day." Also in that year Blythe was appointed to a committee formed for the purpose of receiving and judging essays on the topic of Sabbath observance which were being solicited by the Synod of Kentucky. In both cases, Blythe's name was first among the members of the committee, suggesting either his seniority or his leadership of the committee. In early 1830 his name appeared on a Sabbath memorial from inhabitants of Fayette, Jessamine, and Woodford counties. A church historian referred to Blackburn as one of the "worthies . . . who led the way in planting the Presbyterian Church in East Tennessee." But unlike Rice, Speece, Coffin, and Blythe, Blackburn moved to a neighboring state, to pastor a Presbyterian church in Louisville, Kentucky, where in 1827 he joined two local ministers, an Episcopalian and a Methodist, in issuing a resolution to the public respecting the Sabbath and its observance.²⁶

²⁶ For Coffin, see Charles Coffin to Andrew Jackson, January 21, 1829 (Andrew Jackson Papers, Library of Congress); *Calvinistic Magazine* 4 (1830): 76-87, 203-15. For Blythe, see James Blythe, Biographical File (typescript at PCUSA); Robert Stuart Sanders, "Ministers in the Presbyteries of West Lexington (1799-1935), Ebenezer (1820-1935), Lexington-Ebenezer (1935-1957)," (PCUSA); Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1: 155, 266; West Lexington Presbytery minutes, September 19, 1826 (typescript at PCUSA); Synod of Kentucky minutes, October 17, 1826 (microfilm at PCUSA); *Western Luminary*, August 26, 1829; petition of inhabitants of Fayette, Jessamine, and Woodford counties, Kentucky, (received) March 5, 1830, Petitions Received, RG46 (NA). One

Though some historians identify the Rev. Lyman Beecher as a leader in both the 1810s and the early Jacksonian phase of the Sabbath movement, the aforementioned five ministers from the Upper South--how many from the North who were active in both phases is unknown--indicate a broader continuity in the leadership heretofore unknown. Furthermore, as John observes, the use and coordination of mass-produced petitions--by local leaders such as those above--was an early example of the revolution in printing and communications which was then in its infancy but which would soon make the use of similar documents--especially abolition memorials--commonplace.²⁷

Also in 1814, the general assembly sought "to engage a general co-operation of all denominations in the United States in this important matter" of opposing Sabbath mails, and it appointed a "Committee of Correspondence and Conference" to solicit the support of other denominations. John notes that the Presbyterians succeeded in gaining the support of the Congregationalist general associations of both Connecticut and Massachusetts, and that it was "at this point, and not before, that Lyman Beecher threw himself into the cause." In addition to coordinating the signing of petitions within their

other "James Blythe (Blyth)" appeared in the 1830 census, a man in his twenties from neighboring Bourbon County. Because "Dr. James Blythe"--in his sixties in 1830--resided in Lexington/Fayette County, Kentucky, and Fayette was one of the three counties in which the signers of the 1830 petition (above) purported to reside, I concluded that the petitioner probably was the Rev. (Dr.) Blythe, who had pastored in the area for many years. Furthermore, the majority of identifiable signers of the above petition resided in Lexington/Fayette County, as did the Rev. (Dr.) Blythe, while none was identified from Bourbon County. In any case, Blythe's activity in the presbytery in 1826 is ample evidence that he was a leader in the Sabbath movement during its early Jacksonian phase as well as during the 1810s. For Blackburn, see Jacob Harris Patton, *A Popular History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York, 1903), 221; *Western Luminary*, February 28, 1827.

²⁷ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 541.

locales, Rice, Speece, Coffin, and each of the thirty-nine presbytery agents were to correspond with the above-mentioned committee. Furthermore, the assembly appointed a committee "to prepare a pastoral letter" to all Presbyterian churches "exhorting to special personal circumspection in the observance of the Sabbath." The letter stated solemnly that "without the Sabbath there will be no religion--without religion there will be no morality--and that where . . . correct morality, ceases to form the basis of the public manners, the strongest bonds of society are dissolved, and nothing is to be expected but mutual jealousy and hatred. . . ." Additionally, the pastoral letter recommended church discipline as needed, as well as "the formation of associations for the suppression of vice, and the promotion of good morals." Thus, the Presbyterian assembly in 1814 took a multi-faceted approach to promoting the observance of the precious institution.²⁸

Despite having already sustained several rebuffs, there was reason for Sabbatarians to expect that Congress, with the return of peace in 1815, would finally grant their request regarding Sabbath mails. As the Presbyterian general assembly that year noted, the report of the Postmaster General during the previous session of Congress had expressed "his opinion that when peace shall arrive, the necessity of carrying and opening the mail on the Sabbath day will greatly diminish." Following a committee report addressing the propriety of again petitioning Congress--in which the "fatal blow" against the Sabbath rendered by French infidels and the attendant horrors of the revolution were recalled--the assembly resolved to renew the campaign. This time it adopted another mass-produced--albeit much shorter--memorial asking Congress to take the subject under "serious consideration," now that the return of peace had presumably eliminated the "necessity" of

²⁸ *Minutes of the General Assembly*, 547-48, 565-67, 569-70; John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 525.

Sabbath mails. Having noted that the "Presbyteries had in general attended to the direction of the last Assembly" in the procuring of signatures and the forwarding of petitions to Congress, the 1815 assembly likewise ordered the printing of two thousand copies of the latest petition.²⁹

John notes that the joint Presbyterian-Congregationalist petition drive resulted in "some one hundred" memorials arriving in Washington by "the end of 1815." Unfortunately, neither John nor any other historian seems to have addressed the whereabouts of the vast majority of the 2,000 copies of the Presbyterian petition of 1814 or the identical number of the 1815 memorial. Despite the general assembly's assertion in 1815 that the presbyteries had generally carried out their directives regarding the procuring of signatures and the transmitting of petitions to Congress one year earlier, the fact that so few of them are now extant may indicate that the Presbyterian body had miscalculated on that point.³⁰

In 1816, the general assembly noted, "In some sections of the church the people of God are mourning . . . because the Sabbath of the Lord is not hallowed. . . ." Similar to a number of other assessments of Sabbath practices in the early nineteenth century was the assembly's distressed statement that "Travelling on the Lord's day" is in some cases "regarded as of a venial character, and committed with but little compunction!" Although in 1816 the assembly did not adopt a mass-produced petition as it had during three of the previous four years, it appointed one member of each synod "to correspond with influential individuals in all the congressional districts of the United States" in an effort to enlist their support in continuing the petition campaign. The choice of John Holt Rice to

²⁹ *Minutes of the General Assembly*, 577-78, 597-98, 601 [emphasis added].

³⁰ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 525; *Ibid.*, 577-78.

lead the effort in Virginia was significant because it emphasizes--as did the role of Rice, Speece, and others in 1814--that Lyman Beecher was by no means the lone minister active in the Sabbatarian cause during the 1810s who was still--or again--active during the late 1820s and early 1830s.³¹

Having covered the activities of the Presbyterians, who, with the Congregationalists, led the broad-based Protestant front in its attempt to persuade Congress to repeal the offensive postal law, it is important to note the response of the federal government to those efforts during the 1810s. John writes that the 1810 law had "seriously constrained" the administrative authority of Postmaster General Granger, who in early 1811 hinted that he favored its repeal. A New Englander with a clear appreciation for the cultural significance of the Sabbath in that region, Granger did not want to see the institution desecrated by the government's example. Granger admitted that though it might be necessary for postmasters to open their offices on the Sabbath during periods of war or national crisis, he hoped that Congress might grant him the authority to make such a decision.³²

Another New Englander, Massachusetts Congressman Elijah Hunt Mills, also seems to have favored the repeal of the postal law. A Federalist opposed to the policies of the Madison Administration, including the War of 1812, Mills publicly supported the Sabbatarian position, although his later actions caused Richard John to question his sincerity on the Sabbath issue.³³

³¹ *Minutes of the General Assembly*, 619, 634. For Rice's later role on behalf of the Sabbath, see Chapter 4 to follow.

³² John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 531-32.

³³ *Ibid.*, 532.

Even though Granger and Mills both seemed to favor the repeal of the 1810 postal law, that law had said nothing about the *transportation* of the mail on the Sabbath. As John points out, it was one thing to favor the closing of post offices on the Sabbath, but another matter entirely to try to stop the mails from running on the Sabbath--the position taken by the Presbyterians. Some, like Granger and Mills, may have favored the former but were adamantly opposed to the latter. Many believed that stopping the mails from running on the Sabbath would upset the entire postal system, if not the nation's economy.³⁴

Still others emphasized the potential for military reverses during wartime should the mails not run on every day of the week. In early 1815, only months after the British had burned Washington during the late war, Congressman John Rhea of Tennessee emphasized that particularly during wartime, the constant running of the mails was of "great national importance." Adding weight to Rhea's words was his chairmanship of the House Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads. Even Senator David Daggett of Connecticut, a Congregationalist concerned with the federal government's undermining of state sovereignty with respect to the 1810 law, refrained from seeking the law's repeal. In John's words, Daggett viewed the "fastest possible communications" throughout the country as "absolutely necessary" in light of the unsettled foreign relations existing in 1815.³⁵

John notes that in 1817 national security still remained an issue respecting Sabbath mails. Early that year, Postmaster General Return J. Meigs, Jr., notified the House of Representatives that stopping the mails on the Sabbath would upset the entire transportation system on over seven hundred mail routes. Furthermore, he feared that

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 532-33.

such an arrangement would enable foreign agents to "outspeed" the federal government, a dangerous situation made more likely by the great territorial extent of the nation.³⁶

The most noteworthy aspect of Meigs' analysis, according to John, was his grasp of the implications of Sabbath restrictions upon postal finance. Because a considerable portion of the revenues of mail stage proprietors came from carrying passengers in addition to letters, newspapers, and packages, the postmaster general reasoned that if mail stages failed to operate on the Sabbath, passengers would hire private expresses rather than wait until Monday to travel. Thus, mail contractors would experience a loss of revenue and would seek to renegotiate their contracts. But, more importantly, passengers travelling on the Sabbath would, in John's words, adopt the practice of "carrying letters out of the mails, thus defrauding the government of the postage." Therefore, not only would mail contractors experience a loss of revenue, but the federal government would also. Meigs pointed out that during the War of 1812 the very practice of carrying letters out of the mails had developed when, as a wartime measure to increase federal revenues, postage had been increased fifty percent.³⁷

John observes that despite Meigs' impressive arguments based upon national security and financial considerations, "no congressman chose to follow his lead." Rejecting such considerations as Meigs had introduced as immoral--and turning one of the Sabbatarians' arguments on its head--Congressman Mills perceived that seven-day-a-week transportation of the mails was, in effect, a *moral obligation*. As he saw it, to discontinue the mails one day a week would lead East Coast merchants to establish their own private expresses, thereby producing far greater disturbance of the Sabbath than was already

³⁶ Ibid., 533-34.

³⁷ Ibid., 534.

experienced by the existing mail arrangement. According to John, Mills' report in March 1817 represented the end of the first phase of the Sabbath mails controversy.³⁸

After the action of the general assembly in 1816 and the failure of Congress to respond favorably in early 1817, it was ten years before the highest judicatory of the church again took any significant initiative respecting the Sabbath. Yet that fact did not mean that Presbyterians--or Congregationalists--had dropped the issue altogether. Richard John points out that from 1817 to 1826 the Sabbath mails issue "lay dormant," but his focus on the *mails* may lead one to the mistaken conclusion that Sabbath-related activity lay dormant in *all* respects. In fairness, the Sabbath mails issue *was* the most prominent of the entire Sabbath movement during the first third of the nineteenth century, but it was not the only issue. To some degree, "Sabbath mails" were a part of the broader issue of unnecessary travelling on the Lord's day. In any case, some activity regarding the Sabbath continued, albeit at a lower level.³⁹

Actually, the profanation of the day *in general* received the greatest attention. For example, in 1818 the Presbyterian general assembly best known for having grappled with the issue of slaveholding reported that the principal sins existing in "some portion of our Church" were intemperance and profanation of the Lord's day. The assembly declared, "The Lord's day, viewed in a political light entirely, affords so many benefits calculated for the promotion of present enjoyment in all the relations of life, as to claim for it the veneration . . . of sound statesmen. But to men professing respect for the truth of God, it presents claims of higher authority. . . ."40

³⁸ Ibid., 534-35.

³⁹ Ibid., 535.

⁴⁰ *Minutes of the General Assembly*, 677-78, 692-94.

The following year, in a decision that harkened back to Postmaster Wylie's predicament, the assembly took up the issue of accepting a person as a member of the church "who is a proprietor in a line of stages which carries the mail and runs on the Sabbath." Rather than dealing solely with the issue of Sabbath-breaking mail stages--which itself would arguably have provided an exception to John's "dormant" period--the assembly adopted a much broader substitute measure, which read,

That it is the decided opinion of this Assembly that all attention to worldly concerns on the Lord's day, farther than the works of necessity and mercy demand, is inconsistent both with the letter and spirit of the fourth commandment; and, consequently, all engagements in regard to secular occupations on the Lord's day, with a view to secure worldly advantages, are to be considered inconsistent with Christian character, and that those who are concerned in such engagements ought not to be admitted into the communion of the Church while they continue in the same.⁴¹

While apparently attracting little notice beyond Presbyterian circles, the 1819 general assembly's resolution was significant in that it stated in no uncertain terms that one who performed unnecessary secular labor on the Sabbath was prohibited from becoming a member of a local Presbyterian church. Yet, evidence that presbyteries and individual church sessions complied with the resolution is not available. Perhaps the resolution was followed only in cases as blatant as the running of mail stages, though by that time--after several years of petitions and debate--the mail stage proprietor with the fortitude to seek membership in the Presbyterian or the Congregational Church was probably a rarity. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine examples of Sabbath-breaking enterprises in early Jacksonian America *more noticeable* than the operation of stages, canals, or vessels,

⁴¹ Ibid., 713.

which circumstance probably accounted for the emphasis upon the perceived sin of travelling on the Sabbath, regardless of the reasons involved. Indeed, so strong was the emphasis of Sabbatarians in general against the practice that, in some cases, even ministers who travelled to preach on the Lord's day sometimes expressed remorse over their own perceived evil example, at least in unfamiliar geographical areas where they would perhaps not be recognized as ministers of the gospel.⁴²

Although Presbyterian Church courts--session, presbytery, synod, and general assembly--not infrequently reminded their officers of the need to discipline Sabbath-breaking members, the limited evidence shows that many, if not most, who were *already* members of local churches went undisciplined over the matter of laboring on the Sabbath. For example, the 1824 general assembly observed, "From almost every direction we learn that the Lord's day is most shamefully profaned, and that even professors [of religion] sanction this destructive and most offensive sin by the looseness of their own example . . . Even ministers . . . have been known to travel in public conveyances on this 'day of rest.'" Although the assembly identified the problem as widespread, it failed to direct specific actions to combat the sin. Other prime examples of Sabbath-breaking which Sabbatarians mentioned repeatedly, and which appeared not to have been disciplined, were the hauling of produce and the driving of livestock to market on the Lord's day. In the Upper South states of Virginia and Kentucky, horse-racing on the Sabbath was popular and was often mentioned by Sabbatarians with disapprobation. Although Sabbath-breaking frequently was reported as widespread, especially in the South and West where the scarcity of

⁴² Ibid. John notes that, in 1811, Postmaster General Granger instructed mail stage drivers to pass through communities quietly on the Sabbath so as not to disturb those in worship, and to refrain from the "sounding of horns or trumpets." See John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 532.

ministers and churches and where quasi-frontier surroundings often prevailed, Sabbath-related activity was not "dormant" altogether, even though the Sabbath mails controversy was so.⁴³

In addition to Presbyterians' general assembly statements, other sources indicated that activity on behalf of the Sabbath continued at a relatively low level between 1817 and 1825. For instance, in 1818, in the small, Bluegrass community of Paris, Kentucky, a local printer published a work by New York minister Seth Williston, *Five Discourses on the Sabbath*. . . . Recommended by five Ohio ministers--three Presbyterians and two Congregationalists--Williston's first discourse began simply, "The Lord has made the sabbath a holy day; and when we keep it *holy* to the Lord, he makes it a day of *blessing*, i.e. a day in which he will, in a peculiar sense, meet with us and bless us. . . ." And in 1822, the *Presbyterian Magazine* published an essay perhaps all too Calvinistic in subject, "Is Sabbath Evening, or Saturday Evening, a Part of the Sabbath?" Even among Sabbatarians only a few seem to have been very concerned over that aspect of Sabbath observance--there were far more basic problems to deal with--but even such a seemingly obscure essay kept the Sabbath issue before the magazine's readership.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church . . . A.D. 1821 to A.D. 1835 inclusive* (Philadelphia, n.d.), June 7, 1824. The following Chapter 4 addresses the issue of church discipline respecting the Sabbath in some detail. For the mention of Sabbath day horse-racing in the frontier town of St. Louis, "a custom imported from Virginia and Kentucky," see Patton, *A Popular History of the Presbyterian Church*, 367. In his 1840 work on the Sabbath, Harmon Kingsbury noted that one of nine enumerated reasons for the demise of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath--of which he had served as the general agent--was that "Churches did not generally discipline their members for desecrating the Sabbath." See Harmon Kingsbury, *The Sabbath: A Brief History of Laws, Petitions, Remonstrances and Reports, with Facts and Arguments, Relating to the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1840), 146.

⁴⁴ Seth Williston, *Five Discourses on the Sabbath, Preached at Durham, N.Y.* (Paris, Ky., 1818), 12-13; *Presbyterian Magazine* 2 (1822): 274-78.

Considerably easier to handle was a piece published by Charleston, South Carolina, Episcopalians in 1824. The *Gospel Messenger, and Southern Christian Register* contained a dialogue purported to have been witnessed by the writer between a respectable gentleman and his pious sister regarding the former's poor Sabbath observance. The lady declared as sinful her brother's "Commencing a journey on the Sabbath day, which might have been postponed until the day following." When her brother replied impassively, his sister continued, "Allow me . . . to ask, why you do not go to Church in the Afternoon? Is not that as much a part of the Lord's day as the morning?" Gentleman: "The afternoon is certainly a part of the day; but I think going to Church once a day is often enough. One good sermon in a day, is as much as we can digest with ease or advantage." Lady: "Come, come, brother, be ingenuous. Such a reason never entered into your mind, any more than the opinion, that a good breakfast would spoil a good dinner." Of course, by the end of the dialogue, the gentleman's "heart was touched" as he realized his soul's dangerous state. Regardless of whether the dialogue had ever transpired, it certainly could have moved some readers to more careful Sabbath observance.⁴⁵

Another essay, published in 1824 in Washington, D.C., was undoubtedly read by many Baptists in Virginia and other Middle Atlantic and Southern states. Entitled, "Thoughts on the Sabbath," it appeared in the Baptist organ the *Latter Day Luminary*. The writer addressed four Sabbath-related issues--rest, religious instruction, the calling "off the mind from the anxiety of worldly cares," and communion with God--and asked rhetorically, "Can we then imagine, that an institution appointed when there was the least possible need

⁴⁵ *Gospel Messenger, and Southern Christian Register* 1 (1824): 97-101.

of it," referring to the garden prior to the fall, "should be set aside when every circumstance in the situation of mankind loudly calls for such an institution?"⁴⁶

Two essays, one of which was published in 1825 in each of the two leading Presbyterian newspapers in the South, showed that the Sabbath issue was not entirely dormant between 1817 and 1825. The Lexington, Kentucky, *Western Luminary* published an essay, "Breach of the Sabbath," warning Sabbath-breakers of the dangers to which they thus subjected themselves. The article, like others of its genre, declared that "the amusements which commonly tempt men to violate the Sabbath, such as swimming, sailing, riding, &c. in their own nature dangerous, are peculiarly so, when engaged in with that heedlessness and disregard of consequences, which the breach of a divine command supposes."⁴⁷

The other essay appeared in the Richmond, Virginia, *Family Visitor*, and was entitled, "Christian Observance of the Sabbath." The eloquent essayist--who had written specifically for this periodical--confessed, "The Sabbath does not properly belong to this life--It is the day on which the care-shaken soul of man is invited to renew its hold on heaven." And in closing, "The true reason why . . . [the Sabbath] is so little appreciated, is, that spiritual pleasures are little coveted in this world, even by those who have

⁴⁶ *Latter Day Luminary* 5 (1824): 323-26. An earlier issue listed the names of dozens of Virginians who provided financial support for initiatives pertaining to the Baptist institution, Columbian College (later George Washington University). Most likely, a number of them were subscribers to the Baptist periodical; see *Latter Day Luminary* 4 (1823): 201-208.

⁴⁷ *Western Luminary*, August 24, 1825. For the purposes of this study, Kentucky is considered an Upper South state rather than a Western state. For that reason, despite its name, the *Western Luminary* is considered "Southern." Although the *Charleston Observer* was arguably more significant as a Southern Presbyterian newspaper than was the *Luminary*, the *Observer* did not begin publishing until 1827.

admission through faith, to the fountain from whence they flow." Such essays were seen, if not read, by at least several thousand Presbyterians, some of whom can reasonably be expected to have reevaluated their own Sabbath day practices as a result. Thus, the complete lack of *petitions* during the decade following the first phase of the Sabbath mails campaign did not signify a loss of Sabbatarian concern, neither did it signify a lack of activity. That such was the case *even* in the South, where *considerably less* Sabbatarian activity took place, in comparison with New England and the Middle Atlantic states, demonstrates that among certain evangelical groups concern for the Sabbath did, in fact, continue.⁴⁸

This chapter has provided an overview of the Sabbath (to 1825) and of the first phase of the Sabbath mails controversy which took place between 1809 and 1817. As much as allowed by the sources, the geographical focus has been on the South. The importance of the 1809-1817 controversy is that it provides a logical precursor for addressing the early Jacksonian phase of the Sabbath mails controversy and the entire Sabbath movement in the Upper South between 1826 and 1836. As illustrated by the activities of such ministers as John Holt Rice of Virginia and James Blythe of Kentucky, there existed *greater continuity* between the 1810s and the late 1820s-early 1830s respecting the Sabbath than has been shown by historians to date. Although Sabbath mails petitions ceased for a period of about ten years, even Southern Sabbatarians--not to mention their more active Northern brethren--continued to present the claims of the Sabbath to the readers of denominational periodicals and newspapers, and other religious literature. As the Rev. James Blythe and others expressed, the French revolutionary regime had opposed God and

⁴⁸ *Family Visitor*, August 20, 1825. The same issue also carried an essay entitled, "The Sabbath Breakers."

become infamous by acting legislatively "against his sabbaths." But as early Jacksonian Sabbatarians learned to their dismay, the language of Blythe's discourse applied not only to French infidels of the 1790s, but also, perhaps equally well, to the congressional Sabbath mails reports of Richard M. Johnson in 1829 and 1830--reports which were to play a significant role in the early Jacksonian phase of the Sabbath mails controversy, as well as in the course of the Sabbath movement overall.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Blythe, *A Portrait of the Times*, 24.

Chapter 2

The Sabbatarian Response: North and South, 1826-1832

In March 1830, a Richmond newspaper published an account, "Liberty!--The Spirit of Sunday Mails," of a meeting of Anti-sabbatarians held in Philadelphia. The reporter recalled, "Having remained quiet for a few moments" in a courthouse room filled to overflowing, "violent stamping on the floor commenced; after which an individual . . . moved, that Mr. H.L. Coryell . . . should take the chair." When Coryell failed to appear, three others in succession were called to the chair, none of whom, if present, responded quickly enough for the satisfaction of those gathered. "Immediately a cry was raised, 'no minister, no preacher, *no Presbyterian*,' from different parts of the room," which cry was accompanied by "tremendous hissings." Eventually a Mr. Thomas was persuaded to take the chair. In the course of his attempt to bring the meeting to order, "a man arose . . . and exclaimed, while bending forward and stretching forth his brawny arm, 'If Dr. [Ezra Stiles] Ely is among ye, turn him out,'" precipitating "a roar of laughter which seemed to shake the building." Eventually, amidst much disorder, resolutions "commending ex-senator [Richard M.] Johnson, were then adopted and committees appointed to procure signatures in favor of Sunday mails."¹

¹ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, March 6, 1830 [emphasis added]. The term, "Anti-sabbatarians," has been used by historians to refer to those who opposed the petitioning of Congress to repeal that section of the postal law requiring postal workers to labor on the Christian Sabbath. One difficulty with the term is that it encompassed those who, although favoring the observance of the Sabbath, felt it unwise to request Congress to act on the matter, as well as those who, for various reasons, opposed the observance of the first day of the week as a sacred day.

Though the observer of this Anti-sabbath meeting may have exaggerated the loudness of the gathering or the brawn of Dr. Ely's antagonist, one theme was consistent with Anti-sabbatarian print during the Sabbath mails controversy between 1828 and 1830-31: the animus of organized Anti-sabbatarians toward Presbyterians. Often, this hostility was directed specifically toward the Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely. One of the most influential Presbyterian ministers in the North, several times the stated clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and in 1828 its moderator, Ely's July 4, 1827, sermon, in which he called for a "truly Christian party in Politics," served as a lightning rod for abuse for many years. In any case, Philadelphia Anti-sabbatarians had accurately identified the group most responsible for attempting to halt the profanation of the Sabbath (the running of mail stages and the opening of post offices on the first day of the week).²

As noted in Chapter One, in the early nineteenth century Presbyterians and Congregationalists were the two American religious groups most closely identified with the observance of the Christian Sabbath or Lord's day. As a result of the Plan of Union adopted by the two denominations in the first decade of the century--as a practical means of evangelizing the burgeoning West--many considered the two groups to be almost indistinguishable. Historian Richard Carwardine and others have employed the term, "Presbygationalist," in reference to their close association in the early nineteenth century.³

² Ezra Stiles Ely, *The Duty of Christian Freemen to Elect Christian Rulers* . . . (Philadelphia, 1828), 19. For an account of a town meeting held in Cincinnati, Ohio, in favor of Sunday mails, in which Presbyterians, including Ely, were castigated--over two years after his sermon--see *Western Luminary*, December 30, 1829.

³ Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J., 1962), 32-33; Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven and London, 1993), 113. In fact, in estimating the numbers of members of various denominations nationwide, Presbyterians and Congregationalists were sometimes, if not often, tallied together; see *Calvinistic Magazine* 3 (1829): 159, which used the

Although the formation of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath in 1828 generally serves as the focal point for studies of Sabbatarianism and the Sabbath mails campaigns in the early Jacksonian Era, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church laid the groundwork for this General Union two years earlier.

Richard John has noted the "anticommercial cast" of the Sabbath mails campaigns, the second phase of which was precipitated by the completion of the Erie Canal and the re-passage of the offensive postal law in 1825.⁴

The canal's opening facilitated immediate and tremendous economic and social transformations in New York and beyond, as farmers and producers in the interior gained cheap transportation to distant markets for their goods. Rochester, New York, epitomized the changes. Whereas the town had not even been founded in 1810, by 1828 it was the fastest growing city in the country. With the opening of the canal, neighboring wheat farmers could send their grain to flour mills in Rochester, whence the flour would be transported to New York City at only a fraction of the pre-canal cost. Religious revivals--and revivalism--accompanied such transformations, leading historian Whitney Cross to refer to western New York as the "Burned-over District," where the fires of religious enthusiasm and moral reform activity burned brightest and most often. By 1826, fundamental economic and social changes were well underway in western New York

phrase, "Presbyterians, including Congregationalists, 226,000."

⁴ Richard R. John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously: The Postal System, the Sabbath, and the Transformation of American Political Culture," *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (1990): 527, 535. The earlier phase of the Sabbath mails protest had run from 1809 to 1817. Between 1817 and 1826 the issue lay dormant. See John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 518, 535.

towns such as Rochester, as communities moved rapidly from subsistence to commercial agriculture and from traditional to capitalist relationships.⁵

While anxiety over such changes was not limited to Presbyterians, the increasing erosion of the Sabbath's observance in many communities--an issue of particular concern to Calvinists--caused them to take action the year after the canal's completion. Holding their annual meeting in Philadelphia in May 1826, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church passed five resolutions respecting the Sabbath which they hoped would arrest its increasing desecration. That was by no means the first time that a general assembly had brought up the issue of Sabbath observance, but prior to 1826 it had not taken such strong action. The fourth resolution contained the heart of the measures, calling for what many considered to be coercion: ". . . that it be recommended to all our ministers and church members when travelling, *to give preference* to such livery establishments, steamboats, canal boats, and other public vehicles, as do not violate the law of God, and of the land, in relation to the Sabbath." Shortly thereafter, Connecticut Congregationalists took similar action.⁶

⁵ Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York, 1990), 177-78; Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore and London, 1995), 70-71; Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1950).

⁶ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church . . . A.D. 1821 to A.D. 1835 inclusive* (Philadelphia, n.d.), May 30, 1826 [emphasis added]; Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1995), 180. In 1824, the Presbyterian Church's general assembly observed, "From almost every direction we learn that the Lord's day is most shamefully profaned, and that even professors [of religion] sanction this destructive and most offensive sin by the looseness of their own example . . . Even ministers . . . have been known to travel in public conveyances on this 'day of rest.'" Still, the assembly made no specific recommendations as it did in 1826; see *Minutes of the General Assembly*, June 7, 1824.

Perhaps encouraged by the general assembly's resolutions, and after attempting to obtain Sabbath day closings of the Erie Canal's locks as well as local businesses, wealthy Rochester businessman and Presbyterian elder Josiah Bissell initiated a Sabbath-keeping stage coach and canal packet line which generated widespread publicity, as well as virulent opposition. Determined to demonstrate that strict morality was not at odds with profit-making, Bissell's Pioneer Line featured Monday through Saturday passenger service between Albany and Buffalo, a route until then monopolized by a seven-day per week establishment, the Old Mail Line.⁷

Richard John has observed that Bissell's attempt to capture a previously neglected element of the market--that represented by the growing evangelical middle class--"was something new in American public life." Not only did Bissell encourage evangelical middle-class travellers--including women and even children--by respecting the Sabbath, he also sought to employ only courteous drivers who patronized rest stop establishments serving only non-alcoholic beverages. By using such measures as well as fast horses, Bissell hoped to compete successfully against the Old Mail Line, in spite of having one day less of operation each week than his competitor.⁸

In May 1828, with his Pioneer Line having captured roughly thirty percent of the Albany-Buffalo market, Bissell took advantage of the annual meetings of the major moral reform societies in New York City to organize the General Union for Promoting the

⁷ John, *Spreading the News*, 180-83.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

Observance of the Christian Sabbath. The Rochester Sabbatarian's influence was such that historian John labels the General Union "Bissell's brainchild."⁹

Some three hundred ministers and laymen, almost all from the New England and Middle Atlantic states, and about one-half of whom were New Yorkers, met at the city's American Tract Society House. Present were leading pious businessmen such as Arthur Tappan who, according to Robert Abzug, was "probably the largest contributor to evangelical causes in the land" between 1825 and 1837. Leading Congregationalist minister and long time moral reformer Lyman Beecher gave the "Address of the Convention to the people of the United States." The Sabbath was "the main spring of all moral movements . . . and fountain of illumination to the moral world," Beecher intoned, and the day "by whose influence alone is guaranteed the . . . perpetuity of our civil and religious institutions." Disclaiming coercion, by which he meant the enforcement of laws rather than the judicious use of one's patronage, he declared, "We have come to the conclusion, to withdraw our . . . patronage from the prostration of the Sabbath, because no alternative remains but this, or the ruin of our Republic." As John notes, Beecher's address contained no reference whatsoever to the Sabbath mails issue, suggesting that the overriding purpose of the General Union was, in fact, the molding of a "correct" public opinion, rather than merely obtaining the repeal of a portion of the offensive postal law.¹⁰

⁹ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 537.

¹⁰ [Lyman Beecher], *Address of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* . . . (New York, 1828), 3-5; John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 537-40; Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York and Oxford, 1994), 108. Three Southern newspapers in which Beecher's address was printed were the Richmond, Virginia, *Visitor and Telegraph*, June 7, 1828, the Lexington, Kentucky, *Western Luminary*, June 25, 1828, and the *Savannah Daily Georgian*, July 26, July 29, and July 31, 1828.

Borrowing the principle of "total abstinence" from the temperance crusade, Bissell's influence was perhaps most evident in the adoption of an article which, admittedly, would have helped the Pioneer Line's financial state as well as serving the cause of the Sabbath. Article VI of the constitution, containing the pledge for members of the General Union, professed, "' . . . we will . . . encourage and give a preference to those lines of conveyances, whose owners do not employ them on the Sabbath.'" The significance of the article was that, like its Presbyterian antecedent from 1826, it amounted to a boycott, a measure which in early Jacksonian America was generally perceived as threatening the "harmony" of communities--indeed, the very harmony Sabbatarians and other moral reformers hoped to "restore"--and it appeared to many to represent coercive rather than persuasive tendencies. Though the controversial article was repealed the following year, its initial adoption in conjunction with the activities of a few leading businessmen such as Josiah Bissell in Rochester and Lewis Tappan in New York--both of whom organized campaigns to close bakeries, stores, taverns, and theaters on the Sabbath--have invariably led historians, until recently, to focus almost exclusively upon the "radical" element of the Sabbatarian movement.¹¹

Examples of a focus upon the "radical" may be found among the relatively few historians who have addressed early Jacksonian Sabbatarianism. Among an earlier generation of historians, Charles I. Foster's *An Errand of Mercy* emphasized social-economic considerations over genuine moral-religious ones. In 1960 Foster wrote, "Genuine religious conviction . . . had to find its expression in conformity to a pattern of behavior. And even without the conviction, conformity would serve." Acknowledging

¹¹ [Beecher], *Address of the General Union*, 7-8; *First Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1829), 3, 10-11; Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 114-15.

the close link between the temperance and Sabbath movements--while emphasizing "radical" behavior--Foster noted, "Economic and social boycott were the special weapons of temperance and Sabbath observance. . . ." ¹²

In 1971, an important essay by Bertram Wyatt-Brown examined Sabbatarianism within the context of radical abolitionism. In it, the author argued that the Sabbatarianism of the late 1820s represented the "prelude" to the radical abolitionism of the 1830s. Indeed, some of the same men, notably the Tappan brothers, Arthur and Lewis, and William Lloyd Garrison, were active in both movements. Furthermore, the techniques of the Sabbatarians, especially the use of mass petition drives and widespread publishing of pamphlets and tracts, foreshadowed similar practices by abolitionists and by the mass political parties of the 1830s and later. While Wyatt-Brown saw Sabbatarianism as significant in terms of what it foreshadowed, he was unimpressed with the movement itself, writing, "In itself, the Sabbath mail issue was hardly a matter to shake the foundations of the republic." Yet, the writings and petition signatures of thousands of Sabbatarians nationwide testified to the belief, at least among a portion of the evangelical middle class, that the issue *was* one, in their view, upon which the republic's future depended. ¹³

In 1978, Paul Johnson's *Shopkeeper's Millennium* continued the earlier emphasis upon coercive Sabbatarians. Focusing on the best example of the attempt to *enforce* Sabbath observance at the local level--Rochester, New York--Johnson depicts Sabbatarians as

¹² Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1960), 116, 228.

¹³ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Prelude to Abolitionism: Sabbatarian Politics and the Rise of the Second Party System," *Journal of American History* 58 (1971-72): 328-29, 338-39.

middle-class evangelical businessmen intent on using patronage to force their community's adherence to their moral standards. For him, however, economic and social transformation was the key, while religious and moral convictions were of little import. Probably because no other local studies of early Jacksonian Sabbatarians had been produced, several recent historians--Robert Abzug, extensively; and, Daniel Feller and Steven Mintz, briefly--have emphasized Rochester and New York City Sabbatarians, to the exclusion of less prominent, and less radical, Sabbatarians elsewhere. To their credit, however, they have at least briefly addressed a movement some have neglected altogether. But one drawback to that approach has been to promote the perception that radical New York (General Union) Sabbatarians were representative of Sabbatarians nationwide. A related idea of historians seems to have been that Sabbatarians were not present *except* where auxiliaries to the General Union existed, all but a few of which were located in New England and the Middle Atlantic region. Granted, only two or three of the approximately twenty-six auxiliaries to the General Union were organized in the South, but Sabbatarians existed in the South nonetheless, especially in the Upper South.¹⁴

Even some historians of American reform have neglected Sabbatarianism. In his work, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, Ronald Walters barely mentions Sabbatarianism, while addressing in detail such reforms as Grahamism, phrenology, and the peace movement. Other historians have used appellations for the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath--admittedly, a difficult name--which are simply

¹⁴ Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York, 1978), 83-88; Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 79, 111-16; Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840* (Baltimore and London, 1995), 116; Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers*, 70-71; *Second Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1830), 5.

incorrect, suggesting that scant attention has been devoted to the movement. But most important, if radical early Jacksonian Sabbatarianism existed *outside* of New York, it has yet to be demonstrated. Moreover, my study demonstrates that, at least in the Upper South, *moderate* rather than radical Sabbatarianism prevailed in the early Jacksonian period. Coercive measures such as boycotts and political struggles to pass new Sabbath laws or to enforce old ones--though admittedly more dramatic than rational argument, moral suasion, and personal example--were entirely absent from Upper South Sabbatarianism.¹⁵

A few historians, however, have moved away from the emphasis upon so-called radical Sabbatarianism. In 1993, for instance, Richard Carwardine's *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* dealt with Sabbatarianism to some degree. Carwardine's treatment is broad, emphasizing the role of the Sabbath mails controversy in the division of evangelicals into the opposing political parties of the 1830s, the Democrats and Whigs. Acknowledging the difficulties of attempting to draw conclusions regarding the connections between religious and political affiliations of voters in the early Jacksonian Era, Carwardine, nonetheless, suggests--as have others--that the Whigs' vision of active government and moral uplift may have been somewhat more attractive to evangelicals than was the Democrats' vision of limited government and individual freedom. Moreover, Carwardine claims that Richard M. Johnson's Sabbath mails reports may have been the

¹⁵ Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York, 1978). Among an earlier generation of historians, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., failed to take Sabbatarianism seriously when he wrote, "Many conservatives favored Sunday mails; and few people in any case took the question very seriously." See Schlesinger's *The Age of Jackson* (Boston, 1953 [1945]), 143.

single most important element in the political affiliation that many evangelicals chose--whether they aligned themselves in the Whig *or* the Democratic camp.¹⁶

By far, Richard John's works have been the most significant in recent years on early Jacksonian Sabbatarianism. In his essay, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," he emphasizes the "unabashedly democratic . . . almost populist" feature of the Sabbatarians' General Union and its role in the forming of the Second Party System. Moreover, in contrast with many previous historians, John acknowledges the seriousness with which contemporaries had treated the issue. In *Spreading the News*, John shifts his focus somewhat, viewing the Sabbath mails controversy as the issue which "helped to transform prevailing expectations with regard to the proper role of the central government in American public life." Whereas prior to 1810 Americans had limited their concern for the moral accountability of government to local and state levels, the "invasion of the sacred" by Congress' opening post offices nationwide on the Sabbath and the resulting campaigns against the perceived moral outrage led to a transformation. According to John, the issue caused many evangelicals to expand "their understanding of their covenant with God to embrace the central government, thus hastening the gradual transformation of the United States from a loose confederation of autonomous states into a unified nation." A somewhat different phrasing of the same basic phenomenon may be that, prior to the 1810 postal law, Americans had little reason to doubt the supposedly Christian character of the central government, which was, in any case, hardly involved in the daily lives of most Americans except through the operations of the postal department itself. However, after the Johnson Sabbath mails reports of 1829 and 1830, the supposedly Christian character of the central government, or at least that of the Democratic Party, was--for

¹⁶ Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics*, 57, 99-100, 113, 132.

some evangelicals--brought into question. Perhaps in a similar vein, as historian Paul Goodman has noted, if the choice of chief magistrate of a "Christian Republic" among evangelicals was limited to an Andrew Jackson or a Henry Clay, "the hour of danger was late."¹⁷

One aspect of early Jacksonian Sabbatarianism little understood by historians concerns the role of women. Richard John observes that in this period the post office--much like the tavern or the Masonic Hall--was a distinctly male sphere, and one which to many women threatened the growing middle-class values emphasizing "home and hearth." According to John, the post office and the postal law represented a particular grievance for women on the Sabbath. With post offices open to the public on that day, the arrival of the mail--or the possibility thereof--offered husbands "a tailor-made excuse for avoiding their domestic obligations on the one day of the week when they could not plausibly claim to be at work." Some men congregated at the post office on the Sabbath, read the mail and the newspapers, and then spent the afternoon talking, drinking, and playing poker. Despite the grievance that the wives of such husbands held against Sabbath mails, John points out that no woman appears to have signed--much less initiated--so much as a single Sabbatarian petition (a point my study corroborates for the Upper South). As John concludes, early Jacksonian Sabbatarianism seems to have served "as a pointed reminder of the powerful constraints that blocked the open participation of women in the public

¹⁷ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 538, 563; John, *Spreading the News*, 176-77, 204-205. Similarly, Carwardine, in *Evangelicals and Politics*, (pg. 18), writes, "... Calvinists of the Reformed tradition, and many of them southerners--remained profoundly influenced by the Puritan conception of the state as a moral being and by its corollary, that Christians had a political duty to develop and maintain virtue and the highest standards in the conduct of civil affairs." Paul Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic: Antimasonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826-1836* (New York and Oxford, 1988), 67.

sphere." In the context of such constraints, it is interesting that of the eighty original members of the Virginia Society for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath, twenty-two were women, but the specifics of their involvement is unknown.¹⁸

The most recent work addressing early Jacksonian Sabbatarianism is John West's *Politics of Revelation and Reason*. Unlike a number of historians who have discussed Sabbath mails, West has actually examined individual petitions which citizens sent to Congress during both the 1810s and the 1828-30 phases of the Sabbath mails controversy. West sees the Sabbath mails issue as illustrating "the most fundamental premise of the Founders' system . . . that the morality on which public discourse rests must be sanctioned by reason as well as revelation," a conclusion which comports with the present study of Upper South Sabbatarianism. Even West, however, apparently sees no particular significance to the Sabbath as the religious and social institution *par excellence* which many Jacksonians believed to ensure the continuance of genuine religion *and* social-economic, or civil-temporal, welfare in their communities.¹⁹

That many early Jacksonian evangelicals perceived the Sabbath in that light may help to explain the fact that there was such widespread agreement on the institution among sects which, in other arenas, experienced intense competition, and often, bitter conflict. Yet, in one sense the Sabbath may have been a "double-edged sword": even though general

¹⁸ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 546-48. In *Spreading the News*, John acknowledges that *female* postal officers, although rare, were not entirely unknown, but they were most likely to be found in small post offices in the North (see pages 138-42). In my examination of selected post offices in the Upper South, I found no female postmistresses. For an example of female Anti-sabbatarian petitioners, see Chapter 3 to follow; for female members of the Virginia Sabbath Society, see Chapter 5 to follow.

¹⁹ John G. West, Jr., *The Politics of Revelation and Reason: Religion and Civic Life in the New Nation* (Lawrence, Kan., 1996), Chapter 3; the above quote is from page 147.

agreement on the day's importance and its observance prevailed throughout the ranks of many, if not the vast majority of, Protestant denominations, there was a hint that respect for the Sabbath was considered by some an issue of denominational pride. In other words, some evangelicals sensed that the Sabbath issue might be used to advantage in the sectarian rivalries of the day. For example, the Methodist Church's *Christian Advocate and Journal*--the most widely published religious periodical in America at the time--asserted its denomination's leadership with respect to Sabbath observance. The New York City paper was edited by the Rev. Nathan Bangs, who was concerned that Methodists be able to hold their own in the "Benevolent Empire" dominated by Presbyterians and Congregationalists. In May 1828, just after the forming of the General Union in New York, Bangs' paper declared unabashedly,

While other Christian denominations have cause of rejoicing in this new era . . . we think we may be allowed to say, we joy 'more than ye all'; for, from the origin of Methodism, thanks to the providence of God, and the wisdom and piety of our founder, we have led the van in this matter. The observance of the sabbath . . . has always been, and still is, with us a 'general rule' . . . and no instance of overt violation on the part of our members, has escaped church censure.

Considering the intensity of denominational rivalries during the Second Great Awakening, agreement regarding the Sabbath among the four major Protestant groups--"Presbygationalists," Episcopalians, Regular (Calvinist) Baptists, and Methodists--was especially noteworthy and suggested the perceived fundamental importance of the institution for religion and American society. Still, as the foregoing passage suggested, agreement on the Sabbath issue did not necessarily allow the battle for converts and

influence among denominations to be set aside completely--indeed, the Sabbath was yet another aspect of that competition.²⁰

Though the General Union was not formed specifically to prosecute a campaign for petitioning Congress, but "for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath," it did, nonetheless, assist in organizing the two Sabbath mails petition campaigns, December 1828--March 1829 and December 1829--May 1830, which corresponded to consecutive sessions of the twentieth and the twenty-first Congress. Still, it chose not to petition Congress in its corporate capacity. That fact, John notes, highlighted a new approach on the part of Sabbatarians toward achieving moral reform. Instead of "working through existing institutions like the Presbyterian general assembly, the GUPCS vowed to take its case directly to the American people," an "almost populist" approach highlighted by the circulation of nearly one hundred thousand copies of Beecher's 1828 address, an impressive number given the reading population of the day. Rather than attempting to obtain stricter enforcement of existing state and local Sabbath laws--of which there were

²⁰ *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 30, 1828. An excellent example of agreement on the Sabbath in the midst of fierce denominational competition took place between Presbyterians and Methodists in the Upper South. The *Calvinistic Magazine* was established by Presbyterians in Rogersville, Tennessee, in 1827. Two years later, Methodists in Lexington, Kentucky, began publishing the *Gospel Herald*, in large part to refute what they considered unfair Presbyterian claims (in the *Calvinistic Magazine*) against their church. Yet the two antagonists were in agreement on the value of the Sabbath and both opposed Sabbath mails. For example, an article ("A Dialogue Between a Methodist and a Calvinist") refuting the common Methodist claim that Calvinists "borrowed" their doctrines appeared in the *Calvinistic Magazine* 1 (1827): 145; an article refuting Methodist doctrines published in the *Gospel Herald* appeared in the *Calvinistic Magazine* 5 (1831): 101-103; an article in the *Gospel Herald* 1 (1829): 49, stated that the *Calvinistic Magazine* "is extensively known for the ceaseless and bitter warfare it has carried on, against the doctrines, discipline, ministry and religious character of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

many--the General Union sought "not to affect the government directly, but the government *through the people*."²¹

As congressmen prepared to return to Washington in December 1828, Sabbatarian organizers held at least one meeting in New York City to coordinate a nationwide petition effort to end Sabbath mails. Probably the evangelical Boston attorney Jeremiah Evarts--who also served as the corresponding secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions--was in attendance. In any case, by early December, one or more petitions drawn up by Evarts, and perhaps by other organizers, were being mass produced and mailed to postmasters, ministers, and prominent individuals in communities nationwide requesting their assistance. Anxious to appeal to the widest possible audience, the memorials accentuated the importance of the Sabbath to maintaining the virtuous citizenry deemed essential to the success of the American experiment in self-government. As John notes, the petitions emphasized "republican theory and constitutional law" over theological fine points, but at least one such "New York petition" stated that "the government of God is recognized in this Christian land" and referred to the "laws of God," biblical references which even non-Calvinists or non-professing Christians were likely to accept.²²

²¹ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 538, 540; *First Annual Report of the General Union*, 8, 13 [emphasis added].

²² Petition of inhabitants of Richmond, Kentucky, January 12, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (letter accompanying petition); John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 540-41; West, *Politics of Revelation and Reason*, 146-48. [Jeremiah Evarts], *An Account of Memorials Presented to Congress During its last Session . . .* (New York, 1829), 4. Sabbatarian Harmon Kingsbury credited Evarts with authoring "circulars and petitions" and presenting them for signatures, and conversing "extensively with members of Congress," among other activities; see Harmon Kingsbury, *The Sabbath: A Brief History of Laws, Petitions . . . Relating to the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1840), 145. Several mass-produced memorials were used between 1828 and 1830, but if individuals other than

Clear evidence from the two most important Southern states in terms of participation in Sabbath mails petitioning suggests both the success and the geographical extent of the New York-organized campaign. Of Southern and Western states, the Upper South states of Kentucky (also a Western state) and Virginia sent the most memorials to Congress. Individuals friendly to the Sabbath cause in those states--and likely in most, if not all the states--received one or more copies of the "New York petition" along with a request for procuring signatures from local inhabitants. For example, two petitions sent from Kentucky, one from Richmond (Madison County) and another from Green County, both received in Washington in January 1829, were accompanied by copies of a letter signed by Michael G. Youce, a Danville, Kentucky, bookstore owner and a Presbyterian elder. As was the case with many Sabbatarians, Youce was also active in other denominational or moral reform work, serving as the treasurer of the Presbyterian Education Society of Kentucky. Youce sent a copy of his letter and the petition to a prominent local citizen in Richmond and to one in Greensburgh (Green County), each of whom signed the accompanying memorial. In his December 1828 letter sent from Danville, Youce declared:

By request of a Committee appointed by a meeting in New-York, inviting the cooperation of the friends of the Sabbath in other States, I send you the annexed Memorial to Congress, with a hope that you will exert yourself to procure as many signatures as you can, & forward the same to . . . our members of Congress as early as practicable, say the 15th or 20th of January. The subject will be brought before Congress, at or before that time, and it is desirable that as many letters from influential Citizens of the various parts of the Country should

Evarts wrote them, their identities are unknown. Such petitions generally left a blank space in which local inhabitants were to write the name of their county or town. On some mass-produced memorials, the name of the state to which copies were to be mailed was printed with the rest of the text.

be forwarded . . . It is important that the *whole Community* should express their sentiments on the subject.

Evidently, Youce was responding to the specific request of New York Sabbatarians and almost certainly, the "annexed Memorial" (the "New York petition" herein) had come from New York. Also noteworthy was the two-fold request, "to procure as many signatures as you can," and the statement that "it is desirable that as many letters [not merely memorials] from influential Citizens" should be sent to Congress. Apparently, *both* raw numbers of signatures *and* the personal opinions of leading citizens were deemed important for "the *whole Community*" to express its view on the Sabbath issue.²³

Another example was from Virginia. Separate petitions from the inhabitants of Albemarle and Henrico counties, Virginia, each were accompanied by a cover letter from four men, at least two of whom were members of Richmond's First Presbyterian Church. The first of the four names was David J. (or "I.") Burr, in all probability the wealthy Richmond merchant and elder in the church (two men with this name appeared in the 1830 census, both residing in Richmond). The Burr "committee's" letter, like that of Youce, was an original composition but the two letters were of similar content. As was the case in Richmond, Kentucky, and Green County, Kentucky, and in Washington County, Tennessee, the Albemarle and Henrico memorials were copies of the "New York petition." The Burr "committee's" letter was dated from Richmond, December 13, 1828. Thus, cover letters from Kentucky and Virginia which accompanied copies of the "New York

²³ Petition of inhabitants of Richmond, Kentucky, January 12, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (letter accompanying petition dated December 1828); petition of inhabitants of Green County, Kentucky, January 20, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (letter accompanying petition dated December 1828). For Youce, see *Western Luminary*, March 12, 1828, December 14, 1831. Additionally, the December 31, 1828, issue of the *Western Luminary* published the "New York petition" which was then in circulation in Kentucky.

petition," were each dated in the month of December 1828 and were in direct response to the organizing efforts of New York Sabbatarians.²⁴

While the foregoing discussion demonstrates the coordinated nature of the New York-inspired petition campaign of December 1828 to March 1829, the prevalence of the "New York petition" in counties throughout Kentucky and Virginia hints at the geographical extent to which Sabbath mails petitions were instigated by the efforts of New Yorkers. For example, in Kentucky, there were no less than five cases--aside from the Green County and Richmond memorials--in which copies of the "New York petition" were signed by local inhabitants. Inhabitants of the towns of Danville (one of whom was Youce) and Millersburgh, and residents of the counties of Garrard and Rockcastle, signed separate copies of the "New York petition," as did citizens whose memorial identified them merely as "inhabitants of Kentucky." And in Virginia, at least two counties in

²⁴ Petition of inhabitants of Albemarle County, Virginia, (n.d.), Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (letter accompanying petition dated December 13, 1828); petition of inhabitants of Henrico County, Virginia, January 19, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (letter accompanying petition dated December 13, 1828). Aside from Burr (ordained in 1814), the three others whose names appeared on the cover letter were John N. Gordon, an elder (1823); Charles B. Williams; and, Fleming James, a member of First Presbyterian and a wealthy Richmond merchant; see *Historical Souvenir, The First Presbyterian Church, Corner Grace and Madison Streets, Richmond, Virginia* (Richmond, Va., 1904), list of elders. Burr, Gordon, and James signed a Sabbath mails petition from Richmond in February 1830; see petition of inhabitants of Richmond, Virginia, February 2, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). A third example beyond the scope of this work was from Tennessee. A letter dated from Nashville, December 29, 1828, from a committee headed by six-term governor William Carroll sought the assistance of citizens with respect to the Sabbath mails campaign. The petition accompanying the Carroll committee's letter was a copy of the "New York petition." See petition of inhabitants of Washington County, Tennessee, February 2, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (letter accompanying petition dated December 29, 1828); [Evarts], *An Account of Memorials*, 23; Forrest L. Marion, "East Tennessee and the Sabbath Question, 1828-1832," *Journal of East Tennessee History* 66 (1994): 14-15.

addition to Albemarle and Henrico--namely, Essex and Rockbridge--and the town of Fredericksburg (handwritten copy), sent a copy of the "New York petition" to Congress. Referring to such impressive coordination of Sabbath mails petitions as was experienced in the Upper South--and, presumably, in other regions as well--Richard John rightly observes, "That such a strategy could be undertaken in a republic as far-flung as the United States was, of course, a tribute not merely to the Sabbatarians' organizational sophistication but to the revolution in long-distance communications that they were among the first to exploit."²⁵

Unquestionably, the 1828-29 petition campaign was largely the result of the organizational efforts of New York Sabbatarians and their like-minded associates in

²⁵ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 541; petition of inhabitants of Danville, Kentucky, (n.d.), Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Millersburgh, Kentucky, February 2, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Garrard County, Kentucky, (n.d.), Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Rockcastle County, Kentucky, January 18, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Kentucky, February 2 [1829--the year was not marked, but the petition was received by 20 Cong.; in 1830 the 21 Cong. was in session], Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). Petition of inhabitants of Essex County, Virginia, January 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Fairfield, Rockbridge County, Virginia, (received) February 2, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Fredericksburg, Virginia, (received) January 19, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). Most likely, a number of other Virginia counties used the "New York petition." Although I have noted each case of a Virginia county sending a Sabbath mails petition to Congress between 1828 and 1830, in some cases I have not noted the *text* of the petition. In Tennessee, copies of the "New York petition" came from nine of the thirteen counties which sent memorials to Washington between 1828 and 1830. Several Tennessee counties sent two petitions, in which cases the other (non-New York) petition was an original composition or a copy of a different pre-printed document. Tennessee counties which sent the "New York petition"--probably, all of them were signed in December 1828 or January 1829, though a few were received in Congress undated--were Anderson (though *handwritten*, the text was identical to the "New York petition"), Franklin, Knox, Roane, Rutherford, Smith, Sullivan, Warren, and Washington.

communities nationwide. As Jeremiah Evarts noted, by the spring of 1829 a total of 441 separate petitions had been sent to the House of Representatives, while 26 had been presented to the Senate, hailing "from Vermont to Alabama, and from Maine to the banks of the Mississippi." While Evarts was essentially correct--even inhabitants of Detroit in the Territory of Michigan sent a petition--the vast majority of memorials from the combined efforts of Sabbatarians during 1828-29 and 1829-30 came from eight states: the northern states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania; and the Upper South states of Kentucky and Virginia. As John notes, the 467 petitions sent in the 1828-29 campaign exceeded the number (409) sent during the entire first phase of the Sabbath mails protest during the 1810s. Evidently, the 1828-29 campaign had broadened the Sabbatarians' public support on the issue. Moreover, in January 1829 the House post office committee, to which the vast majority of the petitions had been directed, opined, "It is believed that the history of legislation in this country affords no instance, in which a stronger expression has been made, if regard be had to the numbers, the wealth, or the intelligence of the petitioners."²⁶

²⁶ [Evarts], *An Account of Memorials*, 4, 7, 31. Memorials to both houses of Congress were received by the respective post office committee. Frederick L. Bronner, "The Observance of the Sabbath in the United States, 1800-1865" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1937), 114; John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 543; *Niles' Register*, February 7, 1829. The House committee recommended that the portion of the 1825 postal law requiring postmasters to *deliver* letters, newspapers, and packages on the Sabbath be repealed. Note that the committee did not ask for the *transportation* of the mail on the Sabbath to be discontinued, as most Sabbatarians also desired. John notes that the House committee, while friendly to the desires of the petitioners, was convinced that the transportation of the mail on the Sabbath was necessary so as not to interrupt the regularity of the mails and, with it, the nation's commerce; see John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 556-57.

Although the House post office committee treated the petitioners respectfully, even recommending the adoption of one of the two requests of the Sabbatarians, Richard M. Johnson's Senate committee took a far more aggressive approach. As John, Carwardine, and others have suggested, the Johnson Sabbath mails reports--from the Senate in 1829 and the House in 1830--probably had the greatest consequence of any event or aspect of the controversy in molding the way in which Jacksonian Americans, if not historians, viewed the issue. Most historians have treated Johnson generously, generally taking his arguments at face value rather than examining them closely to determine their accuracy, logic, and relevance to the issues at stake. Perhaps that is partly due, as discussed earlier, to the perception that many, if not most, Sabbatarians were "radicals." In any case, many historians have used terms such as "enforce," "impose," or "coerce" to describe the objective of the petitioners respecting the Sabbath, when, in fact, that was decidedly *not* what they requested from Congress.²⁷

²⁷ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 557-59, 564-66; Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics*, 57, 99-100, 113, 132. A few of the many examples of historians taking Richard M. Johnson's arguments at face value are as follows. Paul Johnson wrote of the 1829 Sabbath mails report, "Senator Richard Johnson . . . explained that the federal government could not *make laws concerning religion* . . ." (*Shopkeeper's Millennium*, 86) [emphasis added]. None of the petitions I have examined from the Upper South had *asked* Congress to make such a law; in fact, they requested Congress to *undo* the law *concerning religion* already passed--in 1810 and 1825. Harry L. Watson wrote, ". . . Richard M. Johnson had championed the separation of church and state and rejected most efforts to *impose* sabbath observance on both state and national governments" (*Liberty and Power*, 226) [emphasis added]. While I am unaware of any dealings Richard M. Johnson may have had with *state* governments regarding the Sabbath, at the federal level, no Sabbath mails petitions I have examined requested Congress to *impose* the Sabbath's observance. That point does not deny that Sabbatarians, in some cases, did work for *enforcement* of local and state Sabbath laws, though I have uncovered only one such example in the South between 1826 and 1836; in Savannah, Georgia, a local Sabbath society advocated enforcement of the city's Sabbath law; see *Charleston Observer*, August 9, 1828; *Savannah Daily Georgian*, August 2, 1828. See Paul Conkin, *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1995), 143.

During the 1829-30 Sabbath mails campaign--following the attacks of Anti-sabbatarians claiming that Presbyterians (primarily) were attempting to "unite church and state"--many petitioners went so far as to reject specifically the idea of Congress passing a law *enforcing* Sabbath observance. Probably, most petitioners during the 1828-29 drive never considered doing so, because they never expected to be charged with such an unrepugnant, if not unchristian, intent. However, at least a few memorialists seemed to anticipate the unfounded claims of their antagonists. Memorialists from Prince Edward County, Virginia, for example, almost all of whom were Presbyterians, stated,

The undersigned are aware, indeed, that a peculiar delicacy is felt by Congress in regard to legislation on the subject of religion--and so may it ever be! But they see a wide difference between that exercise of authority which *enforces* religious observances, and that which requires the violation of religious precepts. The former would be steadfastly [*sic*] resisted by them, in every way becoming citizens & christians: the latter is regarded as a sore grievance.

...

Even Prince Edward's petition, however, was not received until a week *after* Johnson's 1829 report had been issued. Indeed, many petitions had not yet been received in Congress when the senator issued his report, and, in any case, there is no reason to think that Johnson would have considered their arguments, even had they arrived earlier.²⁸

Steven Mintz wrote, "A Senate report in 1829 pronounced that Congress was not the proper tribunal *to determine the laws of God*" (*Moralists and Modernizers*, 71) [emphasis added]. Again, no petition I have seen had requested Congress to take such action; petitioners acted from the perspective that they *already knew* what were the laws of God.

²⁸ The Prince Edward County, Virginia, petition contained *the most signatures (over 230) of any memorial from the Upper South states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee*, between 1828 and 1830. See petition of inhabitants of Prince Edward County, Virginia, January 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) [emphasis added].

But given the fears that developed not infrequently in the early nineteenth century over supposed attempts to undermine the young republic--the Antimasonry movement is an excellent example from the same time period as the Sabbath mails controversy--could it have been that the ambiguity of some petitions, such as the widely used "New York petition," contributed to the misperception of Sabbatarians' intentions? For example, the "New York petition" stated that its memorialists "deem it unnecessary to urge upon the Congress . . . *the obligation* of observing the Lord's day, of protecting the people in their religious privileges, and of the baneful consequences of practices which, under the sanction of government, are an apology for every other violation of the Sabbath by individuals." Though the petition did not ask for Congress to require *the citizenry* to observe the Lord's day, neither did it specifically reject such an idea. Moreover, it did assume that Congress understood its obligation to observe the Sabbath itself by setting aside the business of the post office department--which, as Sabbatarians often noted, was the *only* department of government regularly engaged in official activity on that day. In fact, Sabbatarians often pointed to the Constitution's clause allowing the president "ten Days (Sundays excepted)" for acting on a bill from Congress as having established the (Protestant) Christian faith as the religion recognized by the federal government. As Richard John has observed, the major part of the Sabbath controversy in early Jacksonian America may well have been a struggle over the perceived proper relationship in the republic between "church and state."²⁹

²⁹ Petition of inhabitants of Richmond, Kentucky, January 12, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (letter accompanying petition dated December 1828) [emphasis added]. Petition of inhabitants of Washington County, Tennessee, February 2, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (letter accompanying petition dated December 29, 1828); Petition of inhabitants of Albemarle County, Virginia, (n.d.), Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (letter accompanying petition dated December 13, 1828). For references to the constitutional clause cited above (article I, section VII), see *Calvinistic Magazine* 4

The 1829 report which purported to be Johnson's was actually the work of his Washington landlord and friend Obadiah B. Brown, a clerk in the general post office who also pastored the First Baptist Church. Though it was widely understood that Johnson did not possess the expertise to have produced the report himself, it was many years before Brown's authorship was generally accepted. At the time, some assumed the author to be either of two strident Anti-sabbatarians: the principal founder of the Christian-Disciples movement, Alexander Campbell, or, the Baptist minister who railed against suspected unions of church and state, John Leland.³⁰

The report was penned *as if* Sabbatarians desired to "introduce a system of religious coercion in our civil institutions," as though they had asked Congress "to determine what are the laws of God," as if "extensive religious combinations, to effect a political object" necessarily made a cause bad, and, as though the petitioners had not complained "of any infringement upon their own rights" of conscience. As a torrent of newspaper articles and letters to editors in the months following the Johnson report indicated--for example, at least six consecutive weeks of rebuttals appeared in the Lexington, Kentucky, *Western Luminary*--none of the aforementioned presuppositions could withstand close scrutiny.³¹

(1830): 254-55; and, petition of inhabitants of Greene County, Tennessee, (n.d.), Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). The Greene County memorial was the most professionally-produced petition obviously of local origin in the states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, between 1828 and 1830. John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 555.

³⁰ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 559. An article containing extracts of a statement by Leland on the Sabbath mails issue appeared in the *Southern Religious Telegraph*, February 13, 1830. Leland charged Sabbatarians with desiring "Sabbatical laws . . . to govern the people on Sunday."

³¹ *Register of Debates in Congress*, 20 Cong., 2 Sess., Appendix, 24-26. A few of the many rebuttals to the Johnson report were published as follows: *Christian Advocate* 7 (1829): 221-22 (Philadelphia; Presbyterian journal); *Spirit of the Pilgrims* 2 (1829): 142-45 (Boston; Congregationalist journal); *Visitor and Telegraph*, February 14, and, March

One of the earliest, yet strongest, rebuttals came from the *New York Observer*, which argued,

We are sorry that language so insulting to a large and respectable portion of the people should have been uttered on the floor of Congress. The petitioners . . . embrace the great body of respectable merchants . . . the most honored of our surviving revolutionary worthies . . . judges . . . and men of the first literary and political standing. . . . That such men should be treated as if they were children, ignorant of the meaning . . . of their petitions . . . as if they were a band of blind and bigotted enthusiasts . . . is such an outrage upon all propriety that it not ought to have been suffered in the Senate, without censure from the President.³²

Although examples from New England and the Middle Atlantic region abound, the present study's focus is on the Upper South and, therefore, will emphasize that region's response to the Johnson report. The Upper South's two "Presbyterian" newspapers, the

14 and 21, 1829 (Richmond, Virginia; Presbyterian newspaper)--the latter two issues contained pieces by "A MEMORIALIST" who had written the *Staunton Spectator*; *Western Luminary*, March 4, 11, 18, and 25, and, April 1 and 8, 1829 (Lexington, Kentucky; Presbyterian newspaper)--those six issues contained pieces specifically for the *Luminary*, under four pseudonyms: "A SUBSCRIBER," "X.Y. & Z.," "A lover of civil and religious liberty," and "PHILOSABBATOS." Also, the *Luminary* reprinted "Sabbath Mails" articles from Baptist newspapers, for example, two from the *Christian Watchman* and one from the *Vermont Telegraph*, on March 11, 1829. Articles on the Sabbath mails issue, some of which were partisan reviews of Johnson's report continued sporadically throughout 1829 and increased in frequency with the beginning of the December 1829 to May 1830 petition campaign. See, for example, *Visitor and Telegraph*, June 20, and, December 19 and 25, 1829; *Southern Religious Telegraph*, January 2, 16, 23 and 30, and, February 6 and 13, 1830; the last issue cited contained a letter specifically for the *Telegraph* entitled, "To the Friends of Sunday Mails," purporting to be from "A CITIZEN, WHO HAS NO SECTARIAN INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT;" and, *Western Luminary*, August 26, October 14, November 25, and, December 9, 1829; and, January 27 and February 3, 1830.

³² *Visitor and Telegraph*, February 7, 1829; *Western Luminary*, February 18, 1829 [reprinted from *New York Observer*].

Richmond, Virginia, *Visitor and Telegraph*, and the Lexington, Kentucky, *Western Luminary*, led the field among regional periodicals in rebutting the 1829 Johnson report. The *Visitor and Telegraph* was owned and edited by a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Amasa Converse, and claimed approximately 3,000 subscribers, mainly in Virginia and North Carolina. The *Western Luminary*, the oldest religious periodical west of the Appalachians, was owned and edited by Presbyterian elder Thomas T. Skillman and had approximately 2,000 subscribers, mainly in Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, and Tennessee. Those were impressive numbers of subscribers, especially by Southern standards, among religious periodicals exceeded perhaps only by Alexander Campbell's *Christian Baptist* (beginning in 1830, *Millennial Harbinger*).³³

In any case, the *Visitor and Telegraph* offered an early rebuttal to Johnson's Sabbath mails report. The February 14, 1829 issue examined in excruciating detail "the *consistency and truth* of the premises," and the consequences of adopting the principles advocated in the report. The unnamed author began,

The basis of his [Johnson's] reasoning . . . is, that *Congress has no power to legislate upon this subject*. . . . Is this, we ask, a correct statement of fact? Congress *has legislated* upon the subject; has authorized the transportation and opening of mails on the Christian sabbath. And it is this legislation which we complained of; it is considered an infringement of the rights of conscience; it is the occasion and cause of the petitions now before Congress.³⁴

³³ Authorized agents, by state, were listed in *Southern Religious Telegraph*, June 12, 1830; *Western Luminary*, October 7, 1829. The *Visitor and Telegraph* was renamed the *Southern Religious Telegraph* in 1830, but Converse continued as its editor. See also "Autobiography of Reverend Amasa Converse, (1795-1872)," Biographical Manuscript File (typescript at PCUSA).

³⁴ *Visitor and Telegraph*, February 14, 1829.

Addressing another of Johnson's premises, the essayist continued, "In Virginia, our Legislature have enacted laws to prevent the profanation of the Sabbath; many of the other states have done the same.--And is Mr. Johnson prepared to say that these states have converted their respective governments into *religious* institutions?" The perceptive writer continued, noting a change in the premises of the reasoning in Johnson's report: ". . . in one place we are told that 'Congress cannot interfere'--and in another that 'it is the opinion of the committee, that the subject should be regarded simply as a question of expediency'--and it seems to be tacitly acknowledged that Congress may legislate upon it, on the *principle of expediency*."³⁵

Further on, the author addressed the object of the petitioners:

They do not petition Congress to assume any divine prerogative . . . to settle any religious controversy--to use any coercion. . . . They do not ask Congress to *prevent* any citizen from violating the Sabbath: the sum of their petition, is that government shall not *compel* good citizens to profane this holy rest. . . . Let every one be free to observe it, or observe it not; this is religious freedom.³⁶

A month later, the *Visitor and Telegraph* published "A MEMORIALIST," who addressed Johnson's charge of religious establishment with respect to the chaplaincies in the Army and Navy. The correspondent queried, "Are they [chaplains] not regular officers of the U. States, wearing respectively the military and moral COSTUMES, and receiving a stated salary from the Treasury? As Mr. J. is so very sensitive, and so easily panic-struck . . . why did he never espy the germ of a religious tyranny in these chaplaincies?" The

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

Virginian noted that if Johnson "means to be consistent, let him immediately petition Congress to abolish the several Chaplaincies" representing such a grave threat.³⁷

Other Upper South respondents challenged the reasoning of the Johnson report. Writing specifically for the *Western Luminary*, "X.Y. & Z." offered an analogy paralleling the laws concerning the institutions of marriage and the Sabbath to illustrate the faulty logic of the report. Pointing out that the "same ancient book" which "tells us that God . . . blessed the sabbath and sanctified it . . . also tells us that God . . . directs that every man shall have his *own* wife, and every woman *her own* husband." Yet Congress, the writer observed, has "the right to regulate marriages, if not for the states, at least in the District of Columbia," despite the fact that a minority of persons such as "Mr. Owen . . . of New Harmony--and Miss Francis [*sic*] Wright" consider "this divine law of marriage" to be "a violation of natural freedom." "X.Y. & Z." concluded,

Ought there to be such a disagreeable tie upon human nature as a marriage contract for life . . . ? Ought not marriages to be left without restraint, to be either temporary or permanent as the parties desired? And will not a regulation of this matter, as is done by the States, violate the rights of conscience . . . of some--and determine a question arising out of the law of God! How arbitrary, according to Mr. Johnson's logic, may that government be, who will confine marriage to one man or woman . . . and how much astray does that government travel which, *in obedience to the divine law* imposes on the minority such an odious restraint?³⁸

Four weeks later, the *Luminary* published a letter from one "PHILOSABBATOS," who, referring to the Johnson report, declared, "Neither could it be affirmed with any possible degree of correctness, or propriety, that the suspension by congress, of the mail

³⁷ Ibid., March 21, 1829.

³⁸ *Western Luminary*, March 11, 1829.

operations on the sabbath, would be the adoption of a measure . . . to enforce upon the citizens . . . the religious observance of the sabbath." At least in the Upper South, the Johnson report was thoroughly repudiated by many, if not the vast majority, of Presbyterians.³⁹

While Presbyterians and Congregationalists were most active in attacking the Johnson report, members of the other major Protestant denominations pointed out the errors of the report and defended Presbyterians and Congregationalists against charges of an attempted "union of church and state." For example, an Episcopalian wrote,

It is well known that the friends of Sabbath mails, have almost unanimously given Presbyterians the whole credit due to good citizens for their efforts to save the Sabbath from desecration. In their late meeting held at Tammany Hall, New York, the Presbyterians were charged with the whole guilt of this *pretended* plot to join church and state, and the Episcopalians were expressly acquitted. Our Episcopal Brethren, however, do not . . . consider themselves flattered with this compliment.

The author went on to quote a rector who had written under the name, "EPISCOPOS," that "Episcopalians are deeply in the plot" and that the denomination prays "that a union between the church and all the officers of government may take place to such an extent as that all the latter shall be under the influence of the Gospel. . . ." ⁴⁰

Many Baptists also objected to insinuations that they favored the Johnson report and Sabbath day mails. A New England Baptist wrote that the "brethren here, of this denomination . . . very generally consider Col. Johnson's Report as an uncandid intimation

³⁹ Ibid., April 8, 1829.

⁴⁰ *Calvinistic Magazine* 4 (1830): 127-28; *Western Luminary*, March 10, 1830.

of views foreign to the minds of the Memorialists . . ." and that they considered Johnson's allusion to "extensive religious combinations" to be "an intimation unfounded in fact, and unworthy of being presented before an enlightened community. . . ." The Baptist writer continued, "We only ask Congress to cease their legal profanation of the Sabbath, and to do that respecting the Mail, which they have done by law in relation to the times of the sittings of Courts, and the transaction of other public business, on the Lord's day."⁴¹

Methodists also expressed their views. "A METHODIST" petitioner produced a lengthy, twelve-point letter on the Sabbath mails issue, in which he affirmed the pure motives of the memorialists, "the *universal and perpetual* obligations of the fourth commandment," and the "*right* [of petition] secured to us by the constitution." The author noted, "We believe that no human legislature can license sin,--and that what God has forbidden, cannot be rendered innocent because legalized by our rulers!"⁴²

While such writers challenged the treatment of the petitioners, the accuracy of the facts, the soundness of the logic, and the morality of Johnson's report, that did not stop many early Jacksonian Americans from hailing the document as a major state paper, even a

⁴¹ *Western Luminary*, November 11, 1829. A letter to the editor and the response from the editor of the Philadelphia Baptist periodical, the *Columbian Star and Christian Index*, highlighted the difficulty of the Sabbath mails issue for some, if not many, Baptists. The correspondent wrote in defense of the petitioners and saw no danger of a "union of church and state," stating, "The running of mails and delivering of letters on the Sabbath is a greater curse than intemperance. . . ." The editor responded, "We are as much in favor of the *end* proposed by the [Sabbatarian] *memorial*, as any of them, but we have uniformly protested against the *means* proposed for its attainment." Though Baptists such as the editor, W.T. Brantly, were *Sabbatarians*, they objected to what they considered the involvement of Congress in religious issues. See *Columbian Star and Christian Index* 1 (1829): 282-84.

⁴² *Western Luminary*, January 20, 1830; *Charleston Observer*, January 16, 1830 [reprinted from *Christian Advocate and Journal*].

"new Declaration of Independence" and a "supplement to our Bill of Rights." Indeed, Richard John notes that both the 1829 and 1830 Johnson reports were printed in "unusually large editions" which undoubtedly reached a large number of constituents nationwide. Additionally, printers produced "cheap pamphlet editions in a flamboyant typography" designed to appeal to the widest possible audience. Popular engravings abusing Sabbatarians as mobs of "God-crazed vigilantes" and satin versions of Johnson's reports illustrated their favorable reception in some circles, especially the "infidel portion" of the community.⁴³

Though Anti-sabbatarians reviled Sabbatarians with charges of attempted "union of church and state," it was a Methodist newspaper which unknowingly published one (arguable) example of such "union." In April 1833, the Richmond, Virginia, *Christian Sentinel* announced that the "chief Clerk and Superintendent of Mail Contracts in the General Post-office" in Washington City, "is a *clergyman*. An admirably qualified layman . . . has just been, or is about to be removed from the office of Assistant Post-master in this city, to make room for another [*sic*] *clergyman*. . . . It is undoubtedly *priestcraft*, and a *union of Church and State*." With perfect irony, the chief clerk and clergyman alluded to was none other than the author of the 1829 Johnson Sabbath mails report, the Rev. Obadiah B. Brown.⁴⁴

Taken aback by the "church and state" charges directed against them--generated largely by the Johnson report--Sabbatarians attempted to refute the accusations both individually and collectively. To some degree, individuals, the General Union, and at least

⁴³ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 559-61.

⁴⁴ *Christian Sentinel*, April 5, 1833.

a few Presbyterian bodies disclaimed any intent of coercion, denominational preference, or union of church and state.

As mentioned earlier, the individual most often castigated was the prominent Presbyterian minister Ezra Stiles Ely. Following the Johnson report, Ely responded to one who had accused him of persisting "in your treacherous design in attempting to unite Church and State." Ely declared, "There is . . . no *danger* that any sect of religionists will ever enjoy any special privileges from our national and state governments, if we except the *Deistical rejectors of Christianity* . . . who seem to me to claim . . . an undue share of favor. . . ." Referring to the postal laws as a "Post Office Test Act" which excluded those whose consciences forbade them from violating the Sabbath, Ely confessed, "I am for giving Jews, Turks, and all sorts of Infidels equal religious rights with conscientious christians; but I . . . see no good reason why a christian community should give them superior advantages for obtaining offices and making money." The maligned Presbyterian then turned the tables on his detractors, asking, "Have we not reason to fear then *the union of the State and Infidelity*, and the proscription of all pious people of the christian order!" For anyone still in doubt over Ely's stance, he solemnly declared,

that I never, at any time, or in any place, *advocated* the union of Church and State. I have never desired that one religious denomination should enjoy higher privileges from the state than another; and I challenge any and all who have accused me on this subject, to prove . . . the malicious charge of having aimed to establish any religion by the laws of the land.

That such a response was necessary nearly two years after his "Christian party in politics" sermon testified to the strength of public opinion in America--as Tocqueville keenly noted--though sometimes with little regard to the basis for certain views.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Western Luminary*, May 20, 1829 [reprinted from *Vermont Chronicle*, which had

Other, less prominent, individuals used their pens to refute the "attempted union" charge against Presbyterians. "NO PRESBYTERIAN" declared, "To bring a charge of such an odious nature against any religious body of men . . . there ought to be clear and decisive testimony to support it. But I am fully persuaded that no such testimony can be adduced, *because it does not exist*." The writer noted that the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, adopted by the "highest judicatory of their church," states, when referring to civil magistrates, that they should not "in the least to interfere in matters of faith," nor "give the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest." "NO PRESBYTERIAN" concluded that if a minister in that denomination "desires that his church should be incorporated with the state, he is insincere in his profession, and is unworthy of confidence." As Thomas E. Buckley has shown, in antebellum Virginia the state government used Jefferson's "wall of separation" between church and state to keep the churches firmly under its control, even going so far as to disallow the incorporation of churches and societies established for the assistance of ministers' widows and orphans. Thus, in Virginia, "churches had no legal standing." Not even church graveyards were protected from the state. Under such circumstances, the threat of "union of church and state" had a long way to go.⁴⁶

Individual correspondents were not the only ones to endeavor to refute charges of coercion and attempted union. In May 1829, the first annual meeting of the General Union in New York removed the controversial sixth article--concerning boycotts of

reprinted from *Philadelphian*]. A portion of the same letter of Ely's was published in the *Visitor and Telegraph*, April 18, 1829.

⁴⁶ *Western Luminary*, September 2, 1829 [reprinted from *Philadelphian*]. Thomas E. Buckley, "After Disestablishment: Thomas Jefferson's Wall of Separation in Antebellum Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 61 (1995): 445-80, 454.

Sabbath-breaking businesses--from the constitution "to take away even the appearance of employing other instruments than moral suasion in this holy cause." The article had been objected to even before the Johnson report levelled charges of coercion at Sabbatarians, but the furor generated by the Senate committee's document probably caused whatever support the article still possessed at that time to dissipate. Sabbatarians simply could not afford to support any measure that could be said to be coercive or that appeared to indicate the desire for establishment or union.⁴⁷

Aside from the General Union's response to the 1829 report, one of the resolutions adopted at the annual meeting served as an excellent reminder of the *fundamental* importance of the Sabbath to many, if not most, evangelicals. It insisted,

That the preservation of the sabbath is necessary to the success of every measure for the promotion of knowledge, good morals, and religion; and especially . . . to the success of labours to extend the influence of religion to every part of our country, and to evangelize the heathen; for . . . unless a missionary can affirm that God has set apart a day for public worship . . . and that this day must be observed by all . . . Christians, he can never gain a general attention to his message, and can never organize regular churches of the Lord Jesus.

Thus, the Sabbath was deemed absolutely essential to the progress of "religion" both at home and abroad--as well as to the maintaining of a free, republican government to which so many petitions attested.⁴⁸

While the General Union took positive steps to distance itself from any hint of coercion, so did the highest Presbyterian court in Virginia. In October 1829, the Synod of

⁴⁷ *First Annual Report of the General Union*, 10-11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

Virginia took advantage of the opening of the Virginia Constitutional Convention in Richmond to affirm their continued allegiance to the principle of liberty of conscience. The synod resolved unanimously its "great satisfaction" that the convention was "intending to preserve and perpetuate the sacred principle--Liberty of Conscience" and they proclaimed their continued esteeming and cherishing of "that principle for which the Presbyterian Church in this State, and throughout the United States, have ever zealously and heartily contended, as the dearest right and the most precious privilege that freemen can enjoy." Virginia Presbyterians might well have made that affirmation in any case, but the negative publicity generated by the Johnson report made it an even more appropriate measure.⁴⁹

In early 1830--a month prior to Johnson's second report on Sabbath mails--the *Southern Religious Telegraph* published four memorials which Virginia Presbyterians had presented to the General Assembly of Virginia (the state's legislative body, *not* the highest Presbyterian court) in the 1770s and 1780s. It was yet another attempt to dispel the charge of "attempted union" or "establishment," this time based upon the historic position taken by the church, and was "published in compliance with repeated requests." In 1776, the Hanover Presbytery, for example, had professed, ". . . we *ask no ecclesiastical establishments for ourselves*; neither can we approve of them when granted to others." As the editor of the *Telegraph*, Amasa Converse noted, "The principles defended in these memorials, have been the principles of the Presbyterian Church in this country from its infancy to the present time." Furthermore, for confirmation of the above assertion,

⁴⁹ Synod of Virginia minutes, October 1829, 240-42 (microfilm at UTS, PCUSA).

Converse referred the reader to "the correspondence of the [Virginia] General Assembly of 1828 and 1829."⁵⁰

In spite of the 1829 Johnson Sabbath mails report, many Sabbatarians were encouraged that the controversy had brought the claims of the Sabbath to the attention of Americans nationwide. A number of them expected that, with Johnson having left the Senate, their petitions would receive a far more favorable reception when presented to the next Congress which would open in December 1829.⁵¹

Although the 1829-30 petition campaign was, in most ways, a repeat of the campaign one year earlier, the latter one saw at least two major differences. First, in the 1829-30 petition campaign Sabbatarians specifically rejected any desire for a "union of church and state." And, secondly, Anti-sabbatarians were far more active than they had been during the earlier campaign, sending many more Anti-sabbatarian memorials (often termed "remonstrances") to Congress and holding mass meetings for the purpose of countering the efforts of Sabbatarians.⁵²

For example, in early 1830 the signers of a mass-produced "Philadelphia petition"--of which a number of copies probably were sent to Congress--specifically rejected the desire to unite church and state. Their petition declared, "Your memorialists yield to none of

⁵⁰ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, January 30 and February 6, 1830.

⁵¹ Even in 1830, after Johnson's second Sabbath mails report rejected the petitioners' requests, some Sabbatarians were encouraged. For example, in Virginia, the Winchester Presbytery concluded, "The discussion of the question about sabbath mails is doing much good by exciting enquiry into the duties, privileges, and proper employments of the Sabbath. The progress of correct feeling on this subject is very apparent and highly pleasing." See Winchester Presbytery minutes, April 19, 1830 (microfilm at UTS, PCUSA).

⁵² Bronner, "The Observance of the Sabbath in the United States, 1800-1865," 114-15.

their fellow citizens, in an honest and entire aversion to any union of church and state; believing that such union would be pernicious both to church and state, as well as a manifest violation of the federal compact. . . ."⁵³

Other examples from smaller communities abounded. Virginia petitioners hailing from the counties of Fauquier, Spotsylvania (including the town of Fredericksburg), Stafford, and Prince William, affirmed that "there was not the remotest desire that our civil rulers would designate the true Sabbath--or dictate a religious creed, or even prop up a divine command by human penalties . . . heartily abhorring all Ecclesiastical establishments & priestly dominations. . . ." A widely used petition, hand-copied nearly verbatim by petitioners from a number of Kentucky counties, requested "not that any law may be passed to enforce the observance of the Sabbath; for this, we believe, transcends the constitutional power of Congress,--but that so much of the Post office laws . . . as requires any person to engage in secular labor on the Christian Sabbath, may be repealed." Obviously, many petitioners felt the need to reject specifically the unfounded charges of the 1829 Johnson report--to which the 1830 Johnson report, issued from the House post office committee in early March, added reproach.⁵⁴

⁵³ *Christian Advocate* 8 (1830): 70-72.

⁵⁴ Petition of inhabitants of the counties of Fauquier, Spotsylvania (including the town of Fredericksburg), Stafford, and Prince William, Virginia, (received) February 1, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Fayette County, Kentucky, (received) January 25 to February 1, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of the town of Bowling Green and Warren County, Kentucky, (received) February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Washington County, Kentucky, (received) February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). Johnson had lost his seat in the Senate, his term expiring in March 1829. In December 1829, he returned to Washington as a member of the House with the opening of the twenty-first Congress.

Along with the statements of petitioners, the General Union and the Presbyterian Church directly refuted any unrepugnant and unchristian designs. At its annual meeting in May 1830, for instance, the General Union resolved that its members continued to be "conscientiously opposed, as citizens of a free country, and as Christians, to any union of church and state, and [to] all laws for the observance or the desecration of the Sabbath." Three weeks after the General Union's annual gathering, the Presbyterian Church general assembly adopted a committee report noting "certain slanderous reports extensively circulated against the Presbyterian and other denominations, involving the charge of an attempt . . . to unite Church and State," to which the committee concluded that "no public act is necessary on the part of this Assembly to refute a charge wholly unsupported by testimony and facts." Nonetheless, the committee recommended, and the assembly adopted, the publishing of the relevant sections of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* pertaining to "civil magistrates." Shrewdly, the assembly had in effect answered the charges of their opponents *without officially doing so*, thereby denying any legitimacy to the charges in the first place.⁵⁵

Concurrently with Sabbatarians' proclamations of innocence, Anti-sabbatarian activity increased. Frederick Bronner has noted that approximately thirty Anti-sabbath petitions found their way to Congress in 1828-29. But by March 1831--one year after the second petition campaign--240 remonstrances had been received. For example, during the 1828-29 campaign, only one such memorial came from the Upper South state of Tennessee, none from either Kentucky or Virginia. A year later, though no Anti-sabbath petitions arrived from Tennessee, eight came from Kentucky and three from Virginia (two of those

⁵⁵ *Second Annual Report of the General Union*, 3; *Minutes of the General Assembly*, June 1, 1830. Chapter 23 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, part of the doctrinal standards of the church, addressed the church's proper relationship to civil magistrates.

from the vicinity of Wheeling, now West Virginia). Moreover, Anti-sabbath meetings were held in locations such as Cincinnati, Ohio, Garrard County, Kentucky, and Mobile, Alabama. Such activity, combined with the second and final report on Sabbath mails from Richard M. Johnson--which was even more aggressive toward Sabbatarians than the first--convinced all but a few Sabbatarians that no good would result from further petitioning of Congress. As Bronner has asserted, Johnson's second report gave the "final blow" to the Sabbatarian movement in the decade of the 1830s, especially with respect to the issue of Sabbath mails.⁵⁶

While several themes from the arguments of Sabbatarian petitions were noteworthy, one significant issue that has been neglected by historians has been that of state versus

⁵⁶ Bronner, "The Observance of the Sabbath in the United States, 1800-1865," 114-15, 123; John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 548-49. Although Johnson's March 1830 report may be considered the "final blow" to Sabbatarianism in that decade, the leading evangelical and the only Sabbatarian in the U.S. Senate, Theodore Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, addressed the Sabbath mails issue on the Senate floor in May 1830; see *Speech of Mr. Frelinghuysen, on his Resolution Concerning Sabbath Mails . . . May 8, 1830* (Washington, 1830). For the lone Upper South Anti-sabbath petition in 1828-29, see petition of inhabitants of Pulaski, Tennessee, (received) February 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). For several Anti-sabbath petitions in 1829-30, see petition of inhabitants of Petersburg, Virginia, (received) February 8, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Ohio County, Virginia, (received) February 22 to March 1, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of the town of Wheeling and Ohio County, Virginia, (received) March 1, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). During the 1828-29 petition campaign, the best known Anti-sabbath meeting was held at Tammany Hall, New York; see Barnabas Bates, *An Address to the Committee Appointed by a General Meeting of the Citizens of the City of New York, held at Tammany Hall, January 31, 1829 . . .* (New York, 1829). During the 1829-30 campaign, Cincinnati and Mobile Anti-sabbath meetings were covered in the *Western Luminary*, December 30, 1829, and, March 31, 1830, respectively. For a Garrard County, Kentucky, Anti-sabbath meeting, further discussion and citations of Anti-sabbath activity and petitions from Kentucky, and an extract of Johnson's 1830 report, see Chapter 3 to follow.

federal sovereignty regarding Sabbath legislation. Although the issue of the tariff and nullification generated far more--and more fearful--controversy than did Sabbath legislation in the late 1820s and early 1830s, the state versus federal sovereignty issue was also a part of the Sabbath mails controversy. Whereas historians, such as William W. Freehling, have perceived the seedbed of civil war in the states' rights issue integral to the tariff question--they have ignored the federal government's legislation concerning the Christian Sabbath day. A partial explanation for such neglect is the fact that the "New York petition," certainly one of the most (if not the most) widely circulated petitions during the 1828-29 campaign, failed to mention the "states' rights" aspect of the Sabbath mails controversy.⁵⁷

Nonetheless, the issue of Sabbath day legislation by the federal government touched most, if not all the states, for nearly all had their own laws respecting the keeping of the first day of the week. And as some petitioners were quick to note, the states had never given up their right to pass legislation respecting that day to the federal government.⁵⁸

Although not comprising a major portion of the volume of argumentation found in Sabbath petitions, some memorials referred to the right of the states to legislate regarding

⁵⁷ William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836* (New York, 1966), preface. John West briefly discusses this point in *Politics of Revelation and Reason*, 145.

⁵⁸ The Sabbatarian petition from Petersburg, Virginia, was one of many that referred to the prevalence of state Sabbath laws. See petition of inhabitants of Petersburg, Virginia, (received) February 22, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA), in which the author, prominent attorney and Presbyterian elder William Mayo Atkinson, referred to the colony of Jamestown, pointing out that Sabbath observance had "been enjoined by the laws of our own ancient State, from the earliest period of its legislation, to the present hour. Her example . . . has been followed by her sister States generally, and even by the Federal Government in every other department" but the Post Office.

the Christian Sabbath day. For example, memorialists from Virginia and Kentucky noted the federal government's violation of state rights respecting the Sabbath day. Among other baneful consequences of the federal postal laws upon the nation, inhabitants of the city of Richmond observed, "The Legislative enactments of sovereign States, are nullified, and their prerogatives invaded and violated." Rural Hampshire County, Virginia, petitioners asked,

... is it right for the government of the United States in contrariness to the laws of the States and in contempt of the conscientious feelings of a vast and respectable portion of the community to cause that sacred day of rest to be openly violated throughout ... the country by the *transportation of the mail*. . . ?

Though possibly overstating their case, Woodford, Kentucky, memorialists, declared,

All the States of our Confederacy recognise the Sabbath, and make it the duty of their citizens to rest on that day--Now it must be manifest to all, that . . . having the mail transported on the Sabbath thro all parts of these States, must tend to weaken the laws of said States and undermine their authority.

And residents of the town of Bloomfield and Nelson County, Kentucky, optimistically observed, "As the . . . [postal] law is evidently in conflict with a law of the several States which recognizes the Sabbath as a day of rest we are the more encouraged to hope it will be repealed."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Petition of inhabitants of Richmond, Virginia, (received) February 5, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Hampshire County, Virginia, (received) February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Woodford, Kentucky, (received) February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) [emphasis added]; petition of inhabitants of the town of Bloomfield and Nelson County, Kentucky, (received) February 8, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). A mass-produced memorial used (at least in Tennessee) during the 1829-30 petition campaign argued that as

Upper South Sabbatarians were not alone in their concern for the rights of their states. In May 1829, the *Christian Advocate*, edited by Philadelphia Presbyterian minister Ashbel Green, charged that "Congress has broken through the state enactments, and the local usages and regulations in regard to the Sabbath." Almost a year later, the signers of the lengthy "Philadelphia petition," referred to above, noted that the federal postal law was "inconsistent with the federal constitution," which document "declares, that the powers not expressly given therein, are reserved to the several States of the confederacy, or to the people." They acknowledged their belief that "nearly all, if not the whole, of the confederating States,"

... had laws in existence, and which still exist, explicitly prohibiting such acts as constantly take place, in the conveyance of the Mail . . . on Sunday: nor has the power of repealing these laws ever been surrendered to the federal legislature. Yet they are in effect repealed; for they are completely set aside by that part of the Post Office law to which your memorialists refer.

Evidently, at least some Sabbatarians were convinced that a portion of the federal postal laws undermined the sovereignty and authority of the states. Whether they had in mind other areas of legislative concern besides the Sabbath day, however, was unstated.⁶⁰

long as the nation transported the mail and opened post offices on the Sabbath day, "We usurp powers of general government, to disturb the Sabbath's rest, which the States have never granted; and we interfere with their constant use of powers to protect its rest, which they have reserved to themselves." See petition of inhabitants of Blount County, Tennessee, (received) January 18, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Jefferson County, Tennessee, February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). Tennessee's state law (1803) respecting the Sabbath prohibited "exercising any of the common avocations of life . . . on the Lord's day. . . ." See Kingsbury, *The Sabbath: A Brief History of Laws, Petitions*, 20-21.

⁶⁰ *Christian Advocate* 7 (1829): 222; 8 (1830): 70-72.

This chapter has focused on the petition campaigns of 1828-29 and 1829-30. As has been shown, the Presbyterian Church's general assembly meeting in 1826 laid the groundwork for the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath which was formed two years later, in large part due to the efforts of Rochester businessman and Presbyterian elder Josiah Bissell. Although the General Union was not formed to petition Congress for repeal of the offensive portion of the federal postal law--and never petitioned Congress as a body--it played an indispensable role in the organizing of one, if not both, nationwide petition campaigns designed to effect such a change. While the prevalence of the "New York petition" throughout the Upper South in December 1828 attested to the "organizational sophistication" and the geographical extent of the New York-organized effort, as well as to the speed of the communications system it used to its advantage, the presence of many original compositions among the texts of Sabbath memorials bore witness to the initiatives of citizens in communities nationwide. The two congressional reports issued by Richard M. Johnson--though fundamentally flawed and no less severe in their treatment of the petitioners--seems actually to have assisted the cause of Sabbath observance. Quite unwittingly, Johnson brought the importance of the issue into the national limelight and demonstrated to thousands of evangelicals and non-professing Christians that an institution they valued, if not held as precious, was, indeed, threatened, and with it, the genuine religion valued by evangelicals as well as the peaceful, prosperous, and orderly communities valued by both evangelicals and those not professing the Christian faith. At the same time, Sabbath petitioners learned that, no matter how clearly they expressed their rejection of coercive or "establishment" designs, their intentions would be distorted and their character reviled. And as long as the mail stages continued to rumble on the Sabbath and post offices remained open for business on that day, some believed that the sovereignty of the individual states was undermined, if not

brought into contempt. As the following chapters demonstrate, not only were Calvinists, especially Presbyterians or "Presbygationalists," at the forefront of the Sabbath issue on the national level, they were likewise in the vanguard of the Sabbath movement in the Upper South.⁶¹

⁶¹ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 541; Bronner, "The Observance of the Sabbath in the United States, 1800-1865," 120; Jack Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790-1840* (New York, 1988), 300-03. An example of the perceived benefit resulting from the Sabbath mails campaigns--regardless of whether Congress were to grant the request of the petitioners--was evident in the comment of editor Thomas T. Skillman, who wrote, "The claims and importance of the Sabbath will be more thoroughly discussed and the line of demarcation between its friends and enemies will be more distinctly drawn;" see *Western Luminary*, April 14, 1830.

Chapter 3

Calvinists, Campbellites, and the Sabbath Controversy in Kentucky, 1826-1832¹

In March 1830, Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky, long-time U.S. Senator and now U.S. Representative chairing the *House* Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, issued his second congressional report on the issue of Sabbath mails. Since December 1828, Johnson's committees--he had chaired the *Senate's* post office committee in 1828-29--had received approximately one thousand petitions from communities nationwide requesting Congress to repeal that portion of the federal Postal Law requiring the transporting of the mails and the opening of post offices on Sunday. In his report, Johnson attacked the Sabbatarians, misstating the issue and claiming that they were attempting to undermine the Constitution and republican liberties. Johnson warned, "*We should all recollect that Cataline, a professed patriot, was a traitor to Rome; Arnold, a professed Whig, was a traitor to America; and Judas, a professed disciple, was a traitor to his Divine Master.*" Johnson's reports, which confirmed him as the quintessential Jacksonian Democrat, caused his popularity to soar among many voters and were responsible in part for his elevation to the vice presidency under Martin Van Buren.²

¹ Note that neither the term, "Calvinists," nor the term, "Campbellites," is intended derogatorily in this study. Historically both terms were so used by their opponents. To avoid undue repetition, this study will also use the terms, "Reform" and "Reformers" to refer to the Alexander Campbell-Barton W. Stone movement which merged in the early 1830s in Kentucky.

² Johnson's reports were published in a number of Kentucky newspapers. Among them are the *Argus of Western America*, February 4, 1829, and April 7, 1830; and the *Maysville Eagle*, February 11, 1829, and April 20, 1830 [emphasis added].

In contrast to the approaches of most historians regarding the Sabbath controversy, the most important aspect of which in the late 1820s and early 1830s was "Sabbath mails," this chapter's examination of the controversy at the *community* level in selected counties and towns in Kentucky indicates that the moral-religious and social-economic or civil-temporal, concerns experienced by these communities were reflected in their stand on this issue. In short, the Sabbath controversy provides a *window* into the changes taking place in some Upper South communities during the early Jacksonian period. Moreover, the familial connections of Richard M. Johnson--whose brother was a leading Campbellite minister and whose nephew was a leading stage-coach proprietor--highlight the coinciding of *religious* and *economic* interests which other Kentuckians may have experienced with regard to the issue of Sabbath observance.

Overall, this study examines thirteen communities, seven in Virginia and six in Kentucky. Basically, one county or town was selected from each geographical subregion of the two states from which inhabitants petitioned Congress on either side of the issue--or in some cases, both sides--with a petition signed by approximately fifty or more individuals. In Kentucky, the present study encompasses the counties of Calloway, Warren (including Bowling Green), Washington, Shelby, Fayette (including Lexington), and the town of Maysville (in Mason County).³

In Kentucky, as in the Upper South generally, the most striking characteristic of Sabbatarians, referring to those individuals holding to a strict, basically Old Testament observance of Sunday as the Christian Sabbath, was their strong link with Calvinism. The

³ Geographical subregions of the two states were suggested by Dr. Leonard W. Brinkman of the Geography Department, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in a discussion with the author on October 3, 1995. Not all subregions are represented in this study, due to few or no petitions from some of them.

Calvinist connection with Sabbath observance is noteworthy, in light of the fact that some historians have failed to observe or to take seriously *religious beliefs* as motivating forces behind various moral reforms, instead viewing such beliefs as covers for other motives.⁴

In American history, the two religious groups most closely associated with Calvinism have been the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians. By the early nineteenth century, Presbyterians constituted a small but influential denomination in Kentucky. All officers in the church, ministers and ruling elders, were expected to subscribe to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, considered by many the best systematic expression of the doctrines of the Bible. However, Presbyterians were by no means the only Calvinists in the region. As historians Walter Brownlow Posey, Donald Mathews, and Anne Loveland have noted, the vast majority of *Baptists* in the Old South were *generally* Calvinist. Many Baptist churches and associations, if not most Baptists—including a number of those in the communities with which this study is concerned—subscribed to the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith*, basically the Baptist version of the *Westminster Confession*. These confessions shared a particularly high view of the Sabbath—a view reflected in many of the petitions, letters, and other writings of Upper South Sabbatarians.⁵

⁴ A useful discussion of Puritan writings on the Sabbath is found in Winton U. Solberg, *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977). For historians who have failed to consider or to take seriously the religious motives of Sabbatarians, see, for example, Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1960); and Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York, 1978).

⁵ G.I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* (Philadelphia, 1964), 170-73; Walter Brownlow Posey, *Religious Strife on the Southern Frontier* (Baton Rouge, La., 1965), 24; Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago and London, 1977), 25, 29-31; Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge, La., and London), 162. East Hickman Baptist Church, in Fayette County, provides an example of a Baptist congregation clearly established upon the *Philadelphia Confession*. See East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette County,

Of the Kentucky communities studied, Calloway, Warren, Washington, Shelby, and Fayette counties each produced at least one Sabbatarian petition. The lone community strictly Anti-sabbatarian in sentiment was the prospering Ohio River town of Maysville. Washington countians produced two Sabbatarian "memorials," one in 1829, another a year later. Although Fayette countians produced only one Sabbatarian petition identified as originating from that locale, several such petitions from "inhabitants of Kentucky" bear the signatures of a number of Fayette countians and Lexingtonians. In addition, two Anti-sabbatarian petitions, one of which is identified as originating from a "very small part of Clarke & Fayette" counties, bear the signatures of Fayette countians. In four of the five Sabbatarian communities in Kentucky, the greatest number of petitioners identified by denominational affiliation were Presbyterians, many of them ministers or elders. For Calloway County, however, a county created only in the early 1820s, I have failed to uncover any churches with surviving records from the earliest decade of county history and so cannot address the denominational affiliations of the county's petitioners.⁶

Kentucky, records, June 15, 1787--September 1842 (typescript at UK). One of several Calvinist Baptist associations in Kentucky was the Long Run Association, who stated, ". . . this Association was constituted on the Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith . . . as an expression of her views of the doctrine of the Bible . . . while we continue members of the body, we should maintain the principles of its existence. . . ." See *Minutes of the Long Run Association of Baptists* . . . (N.p., 1830). See also Leo Ashby, "Influence of Alexander Campbell upon the Separation of Disciples and Baptists in Kentucky" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1948), 73, 130.

⁶ The actual petitions are located in the National Archives (NA), Washington, D.C., filed under "Petitions Received" for both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate committees on the post office and post roads (RG233 for House, RG46 for Senate). I have identified petitioners by denominational affiliation primarily through searching the records of individual Presbyterian churches and the minutes of presbyteries and Baptist associations. I used the 1830 census to maximize the probability of positive identification of petitioners and church members.

While Calvinists, mostly Presbyterians but often Baptists as well, were most likely to express Sabbatarian sentiments, the present study demonstrates that Anti-sabbatarianism and the "Campbellite" or "Reform" movement led by Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone in Kentucky were closely related. Nathan Hatch has argued that the early nineteenth century witnessed the "democratization of American Christianity." Men such as Alexander Campbell became leaders of new, populist religious groups, generally marked by virulent anti-clericalism, anti-creedalism, and anti-Calvinism. Campbell's movement was highly successful in some portions of Kentucky in the late 1820s and early 1830s, dividing or overturning many Baptist congregations, not a few members of which actively opposed the Calvinist Sabbath.⁷

Presbyterians had traversed and preached in the Kentucky wilderness at an early date. One of the most influential of these early ministers was the Rev. David Rice, "the first Presbyterian minister to settle in Kentucky." Arriving in 1783, Rice was instrumental in founding the first presbytery in Kentucky three years later, thereby earning the nickname, "Father Rice." Thus Calvinists established a foothold in the region and through the establishment not only of churches but also of Transylvania University in Lexington, exercised influence in early Kentucky out of proportion to their actual numbers. In spite of such efforts, however, observations regarding the prevalence of irreligion, worldliness, and Sabbath profanation in Kentucky, and in the West generally, were common. The perceived low-ebb of Christianity at the close of the eighteenth century in the region served as the backdrop for the remarkable events which soon followed.⁸

⁷ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London, 1989), Chapter 4.

⁸ E.H. Gillett, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, rev. ed. (2 vols., Philadelphia, ca.1865), 1: 404; Ben M. Barrus, *et al.*, *A People Called*

The well-known Great Revival around 1800, though initially begun under the preaching of Presbyterian ministers such as James McGready, soon led to confusion, excesses, and divisions. At least three religious groups either emerged from or were transplanted to Kentucky as a result of the religious fervor of the first decade of the nineteenth century in Kentucky (and Tennessee): the Shakers, the Cumberland Presbyterians, and the Reformers of whom Campbell eventually became the leader.⁹

A detailed description of the events surrounding the development of these sects is beyond the scope of this work. But for the purposes of this study it is significant that of the three groups, only the last departed significantly from the traditional Calvinist view of the Christian Sabbath.

In early 1805 a few Shaker missionaries traveled from New York to Kentucky after having heard of the "dancing and other singular practices" experienced in the revival. They soon made enough converts to establish a community near Harrodsburg, in Mercer County. Most important for this study is that the Shakers' view of Sabbath observance, prescribed in their "Orders of the Sabbath," was similar to that of Jacksonian Calvinists. For example, many Calvinists would have readily approved of several of the Shakers' "orders," the opening statement to which declared, "The gospel strictly forbids that there should be any hand labor performed on the Sabbath, which can consistently be avoided; but all must keep it holy and sacred unto the Lord."¹⁰

Cumberland Presbyterians (Memphis, 1972), 35-36; Niels Henry Sonne, *Liberal Kentucky, 1780-1828* (New York, 1939), 79-80.

⁹ J.H. Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists . . .* (2 vols., Cincinnati, 1886), 1: 527.

¹⁰ Ibid., 525-26, 532-33; Edward Deming Andrews, *The People Called Shakers: A Search for the Perfect Society* (New York, 1963), 264-65.

Shakers defined proper Sabbath observance in terms similar to many Calvinists, and the Cumberland Presbyterians did likewise. This latter group had broken away from the mainline Presbyterian denomination in 1810 over doctrinal issues such as predestination and over the traditional Presbyterian requirements for a lengthy classical education in preparation for the ministry. They, like many of their "Reformer" counterparts, were convinced that only by producing vastly greater numbers of ministers of the gospel--which the traditional Presbyterian educational system did not produce--could the religious needs of the hundreds of thousands of immigrants to the West possibly be met. Although less committed to the Westminster standards than mainline Presbyterians, the "Cumberland Presbyterians believed in strict Sabbath observance."¹¹

Thus, two of the three new or transplanted religious groups emerging from the revivals of the early 1800s in Kentucky (and Tennessee) were basically in agreement with the Calvinist view of Sabbath observance. Such was not the case with the third sect, however. Initially led by Robert Marshall and later by Barton W. Stone, both Presbyterian ministers, the Campbell-Stone Reformers by the 1820s took a decidedly anti-Calvinist stance on the Sabbath. Moreover, such *rejection of the Sabbath was an essential and integral part* of their theological framework, which emphasized that believers were under the New Testament, not the Old; and under grace, not law.¹²

¹¹ Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 10th ed. (Nashville, 1995), 250; Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (Jackson, Miss., 1962), 31; Barrus, *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians*, 256.

¹² Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists*, 522-23. Campbell's understanding of the Sabbath is revealed in a letter he published in the *Christian Baptist* in 1825, in which he stated, ". . . if you go back to Moses for a Sabbath, you may go back to him for a new moon, a holy day, or what you please." That Campbell acknowledged the Lord's day while rejecting the Christian Sabbath is shown in his closing statement in the above-mentioned letter: "In contending for the due observance of the Lord's Day we establish the

The "Marshallites," as they were first known, grew directly out of differing views toward "revival" which were seemingly unavoidable following the Great Revival. In 1803, at only the second meeting of the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky, Marshall, Stone, and three other ministers, two of whom were then on trial for doctrinal irregularities, withdrew from the synod's jurisdiction in support of those on trial. Shortly thereafter, the withdrawing ministers formed their own presbytery, styled the Springfield Presbytery. Amidst great confusion, excitement, and expectations of the millennium, the "New-Lights," as they also were called, published their "confession" in which they denied the validity of all creeds and confessions and stated that the Bible alone should be the bond of fellowship among believers. In 1804, the group disbanded the Springfield Presbytery and adopted both a congregational form of church government as well as the name, "The Christian Church." By 1811, Stone was the only one of the five founding ministers still in the Christian Church, the others either having returned to the Presbyterians or having joined the Shakers. Thus, Stone became the leader of the Christians, the similarities between his views and those of Campbell being such as would enable a merger with Campbell's Disciples some years later.¹³

One of the many points of convergence, though not of perfect agreement, between Stone and Campbell was in regard to the Sabbath. By nature, Stone was more even-tempered and willing to seek common ground with others than was his fellow Reformer. Thus to no one's surprise, Campbell's expressions with respect to the Sabbath were more

law--as Paul did by faith. But in making Sabbath days for Gentiles in this northern latitude, we put a yoke on the necks of the disciples, which makes Christ of as little effect to them as he was to those who circumcised in order to be saved." See *Christian Baptist*, August 1, 1825, 23-24.

¹³ Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists*, 522-27.

caustic than Stone's. For example, in 1824, Alexander Campbell attacked the Calvinist Sabbath in his monthly magazine, the *Christian Baptist*. Campbell declared, "It is all old wives' fables to talk of the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day. If it be changed, it was that august personage changed it who changes times and laws *ex officio*--I think his name is DOCTOR ANTICHRIST." Although in 1829 Stone republished Campbell's stinging treatment of the Sabbath in his own monthly magazine, the *Christian Messenger*, he also showed the ability to see more than one side of the issue and to express moderation. In May 1830, Stone published his own views of the ongoing Sabbath mails controversy, stating,

We are grieved to see . . . a disposition to destroy the idea of a Sabbath under any name. I should rejoice to see that day more religiously observed by all. I have disapproved the attempt to urge Congress to legislate on the subject, and have been disgusted at the zeal of the clergy in their bold attempts to have it effected; yet I have seen the opposite party run into a criminal extreme. . . . These last by their untempered zeal against stopping the mail on the sabbath, have . . . done a real injury to their cause. . . . While the clergy are suspected of having designs to establish their religion by law; these are suspected as having designs to overthrow Christianity *in toto*.

Thus, Stone was concerned lest the opponents of the petitioning Sabbatarians destroy *all* religious belief and practice in the process of preventing the establishment of religion in America.¹⁴

Whereas Campbell consistently assaulted Calvinism, creeds, and the paid clergy ("hirelings," in his parlance) in his *Christian Baptist*, the Sabbath mails controversy provided him an opportunity to attack all three simultaneously over an issue claiming the attention of many, if not most, Kentuckians. Several months after Richard M. Johnson's

¹⁴ Gary L. Lee, comp., *The Christian Baptist, Background and Index* (Joplin, Mo., 1983 [1835]), 44 (originally published by Campbell in the *Christian Baptist*, February 2, 1824); *Christian Messenger* 3 (1829): 217-22; *Christian Messenger* 4 (1830): 140-41.

second report on Sabbath mails, Campbell's magazine proclaimed the following in language quite similar to Johnson's:

HEAR THE PRIESTLY HIERARCHS!

The intolerant zeal with which some of the most aspiring sectaries urge governmental interference in behalf of the cessation of Sunday mails, has convinced me that political designs are at the bottom of the prayers of many of the petitioners. The leaders evince a spirit of resentment against those who do not coincide with their schemes . . . which illy comports with that zeal for holiness which they profess in favor of the Sabbath.¹⁵

Other Reformers joined the fray as well. Another journal devoted to Campbell's movement, the Lexington *Christian Examiner*, joined the Sabbath mails fight by printing

¹⁵ Kentuckians were especially interested in the Sabbath mails issue because their own colorful and heroic Colonel Johnson headed the committees dealing with the petitions. All seven Kentucky newspapers examined in the course of this study printed Johnson's Sabbath mails report in 1829, and at least three printed his 1830 report. See *Argus of Western America* (Frankfort), February 4, 1829, and April 7, 1830; *Commentator* (Frankfort), February 24, 1829; *Kentucky Gazette* (Lexington), February 6, 1829; *Kentucky Reporter* (Lexington), February 25, 1829; *Louisville Public Advertiser*, February 11, 1829; *Maysville Eagle*, February 11, 1829, and April 20, 1830; *Western Luminary* (Lexington), February 25, 1829, and April 14, 1830. One of many examples of Campbell's anti-Calvinism and anti-creedalism is found in a statement directed toward Calvinist Baptists in 1826 in which he referred to "your little Philadelphia Confession of Opinions." See *Christian Baptist* (Nashville, Tenn., 1955), 59 (originally published by Campbell on October 2, 1826). *Christian Baptist* (Nashville, Tenn., 1956), 279 (originally published by Campbell on June 7, 1830). That Campbell and a number of Presbyterians engaged in heated debate over their respective theological views is clear from an examination of their respective journals. For example, in 1827 one of the leading Presbyterian journals addressed at length the errors of "Alexander Campbell's New Testament." See *Christian Advocate* 5 (1827): 217-20, 264-65, 313-17, 363-65, 407-10. Numerous issues of Campbell's *Christian Baptist* contain his own views, criticisms, and refutations of the charges of his Calvinist opponents. David Edwin Harrell, Jr., states that "Campbell's views probably had an influence on Johnson's reports." See his *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866* (Nashville, 1966), 192.

an Anti-sabbath petition sent from a friend in a neighboring village, designed to counteract the efforts of local Sabbatarians. The editor's remarks introducing the letter referred to attempts "by an aspiring and domineering priesthood to obtain exclusive legal privileges" from Congress.¹⁶

Despite the prevalence of published statements such as those above, the most direct evidence for the Anti-sabbatarian-Campbellite connection in Kentucky pertains to petitioners themselves. This study has located eight petitions and two letters from Anti-sabbatarian Kentuckians. Such a petition effort appears to have been well-coordinated, as all the documents were received in Congress between February and April of 1830. Most likely, all were prepared in January and February of 1830, the time for the petitions to reach Washington City and be received in Congress varying from a few weeks to two months. Moreover, in February 1830 a publication in the Richmond, Virginia, *Southern Religious Telegraph* indicated that a Reformer-led Anti-sabbath petition effort was ongoing in Kentucky.¹⁷

A gentleman residing in Richmond published a letter, dated January 16, 1830, he had received from a Presbyterian friend in Kentucky. The correspondent had written for the purpose of obtaining a copy of the memorials of Virginia Presbyterians against an establishment of religion, in order that he might prepare some articles for a Presbyterian magazine in Kentucky. The published extract of one portion of his letter, subtitled,

¹⁶ *Christian Examiner* 1 (1830): 65-67. Note that as late as January 1831 some Kentuckians felt the need to send a remonstrance to Congress against making any change to the existing postal arrangements on Sunday; see William Addison Blakely, comp., *American State Papers Bearing on Sunday Legislation*, rev. ed. (New York, 1970), 295-300.

¹⁷ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, February 6, 1830.

"Campbellism in the West," warned, "He [Mr. Campbell] has spread his notions to a great extent in Ky. Almost all the Baptist churches are more or less affected. . . . As far as I know they are opposed to all the great national institutions, and are getting up memorials *against* stopping the mail on the Sabbath."¹⁸

In any case, five of these Kentucky Anti-sabbath petitions contained virtually the same text, though all five were handwritten; the same is true of two of the remaining three documents, further supporting the idea of an organized campaign. Of the five same-text petitions, all were identified as coming from "Citizens of the State of Kentucky," although in four of the five cases the majority of petitioners identified by residence were from Mercer County, a hotbed of Campbellism around 1830. At least several of these Anti-sabbatarian petitioners appear to have been followers of Campbell, such as Andrew Kyle, the postmaster of Harrodsburg. Not only was Kyle a subscriber to the *Christian Baptist* in 1829; he had also paid the monthly dues for five other men. And at least two of these, Jacob R. Chaplin and C.L. Jones, each signed one of the "Mercer County" Anti-sabbath petitions. Although the locations and procedures of petition-signing are largely unknown, at least one "Mercer" petition found itself within reach of a young boy: just below the last signature on the petition is an entry, "The above scribbling was by a little boy. . . ."¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid. Most likely the unnamed Presbyterian magazine was the *Presbyterian Advocate*, published by Thomas T. Skillman (also the publisher of the *Western Luminary*).

¹⁹ The fifth "Mercer County" Anti-sabbath petition referred to above had a plurality, not a majority, of those petitioners identified who resided in Mercer County. Note that this study did not attempt to identify all petitioners who signed these five "Remonstrances." See petitions (two) of inhabitants of Kentucky, February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG46 (NA); petitions (two) of inhabitants of Kentucky, April 10, 1830, Petitions Received, RG46 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Kentucky, April 12, 1830, Petitions Received, RG46 (NA). For a list of subscribers (actually, those credited for "monthly receipts"--doubtless some individuals who received the magazine failed to make payments on time, if at all!) to the *Christian Baptist* in 1829, see the July 6, 1829 issue. As in the

Two of the remaining Anti-sabbatarian petitions were identified as originating from the "State of Kentucky," though Fayette and Clark countians comprised the bulk of the petitioners in both cases. Together these petitions bear the signatures of at least twelve Campbellites who were leaders within their churches, if not beyond the bounds of their congregations. The dozen "Fayette/Clark" petitioners were from a total of four Baptist churches within the Boon's Creek Association. All of these individuals were "messengers" from their respective churches to the annual association meetings, and thus are easily identified as leaders, including a number of ministers, within their churches. Foremost among these petitioners was Baptist minister George G. Boon, who was (at least) twice elected to the key position of moderator of the Boon's Creek Baptist Association, in 1827 and 1828. Boon was a prominent Reform leader in the Bluegrass and was referred to in the *Christian Baptist* as having baptized "about two hundred and sixty" during a recent revival in 1828. In 1830, when Kentucky Baptists finally took strong disciplinary action against the Reformers in their midst, Boon left (or was forced to leave) Boon's Creek Association, as did his church, Mount Union. Moreover, no less than six of the thirteen congregations which had composed Boon's Creek Association in 1829 withdrew (or were removed) in 1830, all six joining Campbell's growing movement. By 1832, the association had been reduced from 1,860 members in 1829 to only 439 members.²⁰

case of petitioners and church members, I used the 1830 census to maximize the probability of positive identification of magazine subscribers. For example, because there is *no* "A. Kyle" listed in Mercer County in the 1830 census, this study assumed that the petitioner, "Andrew Kyle, PMaster" was the same individual, living in Harrodsburg, who subscribed to Campbell's magazine (listed as "A. Kyle").

²⁰ Petitions (two) of inhabitants of Clarke (later "Clark") and Fayette counties, Kentucky, February 22, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). The twelve "Clark/Fayette" Anti-sabbatarian petitioners who served as messengers to the Boon's Creek Baptist Association between 1827 and 1829 are as follows: six from Mount Zion Church (Robert V. Bush,

At first glance, *twelve* "Fayette/Clark" petitioners identified as Reformers out of a total of nearly two hundred individuals who signed these two memorials may not appear significant, but one must remember that these petitioners represented the leadership within their churches, and in some cases, beyond them. The availability of church records and the constraints of this study were such that it would be nearly impossible to identify individuals within these churches who represented the "rank and file." Because Campbell's movement was based upon the concept of recreating the primitive church, and thus avoiding institutional forms such as church organization and record-keeping, few records exist from the early years of the religious groups later evolving into the Disciples of Christ,

Henry T. Chevis (Chivis), Elliot Holladay, Waller Holladay, John Morton, Sr., and Dabney W. Parish (Parrish)); three from Boon's Creek Church (Thomas Christian, William Grimes, and David Watts, Jr. (or Sr.)); two from Boggs's Fork Church (Belam P. and Richard Evans); and one from Mount Gilead Church (1827 and 1828), George G. Boon (in 1829, Boon was a messenger from Mount Union Church, perhaps having changed churches because of his theological views). In 1830, Mount Zion, Mount Union, and four other churches (Nicholasville, Liberty, Friendship, and Lower Bethel) were dropped from the association for following Campbell's teachings. *Christian Baptist*, June 2, 1828; *Minutes of the Boon's Creek Association* (Lexington, Ky., 1827); *Minutes of the Boon's Creek Association of Baptists* (Lexington, Ky., 1828); *Minutes of the Boon's Creek Association of Baptists* (Clarke County, Ky., 1829); *Minutes, Of the Boons [sic] Creek Association of Babtist [sic]* (N.p., 1830); Alonzo Willard Fortune, *The Disciples in Kentucky* (N.p., 1932), 90 (note that Fortune rendered "Mount Union" Church as "Mount Vernon"). That Kentucky Baptists allowed unorthodox ministers to remain in "good standing" for years, taking no significant measures until late 1829 and 1830, is clear from Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists*, Chapter 33, "The Campbellite Schism." On page 617, Spencer states, "Never was there a time when religious controversy caused greater or more unremitting excitement on this continent, than was [manifested] in Kentucky during the years 1829, and 1830. The contest was a civil war. The contending parties were all members of the same churches and associations. . . . Every form of public worship became a subject of wrangling and debate. . . . It is not be wondered at, if the bitterest feelings of which Christians are capable, were engendered." The numbers of members of the Boon's Creek Association is from Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists*, 640. The eighth Kentucky Anti-sabbatarian petition, from Maysville, will be addressed subsequently.

Christian Church, and Church of Christ denominations. What is clear, however, is that several churches within the association experienced tremendous growth in terms of membership and thus could easily have accounted for the majority of the petitioners. For example, Mount Zion, a church represented by six messengers to the association meetings between 1827 and 1829 who petitioned later, grew from 36 members in 1827 to 161 members in 1828. By 1829, Mount Zion boasted 178 members, making it the third largest church in the association. Similarly, Boon's Creek Church reported 56 members in 1827, 151 members in 1828, and 134 members in 1829. Moreover, the signatures of five of the six messengers from Mount Zion Church *in the same column* of one of the "Fayette/Clark" petitions, suggests that the petition may have been signed in connection with a church gathering. The presence of at least two female signatures, those of Ann B. Graves and Elizabeth Nichols, hints that "rank and file" church members were solicited as petitioners, especially since women in Jacksonian America had few opportunities for making even quiet political statements such as represented by petitions bound for Congress.²¹

Whereas the aforementioned Anti-sabbath petitions bear clear Campbellite influence, the evidence from the two Anti-sabbath letters from Kentucky hints at such influence as well. The first letter was written in January 1830 following a meeting of Garrard County

²¹ *Minutes of the Boon's Creek Association* (1827); *Minutes of the Boon's Creek Association of Baptists* (1828); *Minutes of the Boon's Creek Association of Baptists* (1829); petition (one of two) of inhabitants of Clarke (later "Clark") and Fayette counties, Kentucky, February 22, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). A third church within the association which experienced tremendous growth between 1827 and 1828 was Lower Bethel: in 1827, it reported 66 members; in 1828, 152 members; and in 1829, 141 members. Stephen Aron notes the limited opportunities for public activity evangelicalism offered Kentucky women; see his *How the West was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore and London, 1996), 184.

residents held "for the purpose of taking into consideration certain memorials to Congress to stop the transportation of the mail" on the Lord's day. Colonel John Yantis was appointed to chair the meeting, in the course of which four major resolutions were adopted. Perhaps significantly, none of the resolutions argued in favor of Sabbath mails out of necessity. Rather, all four resolutions stemmed from concerns relating to religious liberty and the dangers of "a union of the affairs of church and state." Though little more can be concluded regarding this letter, its content was consistent with typical Campbellite arguments and it was prepared at the very time of known Reformer petitioning efforts and in a locale in which Campbellism flourished.²²

Like the first Anti-sabbath letter, the second communication was intended to accompany a memorial which, unfortunately, appears to have been lost. Writing from Versailles, Kentucky, in February 1830, C. Bickham Henry addressed Colonel Johnson with moral-religious concerns. Henry stated, "I take the liberty of enclosing you a memorial remonstrating against the stoppage of the mail on Sunday." Henry expressed his view that the present mail arrangements met with "universal approbation with the exception of *one denomination*," undoubtedly referring to the Presbyterians, the foremost adversaries of Campbellite theological views. The writer concluded by expressing his confidence in the colonel's continued cooperation, ". . . calculated to preserve unsullied from *priestly influence* the charter of our countrys [*sic*] rights. . . ." As with the previous letter, this communication was prepared at the peak time of known Reformer political

²² Petition of inhabitants of Garrard County, Kentucky, February 1-8, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (the petition accompanying the letter appears to have been lost). Note that even though the *petition* has not survived, the January 1830 *letter* which accompanied it is filed under "Petitions Received, RG233."

activities and used language consistent with Campbell's and his followers. Moreover, Campbellite influence was very strong in the vicinity of Versailles.²³

Thus, the evidence indicates that Campbellites accounted for a considerable portion--if not all--of the Anti-sabbatarian sentiment in Kentucky. Moreover, even apart from the issue of Sabbath mails, opposition to the Calvinist Sabbath was an integral part of Campbell's theological framework. But what of the evidence for Calvinist support for the traditional Sabbath?²⁴

A number of historians have assumed that Presbyterians and Congregationalists were the two groups that supported the Calvinist Sabbath most strongly. However, Paul Johnson's study of Rochester, New York, seems to be the only study that actually examines the issue of denominational support of Sabbatarianism in a particular locale. My study verifies that Presbyterians were, in fact, the denomination most active in the Upper South on behalf of the traditional Sabbath.²⁵

Of the five "Sabbatarian" Kentucky counties included in this study, Calloway represents a special case. Southwestern Kentucky had only been open for (legal) white

²³ Petition of inhabitants of Versailles, Kentucky, March 2, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) [emphasis added]. Note that even though the *petition* has not survived, Henry's February 1830 *letter* which accompanied it is filed under "Petitions Received, RG233."

²⁴ An interesting historical footnote is that by the 1840s and 50s, it was not uncommon for Disciples of Christ ministers to support Sunday observance--which they considered the Lord's day as opposed to the Christian Sabbath--on basically Calvinist theological grounds; see Harrell, *Quest for a Christian America*, 194-95.

²⁵ Johnson notes that "fully two-thirds of the Sabbatarians [in Rochester] were Presbyterians"; see his *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, 87. See also Forrest L. Marion, "East Tennessee and the Sabbath Question, 1828-1832," *Journal of East Tennessee History* 66 (1994): 9-31.

settlement for a few years when the state legislature established the county in 1822. Establishment of a county court followed shortly, as did the erection of a jail, the building of a road through the county seat of Wadesboro, and establishment of a nearby ferry. Settlement was such that by 1830, the population of the county was 5,164, of whom 901 were adult white males between the ages of twenty and seventy years. It may be surprising that such a quasi-frontier community far removed from Puritan New England would have expressed sentiment in favor of the Calvinist Sabbath. Yet it did. Some fifty-four men, probably most of them from Calloway, affixed their signatures to the document which asked for redress of a perceived grievance:

Were there public danger . . . from our nation being involved in war; we would acquiesce [in post office business being conducted on the Sabbath]. But this is not our condition nor that of our nation: we have peace and tranquility at home and abroad; and we are . . . at liberty to enjoy our sabbaths without fear . . . surrounded by every blessing of providence that is calculated to make us happy as a people. . . . But, throughout our land is seen the continued prosecution of the post office business. Whilst all other employments under the government from the farmer's to the Legislator's are . . . left to rest because of the Sabbath; yet the post-office department regardless of any day, continues to labour.

Of note is the fact that Calloway countians--thereby refuting the charges of many Anti-sabbatarians--*were* willing in cases of danger or war to allow post offices to conduct business on the Sabbath. But as they saw it, no such need existed. Moreover, post office business on the Sabbath represented an affront to the "principles of morality and religion."²⁶

²⁶ *History of Calloway County, Kentucky* (Murray, Ky., 1972 [1931]). Petition of inhabitants of Calloway County, Kentucky, January 12, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). Many other Sabbatarian petitions also express willingness to open post offices on the Sabbath during periods of war or crisis. I have used the 1830 census to verify that, in most cases, the majority of petitioners were, in fact, residents from the locales from which the petitions purportedly hailed. Many petitioners, however, appear to have been

Unfortunately, the lack of church records does not allow for an analysis of the denominational affiliations of Calloway's petitioners. Even so, some evidence points to Calvinist influence. The earliest known minister in the county was Henry Darnall, whom a local history credited with establishing the first church in the county. Darnall was "of the old school [Calvinist or Regular] Baptist Church," and was one of Calloway's petitioners. That Darnall was considered a man of local prestige, aside from his ministry, is shown by the fact that he was one of three men commissioned to contract and superintend the building of the first county jail in 1823. Perhaps the members of Darnall's church comprised a number of Calloway's petitioners, but this remains conjecture. Though their denominational affiliations are unknown, other locally prominent petitioners included James Ingram and James Peter, both of them Calloway County jailers; Samuel Peter, builder of the second jail in Wadesboro in 1827; and, George Tucker, one of the commissioners appointed to organize the county in 1822, member of the first county court, and later sheriff. Perhaps--even aside from Calvinists--"civil magistrates" were especially sensitive to Sabbath-keeping as a means for maintaining a peaceful, orderly, and law-abiding society.²⁷

dependents of "heads of households," and, unfortunately, dependents' names were not included in the 1830 census. *Fifth Census; or, Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States, as Returned by the Several Marshals of the States and Territories. 1830* (Washington, 1832).

²⁷ *History of Calloway County, Kentucky*. Petition of inhabitants of Calloway County, Kentucky, January 12, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). The names of Calloway County "justices of the peace" are unknown (the early court order books are not extant), but they would have been likely petitioners. For further discussion of this point, see the following Chapter 6.

Indeed, Calvinists and the civil magistracy sometimes appear to have gone hand-in-hand. The Sabbatarian petition from Warren County, Kentucky, for example, bears the signatures not only of a number of Presbyterians, town trustees of Bowling Green (the county seat), and justices of the peace, but also of a few men who were *both* Presbyterians *and* magistrates.²⁸

Bowling Green was a town of approximately 500 inhabitants in 1830 when town and county residents prepared a petition bearing approximately one hundred ten signatures. No less than ten current (or future) members of the Bowling Green Presbyterian Church, including at least six (present or future) elders, signed the local memorial, such as elders John Marshall, William McPheeters, and Samuel Stubbins. The church had been organized in 1819 with some twenty-seven members, but struggled in the early years for lack of a settled pastor. In fact, from the summer of 1828 until December of 1831--during the time that the Sabbath mails controversy was ongoing--the church was without a pastor. That so many church members signed the Warren petition in early 1830 points to the importance of the role of the church's lay leaders, the elders, who may have encouraged their members' involvement.²⁹

²⁸ Petition of inhabitants of Bowling Green and Warren County, Kentucky, February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA).

²⁹ Of the elders, Calvin A. Garrison was received as a church member in 1832 and ordained as elder in 1843; Asher W. Graham was received as a church member in 1833 and ordained as elder in 1836; John H. Graham's dates are 1833 and 1839, respectively; Marshall was ordained as elder in 1830; McPheeters, one of the charter members of the church, was ordained as elder in 1819; and Stubbins was received as a church member in 1832 and ordained as elder in 1840. Thus, although several elders were not ordained until years after signing the petition in 1830, all were church members at least by 1833. Of course, how long they were associated with the church prior to their membership cannot be determined. Of the four other known Sabbatarian church members of Bowling Green Presbyterian, William E. Akin was received in 1829; Hugh Barclay in 1826; George Railey (Raily) in 1824; and, Thomas Sterrett in 1832. Two Cumberland Presbyterians who

Bowling Green Presbyterians were not the only group to express their sentiments on behalf of the Sabbath, however. No less than seven town trustees (who served sometime between 1823 and 1834) and two justices of the peace affixed their signatures to the local petition. John Atkinson, one of the five trustees serving in 1830, was apparently the first to sign the memorial. A wealthy merchant and future trustee, Jacob Vanmeter, signed next. Two other trustees, Asher W. Graham and Samuel Stubbins, were future Presbyterian elders. And two justices, John Keel and Thomas Sterrett, added their names. Finally, Chasteen T. Dunnavan, the county sheriff in 1829, and Jonathan Hobson, clerk of the county's circuit court, affixed their signatures. Obviously, men of local prominence, either within Presbyterian or "civil magistracy" circles--and occasionally both--were well-represented among Warren County Sabbatarians.³⁰

petitioned were the Rev. David R. Harris, who performed a local marriage in 1829, and Benjamin F. Lewis, ordained as an elder in Mount Olivet Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1836. See *A History of the Presbyterian Church, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 1819-1983* (Bowling Green, 1983); Warren County, Kentucky, Order Book F, from April 5, 1824, to July 24, 1832, pg. 177 (typescript at WKU); Mrs. William Pate Garrett, comp., *Genealogical Records of Mount Olivet Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Bowling Green, Warren County, Kentucky, 1813-1981* (Centre, Ala., 1981); Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green, Kentucky, Session Book 1-A, 1819-1862 (WKU).

³⁰ Of the trustees, Atkinson served in 1829-1830; Dunnavan, in 1825; A. W. Graham, in 1823 and 1827-1828; Henry Grider, in 1827-1828; James A. Neale, in 1831; Stubbins, in 1834; and, Vanmeter, in 1833. Some of these individuals may have served in other years as well, but the years included herein are a minimum. Generally, five trustees served at a time. See "Minutes of the Trustees for the City of Bowling Green, March 13, 1823--December 7, 1839," (typescript at WKU); Sandra K. Gorin, comp., *Warren County, Ky., Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Bowling Green, Ky., 13 March 1823 through 7 December 1839* (Glasgow, Ky., 1993). Keel served as a justice in 1828, Sterrett in 1829 (length of service unknown). See Warren County, Kentucky, Order Book F, from April 5, 1824, to July 24, 1832, pg. 177 (typescript at WKU); *Spirit of the Times*, various issues, 1827. The issues for February 17 and March 31, 1827 published pieces promoting Sabbath-keeping.

While such was the case among Warren County Sabbatarians, the same was true to an even greater degree among Shelby and Washington countians. Shelby countians produced a petition signed by over one hundred forty individuals, the second highest number of Sabbatarians to sign a single petition in Kentucky. Of the Shelby signers, at least eight were (or became) elders of the Mulberry Creek and Shelbyville Presbyterian churches, pastored for over thirty years by the Rev. Archibald Cameron. As these two churches constituted a single congregation until 1828, it suffices to consider the two churches as a single entity. In addition to the elders, at least eleven petitioners were (or became) members of the "Mulberry-Shelbyville Presbyterian church." Thus, no less than nineteen men associated with this church signed the Shelby memorial, the highest number of signers this study has verified from a single Kentucky congregation. Even more so than in Warren County, Shelby's justices of the peace brought their influence to bear on the Sabbath mails issue. Nearly one-half of the county's justices (five of approximately eleven) were signers, including Charles Baird, George Bergen, and Samuel Harbison (Harbeson), all of whom served in 1829 or 1830. Of these, Baird and Harbison were also Presbyterian elders.³¹

³¹ The two other Shelby justices who signed the local memorial were Charles Mitchell and Robert T. Robb; petition of inhabitants of Shelby County, Kentucky, January 18, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). Note that though the text of this petition was pre-printed, Shelby countians added their own clause at the end of the text which read, "except in time of war," to indicate their willingness to allow the mails to travel and post offices to open on the Sabbath during wartime. Eleanor Graham Lawrence, comp., *Copy of Session Books I and II of Mulberry Presbyterian Church, Shelby County, Kentucky* (Shelbyville, Ky., 1931); "Records of the Presbyterian Congregation of Mulberry-Shelbyville-Six Mile," and "Records of the Presbyterian Congregation of Mulberry-Shelby County" (microfilm at PCUSA); "Minutes of the Session of Mulberry Presbyterian Church, Shelby County, Kentucky" (typescript at KHS). The elders (with known years of service, though, normally, elders served continuously after their ordination) were as follows: Baird (1820); Samuel Graham (1828); Harbison (1820, 1829); Thomas King (1828); Alexander Logan (date unknown; two men with same name, both of whom were elders); Joseph Venable (1827-29), who also served as president of the Shelby County Bible Society in 1829 (*Western Luminary*, October 7, 1829); Samuel Venable (member,

Though the identity of the writer is unknown, perhaps it was one of the Shelby petitioners--in any case, most likely a Shelby resident--whose review of Senator Johnson's Sabbath mails report was published in Lexington at the request of the *Shelbyville Compiler* in April 1829. "AN UNSKILFUL HAND" wrote a four-column review published on the front page of the *Lexington Kentucky Gazette*. Suggesting the detailed arguments to follow, the writer began, "If assuming false premises are evidences of a bad cause, the believers in a supreme judge of the world have the gratification to find that . . . [the U.S. Senate, to which the committee of Richard M. Johnson reported] . . . has been driven to this alternative in adopting the report of their committee." Following a historical overview, from both the Bible and the era of the American Revolution, "HAND" continued:

We agree . . . that 'extensive religious combinations, to effect a political object are always dangerous.' . . . But we humbly conceive that the petition to discontinue Sabbath mails, was not of this character, although the committee have so denominated it . . . the petitioners have been under an impression, that our declaration of Independence and our articles of confederation had acknowledged a '*Supreme Judge and Governor of the world*.'--Our statutes had not permitted the legal authorities to execute civil process on Sunday . . . whereby he [the creditor] might detain his . . . debtor on the Sabbath day, and sometimes considerable losses were sustained by this observance of Sunday; . . . With this evidence of the acknowledgement of our civil rulers, that there was a '*SUPREME JUDGE of the world*' . . . the petitioners did believe that they might call the attention of Congress to the subject, without any grounds for its being charged as a first effort of an extensive religious combination to effect a political object. . . .

1828; elder, 1834); and, Singleton Wilson (1820, 1829). At the time the Shelby petition was produced, Mulberry claimed just under eighty "communicant" members (excluding children). Shelby County Court Order Book 9-A, 1827-1829, and Book 9-B, 1829-1831 (Shelby County Clerk's office); George L. Willis, Sr., *History of Shelby County, Kentucky* (Hartford, Ky., 1979 [1929]).

But "HAND" was not finished. Perhaps with some subtlety, the writer noted that the committee had concluded

... that the petitioners . . . have called upon Congress . . . to determine what are the laws of God. Haman when at the giddy height of public favor, assumed that particular honors were intended for himself, when in fact they related to one who believed in a SUPREME GOVERNOR of the world, and resulted in the preservation of a people who remembered the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Clearly, one most "skillful hand" in the vicinity of Shelby County, Kentucky, had devoted considerable time and effort to refuting the arguments of the 1829 Johnson report.³²

Although Presbyterians were the best-represented denomination among Shelby County petitioners, they were by no means the only professing Christians to sign. This study has verified that at least five Baptists and six Methodists also affixed their signatures to the Shelby memorial. This fact points to representation from all three denominations to a greater extent than in any other locale included in this two-state study. Such interdenominational cooperation *may be* as much a reflection of the still-maturing nature of Kentucky society by 1830 as it is an indication of theological agreement. For example, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists had all shared the Shelbyville meeting house for years after 1814 until each group could construct their own building. Another plausible explanation is that the spread of Campbellism in the state tended to unite other denominations in a common defense. Nevertheless, this perspective by no means discounts basic doctrinal agreement. Four members of Six Mile Baptist Church, one of whom, Squire C. Robinson, was a deacon, signed the local petition. Caleb Guthrie, an "Old School" (Calvinist or Regular) Baptist minister in the Long Run Baptist Association,

³² *Kentucky Gazette*, April 3, 1829. Unfortunately, the *Shelbyville Compiler* is not extant.

signed as well. Four members (current or future) of Shelbyville's Centenary Methodist Church signed the local petition, as did two officers in the church, Jacob Cardwell and George Robinson (dates of service unknown).³³

Washington County closely matched Shelby in terms of the representation of Presbyterian elders and justices as well as in terms of significant interdenominational cooperation. In Washington County, no less than six elders and two future deacons of Lebanon Presbyterian Church signed at least one of the two local Sabbatarian petitions. Washington countians prepared a petition in December 1828 (over eighty signatures) and another a year later (over one hundred seventy signatures). A total of some two hundred thirty individuals signed at least one of these memorials, by far the highest number of petitioners from any community in Kentucky. In the Upper South--if not the entire South--only Prince Edward County in Virginia produced an equivalent number of total petitioners (though from a single petition). Of note, too, is that Washington County doubled the number of signers on their second memorial, indicating that residents perceived the issue to be of increased import. Moreover, the latter was a beautifully penned, handsomely bound, pamphlet, in contrast with the normal single sheet petition.

³³ Records of Six Mile Baptist Church, Shelby County, Kentucky (typescript at KHS; the original records are part of the Baptist materials from Shelby County, but the manuscript is not definitely identified, according to KHS); petitioners Jeffrey W. Bondurant, Stephen Scoby (Scobee), and Pierson Willis were members of Six Mile at different times between 1827 and 1830. Records of Centenary Methodist Church, Shelbyville, Kentucky, 1841-1878 (microfilm at UK); petitioners Samuel Brittain (Britton), Henry Burnett, Ralph Hickman, and John McGaughey were members of Centenary in 1841-42, but earlier records appear not to be extant. E.D. Shinnick, *Some Old Time History of Shelbyville and Shelby County* (Frankfort, Ky., 1974), 5; also, Willis' *History of Shelby County* includes many of the individuals mentioned here. Several articles in the Methodists' *Western Christian Advocate* attested to Methodist support in the West for the Calvinist Sabbath; see issues for July 11, October 24, and December 26, 1834.

At least six justices signed from Washington County, and one of them, Andrew Cunningham, was both a justice and an elder.³⁴

But the most striking aspect of Washington County's petition effort was its interdenominational cooperation. Both petitions bear the signatures not only of Presbyterians but also of Roman Catholics. Given the historic animosities of the two groups, such cooperation is remarkable. Often major differences existed regarding Sabbath observance. For example, Presbyterian publications not infrequently addressed the generally poor Sabbath day practices of Roman Catholic nations or communities. Nevertheless, the names of at least twelve members of Lebanon's Holy Name of Mary Church appear on one (or both) of the local petitions. That both petitions were cooperative efforts is clear from the distribution of signatures. For example, on the first memorial, the names of Presbyterian elders Alban S. Howsley and Nicholas Ray were followed by Roman Catholic John B. Smith; on the second memorial, the signatures of Roman Catholics Barnet Flanagan and Basil Hayden were close to that of Presbyterian Elias Shackleford, while Nicholas Ray's signature was followed by that of Henry

³⁴ Petitions of inhabitants of Washington County, Kentucky, January 26, 1829, and February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). Elder Andrew Cunningham may have served in Springfield Presbyterian Church rather than in Lebanon (previously Hardin's Creek) Presbyterian. The elders and their dates of ordination or known periods of service, were Cunningham (1822, 1825), Robert H. Fogle (ca. 1827-30), Alban S. Howsley (ca. 1827-30), Joseph Maxwell (ca. 1817), William Newbolt (ca. 1827-30), and Nicholas Ray (ca. 1827-30); deacons were William Dicken (1840) and Elias Shackleford (1840); see W.T. Knott, *History of the Presbyterian Church in what is now Marion County and City of Lebanon, Kentucky, from 1789 to 1895* (Lebanon, Ky., 1895); Minutes of Transylvania Presbytery, 1786-1837, pg. 17 (typescript at PCUSA). The Washington justices and their known years of service, were Cunningham (1820, 1829), John Ferguson (1829), Joseph P. Knott (1829), James L. Maham (1820), William McMurray (1829), and John B. Smith (1829); see Washington County, Kentucky, Court Order Book D, 1826-1833 (Washington County Clerk's office); *Washington County, Kentucky, Bicentennial History: 1792-1992* (Paducah, Ky., 1991).

Mattingly, a Catholic. Apparently, even Presbyterians and Roman Catholics were capable of joining forces on occasion.³⁵

While the aforementioned Sabbatarian memorials purported to have originated from a particular county and, in some cases, from a particular town, the petitions signed by Fayette countians generally were signed by "inhabitants" of Kentucky. This study has located only one Sabbatarian petition originating solely from Fayette, although several other memorials contained a number of signatures of Fayette countians and inhabitants of neighboring counties--such as Presbyterian pastors--among those signatures which could be identified by county.³⁶

³⁵ *Western Luminary*, March 31, 1830. This portion of the study is indebted to Mr. Gerald Thompson for his work on Roman Catholicism in Kentucky--and for his invaluable (and providential) personal assistance during a research trip to Springfield, Kentucky. See his *Kentucky Catholic Pioneers, vol. I, the Rolling Fork Settlement* (Utica, Ky., 1983). See also, *A Copy of the First Register of St. Rose Church, Washington County, Kentucky, 1830-1839* (N.p., n.d.). Two of the twelve individuals considered in this study to be members of Holy Name of Mary Church may, at least at some time, have been members of St. Rose. In 1830, there were no less than five active Roman Catholic churches in Washington County. Ben. J. Webb, *The Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky* (Louisville, Ky., 1884), 121; Mary M. Olson, *A Complete Index to Webb's Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky* (Utica, Ky., 1983), 76, 92. Poor Sabbath observance by Roman Catholics was reported in the *Western Luminary* (March 31, 1830) when it published an account of an Anti-sabbath meeting in Mobile, Alabama, in which the reporter stated that "a portion of the present meeting is composed of Roman Catholics, whose religious opinions do not compel them to close their stores or shops on Sunday."

³⁶ Petition of inhabitants of Kentucky, February 1, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Kentucky, February 2 [1830], Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Kentucky, March 5, 1830, Petitions Received, RG46 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Fayette, Jessamine, and Woodford counties, Kentucky, March 5, 1830, Petitions Received, RG46 (NA). Examples of Presbyterians who signed these petitions are the Rev. John C. Young and the Rev. Samuel Steel. Because of the failure, in some instances, to identify the petition's specific place of origin, the positive identification of individual petitioners was rendered doubtful in many cases.

The lone petition originating strictly from Fayette seems to have been the work primarily of Walnut Hill Presbyterian Church, located several miles from Lexington. Of the forty-four signers of this 1830 petition, at least ten were members of the church by 1828, including three who were (or became) elders. Among them were elder (by 1836) Elijah McClanahan (McClenehan); elder (by 1820) Archibald McKee; and elder (by 1831) Dr. John Todd, whose signature appeared first among the petitioners. Todd also served as the first vice-president of the local Athens Anti-Intemperate Society.³⁷

While Fayette Countians appeared more involved in petitioning--on *both* sides of the issue--than their Lexington neighbors, the publishing of religious periodicals may have represented the most important role played by Lexingtonians in the Sabbath controversy. Three Lexington periodicals published around 1830 were the *Christian Examiner* (Campbellite), the *Gospel Herald* (Methodist), and the *Western Luminary* (Presbyterian).

Much like Campbell's own *Christian Baptist* (and later the *Millennial Harbinger*), the *Christian Examiner* attacked its religious opponents and their view of the Sabbath. In addition to publishing the Anti-sabbatarian petition mentioned earlier, the same issue of the *Examiner* refuted the *Gospel Herald's* claims that the majority of Baptists favored suspending the transportation of the mail on the Sabbath. The Campbellite journal asked rhetorically, "Has the *Herald* adopted Dr. [Ezra S.] ELY's mode of computation, by counting FIFTEEN Baptists in *favor* of a Congress Sabbath, for every ONE who has signed the memorial?"³⁸

³⁷ Petition of inhabitants of Fayette County, Kentucky, January 25--February 1, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); Robert Stuart Sanders, *History of Walnut Hill Presbyterian Church (Fayette County, Kentucky)* (Frankfort, Ky., 1956), 23-25; Walnut Hill Presbyterian Church, session records, 1818-1853 (PCUSA). For Todd, see *Western Luminary*, July 8, 1829.

³⁸ *Christian Examiner* 1 (1830): 71.

The object of the refutation, the *Gospel Herald*, was initiated in 1829 in the midst of the religious strife then engulfing Kentucky and Tennessee. An early issue of the *Herald* declared that the Presbyterians' *Calvinistic Magazine*, published in Rogersville, Tennessee, "is extensively known for the ceaseless and bitter warfare it has carried on, against the doctrines, discipline, ministry and religious character of the Methodist Episcopal Church." Yet such rivalry did not preclude Kentucky Methodists from expressing support for the Calvinist Sabbath. An October 1829 article stated the Sabbath to be "a day on which we are not to work our own works, or think our own thoughts. . . . For our eternal benefit, a certain space of every week is appointed, which, sacred from all other avocations, save those imposed by necessity and mercy, is to be employed in religious duties." Thus, the *Herald* used its influence in Methodist circles in support of the issue most closely identified with their religious competitors, the Presbyterians.³⁹

Not surprisingly, it was the Presbyterians' *Western Luminary* which provided by far the most extensive coverage of the Sabbath issue among all Kentucky periodicals. Initiated in 1824, the *Luminary* was the oldest weekly religious periodical west of the Alleghenies. It boasted a subscription list of some two thousand and in 1829 claimed over fifty agents in Indiana; over thirty-five each in Tennessee and Ohio; over twenty in Illinois; twenty in Missouri; and smaller numbers in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The *Luminary's* editor, printer, and proprietor, Thomas T. Skillman, was an elder in Lexington's McChord (or Second) Presbyterian Church and a manager of the Kentucky Bible Society. Based on the frequency and on the variety of Sabbath-related pieces he published, Skillman seems to have done more than any other Kentuckian of his day to bring the issue of Sabbath

³⁹ *Gospel Herald* 1 (1829): 39-40, 49.

observance to the attention of his wide audience. Although the apex of interest in the Sabbath in Kentucky had passed by 1833, Skillman's death in the terrible cholera epidemic of that year undoubtedly deprived Sabbatarians in the West (and Upper South) of one of their most outspoken advocates.⁴⁰

Illustrative of the frequency and variety of Skillman's pieces on the Sabbath were those from two periods: in early 1826, prior to the period of peak interest in the Sabbath in Kentucky, and nationwide; and, in mid-1829, in the midst of the Sabbath mails petition campaigns. During 1826, Skillman's Sabbath-related pieces included the following: in January, a description of the Sabbath in the British West Indies; in February, resolutions for the Sabbath; in April, an account of the deaths of a party of Sabbath-breakers; in May, a piece on the blessing of the Sabbath; and, in June, an account of one Sabbath-keeping proprietor, an article on the transportation of the mail on the Sabbath, and the publication of the 1826 general assembly's resolutions on the Sabbath. Three years later, the *Luminary's* pieces included these: in April, an article on Sabbath mails, a letter from "PHILOSABBATOS" against Sabbath mails, and a letter addressing visiting on the Sabbath; in May, an article offering biblical instruction on the Sabbath, and an article and a letter refuting charges of "church and state"; in June, a report on the anniversary meeting of the General (Sabbath) Union, and a letter from "C.G.H." on the Sabbath; in July, the resolutions recently adopted by the General Union, articles on "Sunday Mails and Temperance Societies" and Sabbath observance, and an essay on the duty of Christians to keep the Sabbath; and, in August, an article on the importance of the Sabbath, and extracts from certain Sabbath mails petitions. Perhaps the strongest testimony to

⁴⁰ *Western Luminary*, May 13 and October 7, 1829; Robert Stuart Sanders, *History of the Second Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Kentucky, of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1815-1965* (Lexington, Ky., 1965), 89.

Skillman's deep attachment to the Sabbath is the fact that at least in the pages of the *Luminary*, the two foremost evangelical moral issues of the day--temperance and the Sabbath--received nearly equal attention. In fact, at times the Sabbath received greater attention than the campaign against the "burning poison."⁴¹

But petitioning Congress on Sabbath mails and publishing in the *Western Luminary* were not the only activities related to the Sabbath in which Kentucky Presbyterians were involved. Presbyterians were somewhat active on behalf of the Sabbath in two of the church's courts, the presbyteries and the synod. Of the five presbyteries in the Synod of Kentucky, two addressed the issue of Sabbath observance, and one of these demonstrated particular interest.⁴²

In 1828, Muhlenburg Presbytery, for example, responded to a request of the church's highest court, the general assembly, by recommending "all the Churches under their care to inforce [*sic*] the discipline of the Church for every violation of the Sabbath by their members." Two years later, again in response to the action of general assembly, Muhlenburg recommended to the churches under their care to observe the second Thursday in November as a day of "*fasting, humiliation and prayer*, with a view to promote the observance of the Sabbath. . . ." Though the actual results of such efforts are not known, at least they indicate a degree of Sabbath-related activity which three other Kentucky presbyteries apparently neglected.⁴³

⁴¹ *Western Luminary*, January 18, February 15, April 5, May 24, June 14, June 28, 1826; April 1, April 8, May 6, May 20, June 10, June 24, July 4 (apparently misdated from July 1), July 8, July 15, August 26, 1829.

⁴² In 1830, the five presbyteries in the Synod of Kentucky were Ebenezer, Louisville, Muhlenburg, Transylvania, and West Lexington.

⁴³ Muhlenburg Presbytery minutes, vol. I, September 19, 1828; October 7, 1830 (microfilm at PCUSA). I have examined the minutes of all five Kentucky presbyteries

By comparison, West Lexington Presbytery demonstrated greater concern for the Sabbath and appeared to influence the synod on the issue as well. In 1826, the presbytery not only adopted for themselves several resolutions of general assembly regarding Sabbath observance, but also they truncated a key resolution while adding two of their own. In May 1826, the assembly had adopted five resolutions regarding Sabbath observance: (1) noting the evils associated with the widespread profanation of the day; (2) encouraging churches and individuals to avoid guilt in this area; (3) requesting ministers to preach to their churches on the subject of Sabbath observance; (4) calling upon churches to take stern measures against Sabbath-breakers; and, (5) recommending that each synod appoint a member to coordinate measures for the sanctification of the day with other denominations. At their September 1826 meeting, West Lexington Presbytery adopted the first three resolutions nearly verbatim (the fifth applied only to the synod, not the presbytery). Significantly, they chose to abbreviate the fourth resolution, however.⁴⁴

That resolution had stated,

That it be . . . enjoined on . . . Presbyteries and church sessions . . . to exercise discipline on their . . . members whenever guilty of violating the . . . Sabbath . . . and that each pastor should . . . present this subject . . . to the session of the church . . . and invite the co-operation of its members . . . for the suppression of Sabbath-breaking:--*and further, that it be recommended to all our ministers and church members when travelling, to give preference to such liv-
ery establishments, steamboats, canal boats, and other public vehicles, as
do not violate the law of God, and of the land, in relation to the Sabbath.*

between 1826 and 1832; the minutes of Ebenezer, Louisville, and Transylvania presbyteries are silent on the issue of the Sabbath.

⁴⁴ West Lexington Presbytery records, vol. 4, September 21, 1826 (typescript at PCUSA); *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church . . . A.D. 1821 to A.D. 1835 inclusive* (Philadelphia, n.d.), 182-83.

Although West Lexington's presbyters adopted the majority of the resolution nearly verbatim--just as they had done with the three preceding resolutions--they stopped short of advocating that ministers and church members should *give preference* to those establishments which did not violate the sanctity of the Sabbath. To many Jacksonian Americans, the giving of preference to certain businesses--amounting to a boycott--equated with "economic coercion." This was a sensitive issue for many, because it was seen as threatening the perceived harmony of communities. Indeed, the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath faced this very issue in 1828 and 1829. It is likely that part of the explanation for the scarcity of Southern auxiliaries to the General Union was due to the sensitivities of Southerners regarding such "coercion." Moreover, as J. Mills Thornton and others have shown, the existence of the "peculiar institution" made Southerners especially sensitive to anything that could appear disruptive of social harmony among whites. While social unity was certainly desirable to Northerners, unity among *all* whites was absolutely essential in the slave-holding South.⁴⁵

Although West Lexington was unwilling to advocate potentially disruptive measures, they added two resolutions of their own addressing the Sabbath day behavior of church members. Their fifth resolution recommended the avoidance of unnecessary visiting on the Lord's day, attendance upon public worship with children and servants, and godly conversation and deportment. Their sixth and final resolution stated the presbytery's disapprobation of the practice of "setting out upon journeys on the sabbath day--and prosecuting journeys when abroad," a practice, they felt, "which presents to the public eye so bad an example." Indicating the influence of West Lexington Presbytery within the

⁴⁵ Ibid. [emphasis added]; J. Mills Thornton, III, *Power and Politics in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge, La., 1978), 321-22, 443.

Synod of Kentucky, the synod at their meeting in October 1826 adopted the presbytery's Sabbath resolutions nearly verbatim.⁴⁶

As had Muhlenburg Presbytery, West Lexington resolved that the second Thursday in November 1830 be observed as a day of fasting and prayer on account of the sin of Sabbath profanation. Characteristically, concern for the Sabbath was not far removed from anxiety over intemperance, and the same discussion at presbytery addressed both moral issues. West Lexington expressed "deep regret that any members of the church of Christ should . . . feel themselves at liberty to *manufacture, sell, or use* ardent spirits, & thus as far as their influence extends, counteract the efforts now making for the promotion of temperance."⁴⁷

While the foregoing discussion describes West Lexington's activities on behalf of the Sabbath, the Kentucky synod took several measures of its own. One abortive effort to help raise the standard of Sabbath observance in late 1826 illustrates the difficulties Sabbatarians faced even within Presbyterian circles. Perhaps hopeful on the morning following synod's adoption of the West Lexington Sabbath resolutions, the synod appointed a committee to receive "essays on the moral obligations of the Sabbath." The essays were to be solicited over the next several months, were to be submitted anonymously and judged by the committee, and the best one was to be published and sold. If the proceeds from the sales failed to cover the expense of publication, the synod would

⁴⁶ West Lexington Presbytery records, vol. 4, September 21, 1826 (typescript at PCUSA); Synod of Kentucky minutes, October 16, 1826 (microfilm at PCUSA).

⁴⁷ West Lexington Presbytery records, vol. 5, October 14, 1830 (PCUSA). The synod also recommended observance of the day of fasting and prayer, but this body did not meet until after Muhlenburg and West Lexington presbyteries had already recommended this step; Synod of Kentucky minutes, October 20, 1830 (typescript at PCUSA).

cover the expense. A year later, however, the synod learned that, although solicited, not a single essay had been received by the committee. Perhaps, Kentucky Presbyterians perceived greater--or more tangible--moral threats than that of Sabbath profanation. The most likely such threat was intemperance.⁴⁸

Despite this disappointment over the essay contest, the synod in 1829 addressed Sabbath observance again. Included in the list of the requirements of students attending the Kentucky Presbyterians' Centre College, was this: "The whole of every Lord's day is to be devoted to devotional exercises, either of a social or secret kind, or religious instruction." The next day, the synod noted with satisfaction the efforts being made by the General Union on behalf of the Sabbath, and particularly encouraged Christians to abstain from travelling on that day and to "show by their example, the high estimation in which we hold that sacred day." Noteworthy, perhaps, is the fact that this measure was initiated by the synod; in 1829 the general assembly had been silent on the subject of the Sabbath.⁴⁹

The foregoing discussion has focused on the Sabbath as a moral-religious issue. That this was the case in large measure is clear from the controversy between Calvinists and Campbellites as well as from the activities of Presbyterians and their courts on behalf of the Sabbath. Whereas Calvinist Presbyterians and Baptists, and in some cases Methodists and even Roman Catholics, signed petitions, wrote letters, and published articles on behalf

⁴⁸ Synod of Kentucky minutes, October 17, 1826 (microfilm at PCUSA); October 11, 1827 (typescript at PCUSA). The deadline for submittal of essays on the Sabbath was either January 1 or June 1, 1827 (either "Jan." or "Jun." in the original manuscript). Since synod did not receive the committee's report until the fall meeting in 1827, probably the deadline had been June 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, October 19 and 20, 1829 (typescript at PCUSA).

of the traditional Sabbath, Campbellites did the same in favor of the Anti-sabbatarian position.

Of course, the moral-religious aspects experienced by these communities cannot be divorced from their concurrent social-economic dimensions. This study suggests that the size of a community and the degree to which it was caught up in the excitement surrounding the building of turnpikes and railroads, thus connecting it with larger, more distant markets, often was reflected in the community's stand on Sabbath mails. Of course, these two aspects are closely related, for only a sizeable community could hope to raise the funds and provide the technical expertise and leadership necessary for turnpike and railroad construction. Many people perceived the Sabbath mails issue within the context of economic opportunity, and many Anti-sabbatarians argued that stopping the mails on the Sabbath would hurt local businesses which depended upon timely market information. Maximum mail service was essential, they felt, for staying on top of the market.⁵⁰

In Kentucky, Maysville provides an excellent example of a large--by Southern and Western standards--and prospering, town, with high commercial prospects resulting from new, and anticipated, transportation systems. Located on the Ohio River and possessing regular steamboat service, in 1830 Maysville was second in the state only to Louisville in terms of its commercial importance. A traveller, Timothy Flint, described the town in that year:

It has a fine harbor for boats. . . . There are three streets running parallel with the river; and four streets crossing them. . . . The houses are about 500 . . . and the inhabitants about 4000. . . . [and has] the usual number of stores and manu-

⁵⁰ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 548-50.

factories. Glass and . . . other articles are manufactured. . . . It has a market house, court house, three houses for . . . worship, and some other public buildings. What has given particular importance to Maysville, *is its being the principal place of importation for the north-east part of the state*. The greater part of the goods for Kentucky from Philadelphia and the eastern cities, are landed here. . . . It is a thriving . . . town, and a number of steam boats have been built here.⁵¹

Flint's description accurately portrayed Maysville's commercial prominence at a critical time in the town's history with regard to its prospects for the future--and with regard to the Sabbath controversy as well. Fervent interest in new and better transportation opportunities had existed for at least several years. In 1827, the Maysville, Washington, Paris, and Lexington Turnpike Company was incorporated and by late 1830 the company had completed the first four miles of macadam road in the state, stretching from Maysville to Washington, Kentucky. In late 1828, the *Maysville Eagle* ran a series of seven letters prepared for the *Eagle*, entitled, "Internal Improvement, &c." The anonymous writer, "AZAWORTH," discussed and advocated enterprises such as the much-hoped-for turnpike between Maysville and Lexington; "canals across Kentucky both practicable and expedient"; "inclined planes," deemed faster, cheaper, and less laborious substitutes for canal locks; and, "a canal or railway from Maysville to Alabama eminently, if not pre-eminently, productive." The next year, 1829, witnessed continued high interest in the Maysville and Washington Turnpike Road Company, as stockholders led by local resident Adam Beatty attempted to obtain from the State of Kentucky an amendment to the act of incorporation, whereby the state would subscribe to purchase some of the stock. At the same time, the company's stockholders sought to obtain the federal government's

⁵¹ G. Glenn Clift, *History of Maysville and Mason County* . . . (Lexington, Ky., 1936), 170-73 [emphasis added].

"subscription of stock to aid in the construction and completion of the contemplated road" from Washington to Lexington. Additionally, late in the year the town trustees of Maysville decided to establish a ferry across the Ohio River between Maysville and her northern neighbor.⁵²

The year 1830 witnessed local interest at fever pitch. In the spring, the Maysville Road Bill was before Congress, and many merchants, and possibly many others, expected the road to bring an economic boom with it. The bill was intended to obtain the federal government's subscription of \$150,000 to the stock in the Maysville, Washington, Paris, and Lexington Turnpike Road Company. Though it was late April 1830 before the U.S. House approved the bill and mid-May before it passed the Senate, its passage had been anticipated for at least six months. Also that spring, the *Eagle* published a series of articles advocating the cause of the Maysville to Lexington turnpike, among others. Between April 6 and May 18, the paper published no less than seven numbers from "A Friend to Good Roads." In the sixth number, "A Friend" argued,

If any one doubts the practical effects of the old road law, I would invite him either on foot, on horseback, or in any kind of vehicle . . . to travel in the winter or spring months along the road from Maysville to Lexington. If his own observation will not convince him, let him enquire of every traveler . . . what is your opinion of the . . . road? The testimony will not . . . be contradictory.

⁵² Edna Hunter Best, *The Historic Past of Washington, Mason County, Kentucky* (Cynthiana, Ky., 1944), 85. The seven letters were published in the *Maysville Eagle*, October 15 (note that this issue was misdated as October 16) and 22; November 5, 12, and 26; December 10 and 24, 1828; quotes in the text above were taken from the November 5, 26, and December 10, 1828, issues. *Maysville Eagle*, April 22, December 22, 1829; Mason County Court Order Books, vol. L, 1827-1832 (microfilm at KDLA).

Undoubtedly, "A Friend to Good Roads" would have nodded in agreement had he seen the entry in the *Eagle* in 1827 which complained that the "Eastern Mail has not arrived here since last week, owing to the want of a post road, that can be traveled during the Winter season."⁵³

Amidst such excitement, in January 1830 Maysville residents mounted an Anti-sabbath petition campaign during what must have seemed a critical moment for the town's future. Just as Maysvillians were aspiring to the turnpike which would add so much to their fortunes, Sabbatarians were mounting another petition campaign to stop the already too slow mails one day a week. Such an effort must have seemed the height of commercial imprudence. Indeed, Richard John has noted that a fundamental element of Sabbatarianism in the early Jacksonian era seems to have been a distinct "anticommercialism," a desire "to slow the commercial penetration of the Sabbath." That many Maysville merchants wanted to keep the mails moving on the Sabbath is clear from an examination of the town's petitioners. Among the approximately one hundred ten petitioners are the signatures of approximately twenty-five local merchants. These included John T. Brooks, the owner of a saddling and harness company; Nathan Hixson, whose businesses included a hemp press, a steam mill, and a dry goods store; Jonathan T. Langhorne, dry goods merchant, proprietor of the well-known "Eagle Tavern," and chairman of the board of town trustees for Maysville in 1829; William Mackey, a dry goods wholesaler and by far the wealthiest man in Maysville; William M. Poyntz, a partner

⁵³ *Maysville Eagle*, April 6, 13, 20, and 27; May 4, 11, and 18, 1830. Clift, *History of Maysville*, 164. R. [Richard] H. Collins, *Collins' Historical Sketches of Kentucky. History of Kentucky* (Louisville, Ky., 1877), 36. Following President Andrew Jackson's veto of the Maysville Road Bill in late May 1830, the *Eagle* initiated unrelenting attacks against the "hickory-headed administration" for what they termed, "THE VETO." See, for example, *Maysville Eagle*, September 14, 28, 1830.

in "Nat. Poyntz and Company" and an official in the Maysville and Washington Turnpike Road Company; and, William Tureman, a dry goods dealer. Other Anti-sabbatarian petitioners included a tanyard owner, carpentry shop owner, bookbinder, shoe store owner, merchant tailor, salt merchant, and tavern owner.⁵⁴

The text of Maysville's petition expressed concern for both the "general welfare of the country" and for "the principles of religion." In fact, references to "an [ecclesiastical] influence" and "the unnatural union of church and state" hints at the influence of Campbell's disciples. Whether this was the case or not is less clear than with the petitions discussed earlier, but at least four petitioners appear to have been Reformers. These were John Corwine, a subscriber to the *Christian Baptist* in 1823 and later a member of the Maysville Christian Church; William Tureman, a subscriber to the *Christian Baptist* in 1823 and again in 1829; and, Nathan Hixson and Jesse Wood, charter members of the Maysville church in 1828. In any case, Campbell's movement was very strong in Mason County in the late 1820s and early 1830s. In 1828, the Baptist church in Maysville split over Campbell's teachings, the majority joining his movement; and in 1829-1830, the 700-member Mays' Lick Baptist Church located twelve miles from Maysville, also divided.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 535. Petition of inhabitants of Maysville, Kentucky, February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) (note that this is the eighth of the Anti-sabbath petitions from Kentucky discussed earlier). I identified Maysville "merchant-petitioners" primarily by examining the advertisements in the *Maysville Eagle* between January 1828 and March 1831. Other sources were Clift, *History of Maysville*, Chapters 4 and 5; Gayle Anderson Braden and Coralie Jones Runyon, *A History of the Christian Church, Maysville, Kentucky* (Maysville, Ky., 1948), 9-35; Mason County Court Order Books, vol. L, 1827-1832 (microfilm at KDLA).

⁵⁵ Petition of inhabitants of Maysville, Kentucky, February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). Braden and Runyon wrote, "A measure of Mr. Campbell's influence in Mason County is shown by the fact that there was soon a growing number of subscribers to these publications [the *Christian Baptist* and, later, the *Millennial Harbinger*] in that section." See Braden and Runyon, *A History of the Christian Church, Maysville*,

A final piece of evidence lends support to the view that Campbell's influence was involved in Maysville's Anti-sabbatarianism. Just across the Ohio River lay Brown County, Ohio, an area bound to perceive its fortunes as tied, to some degree, to Maysville's. That Brown countians also submitted Anti-sabbatarian petitions to Congress may not be surprising, but the language they expressed was shocking, indeed. A number of identical pre-printed petitions from Brown County attests to a well-organized petition effort. The Brown countians declared shamelessly:

As in the age of Popery, they [Sabbatarians] would by their Legerdemain endeavor to impose their "PIOUS FRAUDS" upon the good people of this Great Republic, to accomplish their diabolical purposes, and bind their fellow citizens in ecclesiastic (worse than demoniac) chains.

But with good old King David, let us fall into the hands of the Lord rather than into the hands of these scorpion-tailed inquisitors, who are striving for no less than the amalgamation of the Congress . . . with their Synods [Presbyterian].

Though the source of such abusive language is unknown, it is consistent with other writings of Campbell or some of his followers. Perhaps commercial interests and religious rivalries coincided almost perfectly in some locales in the winter of 1829-1830.⁵⁶

While Maysville's case illustrates the Anti-sabbatarian side extremely well, small Kentucky towns such as Wadesboro in Calloway County, Shelbyville in Shelby County, Bowling Green in Warren County, and Springfield in Washington County illustrate the Sabbatarian side. These communities seem to have been less interested in turnpikes and

Kentucky, 22-25, 34; *Christian Baptist*, July 6, 1829. At the time of division, Mays' Lick Baptist was "probably the strongest church [Baptist] in the West;" see *Lexington Herald-Leader*, October 15, 1961.

⁵⁶ Petition (one of several) of inhabitants of Brown County, Ohio, March 1, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA).

railroads and less connected to distant markets than towns such as Maysville; of significance, perhaps, is the fact that some communities lacked a local newspaper and thus had no vehicle to express these interests even if they were present. The scarcity of local newspapers and the absence of a census of manufactures in 1830--manufacturing data were not reported in that census--make any assessment of the economic trends in these small Kentucky communities around 1830 tentative at best.⁵⁷

Recognizing this difficulty, perhaps the best available data to suggest the general level of economic activity are the postmasters' compensation figures for given Kentucky towns. These figures, in dollars and cents, were published every two years and were based directly on the postage collected by each postmaster. Thus, they provide a relative comparison of the volume of mail handled by particular post offices. As many Anti-sabbatarians were quick to point out, commercial activity depended upon "rapid" transportation of the mails, which represented the primary means of communicating market information in the interior of the country.⁵⁸

Examining the compensation of the postmaster (including clerks in the larger offices) for a number of Kentucky towns between the early 1820s and early 1830s suggests several points (see Table 3.1). First, Louisville and Maysville were the state's post offices

⁵⁷ I consulted the University of Kentucky newspaper holdings, the best-known collection of Kentucky newspapers. There appears to be no evidence of the existence of any local newspapers in Calloway or Washington counties prior to the 1850s; Shelby County did enjoy a newspaper around 1830, the *Shelbyville Compiler*, but it is not extant (the publishing of the letter is the only primary evidence I uncovered indicating the existence of a newspaper in Shelbyville around 1830); and the *Spirit of the Times*, published in Bowling Green, is the only newspaper I located from Warren County prior to 1831, and the period for which issues are extant is only from late 1826 to late 1827.

⁵⁸ Marion, "East Tennessee and the Sabbath," 21.

Table 3.1

Postmaster Compensation, Selected Kentucky Towns¹

	1823	1825	1827	1829	1831	1833
<i>Bowling Green</i>	253	262	298	409	364	471
Danville	190	217	260	309	385	439
Elkton	82	88	114	151	172	268
Harrodsburgh	143	228	*	365	304	388
<i>Lexington</i>	1385	1212	1453	1491	1994	1958
Louisville	2013	2044	1587*	3016	1225*	4600
<i>Maysville</i>	276	6_3@	1685	2044	1979*	2530
Millersburgh	62	50	62	75	109	183
Richmond	185	200	231	273	275	335
<i>Shelbyville</i>	206	249	295	365	393	339
<i>Springfield</i>	125	98	129	157	140	181
<i>Wadesboro</i>	---	17	37	55	61	90

Note: towns located in the counties covered in this study are italicized.

* Data incomplete.

@ This figure is probably "653."

¹ *Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval, in the Service of the United States, on the 30th of September, 1823* (Washington, 1824); *Register of Officers and Agents . . . September, 1825* (Washington, 1825); *Register of Officers and Agents . . . September, 1827* (Washington, 1828); *Register of Officers and Agents . . . September, 1829* (Washington, 1830); *Register of Officers and Agents . . . September, 1831* (Washington, 1831); *Register of all Officers and Agents . . . September, 1833* (Philadelphia, 1834). Figures are rounded off to the nearest dollar. In the larger post offices (Lexington, Louisville, and Maysville), compensation figures include postal clerks.

experiencing the greatest increases in volume of mail. Louisville's figure rose from over \$2,000 in 1825--already nearly twice that of Lexington, its only rival in the state--to over \$3,000 in 1829--and to \$4,600 in 1833, over twice that of every town except Maysville. Maysville's compensation rose from less than \$700 in 1825--surpassed at the time only by Lexington (over \$1,200) and Louisville--to over \$2,000 in 1829--and to over \$2,500 in 1833, second only to Louisville. Such increases in the volume of mail hinted at significant economic growth in Louisville and Maysville.⁵⁹

But another indicator pointed to Maysville's economic fortunes. Between March 1827 and March 1831, the number of steamboat arrivals at Maysville more than doubled (see Table 3.2). For the one week period between March 21 and 27, 1827, a total of thirteen

Table 3.2

Steamboat Arrivals, Maysville, Kentucky¹

March 23-29, 1825	March 21-27, 1827	March 23-27, 1830	March 15-22, 1831
10	13	22	33

¹ Data extracted from *Maysville Eagle*, March 30, 1825, March 28, 1827, March 30, 1830, and March 22, 1831.

⁵⁹ *Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval, in the Service of the United States, on the 30th of September, 1825 . . .* (Washington, 1825); *Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval . . . on the 30th of September, 1827 . . .* (Washington, 1828); *Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval . . . on the 30th of September, 1829 . . .* (Washington, 1830); *Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval . . . on the 30th of September, 1831 . . .* (Washington, 1831); *Register of all Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval . . . on the Thirtieth September, 1833 . . .* (Philadelphia, 1834).

steamboats arrived, most from Pittsburgh or Louisville, with several from unspecified locations. On two days during that week, no steamboat arrived. But only four years later, during the eight-day period between March 15 and 22, 1831, no less than thirty-three steamboats arrived at Maysville. In addition to steaming from Pittsburgh and Louisville, vessels arrived from Cincinnati and Nashville. On two separate days, six boats arrived at the port, and at least two arrived on each of the eight days reported. A portion of the increased steamboat activity at Maysville was undoubtedly due to the initiation of operations, in January 1830, of the steamboat *Phoebus*. As local historian G. Glenn Clift noted, "Maysville's importance as a commercial port was furthered . . . when the steamboat *Phoebus* established a tri-weekly packet trade between Maysville and Cincinnati." Although the above figures may not represent concrete evidence for a strong local economy, they certainly suggest an economic rationale for Maysvillians who sent a petition signed by numerous merchants designed to keep the mails running--and thereby providing the latest market information--on the Sabbath.⁶⁰

The compensation figures for postmasters of the "Sabbatarian towns" of Wadesboro, Shelbyville, Bowling Green, and Springfield tell a story somewhat different from Maysville's (see Table 3.1). Wadesboro, of course, had not even existed until the early 1820s. In its first year of reporting postmaster compensation, 1825, Wadesboro's amount was a meager \$17 and by 1833, \$90. Although Wadesboro's compensation increased by several-fold, its figures were small by comparison with other Kentucky towns. Shelbyville's compensation increased from \$249 in 1825 to \$393 in 1831. Similarly, Bowling Green, which was on the verge of accelerated economic growth in 1830,

⁶⁰ *Maysville Eagle*, March 28, 1827, and March 22, 1831. See Clift, *History of Maysville*, 173-74.

reported an increase from \$262 in 1825 to \$409 in 1829. Perhaps significant for the town's stand on the Sabbath issue around 1830 was the fact that local entrepreneurs were only then organizing to make steamboat navigation on the Green and Barren rivers a reality for Bowling Green. Boom times were still just around the corner.⁶¹

Springfield, however, may have experienced economic decline relative to other Kentucky towns. Its compensation increase was much less pronounced than was Shelbyville's and Bowling Green's, rising from \$98 in 1825 to \$157 in 1829, then falling to \$140 two years later. Although its compensation had nearly doubled by 1833, Springfield was the principal town and county seat of an "old" Kentucky county yet it still accounted for only a relatively small volume of mail, and, one assumes, of economic activity. Referring to Washington County in the 1830s, a local history noted, "The *survival* of Bardstown and Springfield appears to have owed much to the completion of the Bardstown and Louisville Turnpike." Perhaps significant is the fact that while the proposal for the road was the first major internal improvement project in the county, it was not introduced in the state legislature until January 1831--nearly one year after the second of two local Sabbath petitions was produced. Thus--in sharp contrast to Maysvillians--Washington countians do not appear to have been anticipating local internal improvements at the time that the Sabbath mails controversy was at its peak. That Washington County produced two Sabbatarian petitions and represented, in terms of the

⁶¹ Petition of inhabitants of Calloway County, Kentucky, January 12, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Shelby County, Kentucky, January 18, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Bowling Green and Warren County, Kentucky, February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); *Architecture of Warren County, Kentucky, 1790-1940* (Bowling Green, Ky., 1984), 10-11; Nancy Baird and Carol Crowe-Carraco, *The History of Bowling Green and Warren County* (Bowling Green, Ky., 1989), 1-2.

total number of petitioners, one of the two "strongest" Sabbatarian counties in the Upper South was perhaps not entirely unrelated to its economic situation. Perhaps the local economy had something to do with the willingness of Presbyterians and Roman Catholics to take the remarkable step of joining hands in the local petition effort.⁶²

This study indicates that the Sabbath mails controversy in Kentucky provides a window into the moral-religious and social-economic concerns experienced and expressed by some communities in the early Jacksonian era. In general, small communities lacking steamboat access and without significant interest in turnpikes or railroads, and who possessed large Calvinist congregations, were those most likely to be found defending the traditional Sabbath. Large communities seeking such new modes of transportation and who either lacked strong Calvinist influence or who were experiencing the religious turmoil of the Campbellite movement in Kentucky, or both, were far more likely to oppose traditional Sabbath observance. The evidence presented herein indicates that communities in which traditional social-economic relationships remained generally intact in the 1820s were more inclined to maintain traditional moral-religious relationships as well, while communities whose social and economic lives were being revolutionized were more inclined to overturn traditional moral and religious relationships.

Before concluding this chapter, it is helpful to return to the case of Colonel Johnson. Johnson's two congressional reports against the repealing of the federal postal law have been noted by historians and others since the Jacksonian era as landmark defenses of

⁶² Petitions of inhabitants of Washington County, Kentucky, January 26, 1829, and February 15, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); *Washington County, Kentucky, Bicentennial History*, 27-28 [emphasis added]. William Preston Vaughn provides a possible parallel with the Sabbath issue when noting that Antimasonry was strongest in "poor rural districts"; see his *The Antimasonic Party in the United States, 1826-1843* (Lexington, Ky., 1983), 25.

religious liberty and the "separation of church and state" in America. In light of the importance of Johnson's addresses, it is noteworthy that a near-perfect coinciding of *religious* and *economic* interests of close family members of Richard M. Johnson existed on behalf of the Anti-sabbatarian position.⁶³

A brother of Colonel Johnson, John T., held a clear *religious* interest in the Anti-sabbatarian view of the Sabbath mails issue, while a nephew, Edward P., held an equally strong *economic* interest in the refusal of Congress to grant the request of Sabbatarian petitioners. Brother John T. Johnson was one of the leading Campbellite preachers in Kentucky, whose influence was perhaps exceeded only by Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell. Disciples historian Alonzo Willard Fortune has written that John T. Johnson was one "who did much to determine the character of the Disciples in Kentucky. . . . As an evangelist he was constantly going among the churches, indoctrinating them and setting them in order. As an editor and correspondent for the religious journals he helped to determine the thinking of the preachers." In fact, J.T. Johnson seems to have played a key role in the four-day meeting in December 1831 which precipitated the merging of Stone's Christians and Campbell's Disciples shortly thereafter. According to Fortune, Stone and J.T. Johnson "were the leaders in this meeting and it seems to have been suggested by Mr. Johnson." A fundamental point of the Stone-Campbell movement was the belief that "Christians are living under the New Testament," as opposed to continuing to follow the Old Testament. Because the Fourth Commandment, regarding the Sabbath, is found in

⁶³ For examples of laudatory treatments of Johnson's reports from four different eras, see William Emmons, *Authentic Biography of Col. Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky* (Boston, 1833), 89; Emily Elizabeth Tandy Ford, "Richard Mentor Johnson: Thirty Years in Congress," (M.A. thesis, University of Kentucky, 1929), 71; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston, 1953 [1945]), 139-43; Harrell, *Quest for a Christian America*, 192-93.

the Old Testament, the Reformers objected strongly to expressions of the continuing validity of the Sabbath. Thus, for the sake of the movement to which John T. Johnson was dedicated, the Sabbath mails controversy was one of considerable religious, if not social and economic, interest for the brother of Colonel Johnson.⁶⁴

Nephew Edward P. Johnson was the leading stage-coach proprietor in the Bluegrass area, no small portion of whose profits depended upon U.S. mail contracts which many believed would suffer financially, should the mails be prohibited from running on the Sabbath. Kentucky historian J. Winston Coleman, Jr., wrote of the colonel's nephew, "During the palmy days of the stage travel" in the Bluegrass after 1830, Edward P. Johnson "was the most important figure. He had numerous connections and companies, operating over many Bluegrass routes." Furthermore, he developed what came to be known as the *limited* (or faster, mail stage) and what was termed *accommodation* (or slower, passenger stage) lines. With Lexington as the Distributing Post Office, or hub, for all of Kentucky, Edward P. Johnson had great economic interest in not allowing anything, much less Sabbath restrictions on the mails, to upset his stage business. Thus, by virtue of the clear interests, one religious and the other economic, of two close family members, Colonel Johnson, at the very least, had no reason to resist taking the Anti-sabbatarian side of the Sabbath mails controversy, and, perhaps, had all the more reason to embrace it.⁶⁵

While the evidence uncovered in the present study does not allow for any firm conclusions as to which set of relationships, social-economic or moral-religious, were primary in the Sabbath controversy in Kentucky, the best conclusion--and one indicated by

⁶⁴ Fortune, *The Disciples in Kentucky*, 103-105, 107, 118-19. See also John Rogers, *The Biography of Elder J.T. Johnson* (Nashville, Tenn., 1956 [1861]), 25-28.

⁶⁵ J. Winston Coleman, Jr., *Stage-Coach Days in the Bluegrass . . .* (Berea, Ky., 1976), 44-47, 77-79, 204, 214, 218.

the personal example of Richard M. Johnson--is simply the acknowledgment that they may have operated in concert with one another. As to how many other Kentuckians of far lesser stature than Colonel Johnson experienced a similar coinciding of factors impinging upon the Sabbath issue is unknown. That being the case, the surest conclusion warranted by the evidence is that Jacksonian era Kentuckians' decisions regarding the issues of their day were sometimes reached with *less* independent judgment than either they realized or would have wished to acknowledge.

Chapter 4

Presbyterians, Gentlemen Justices, and the Sabbath Mails Campaigns in Virginia, 1826-1830

On July 1, 1828, the Rev. John Holt Rice, the South's leading Presbyterian minister and the Professor of Theology at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, wrote to one of the state's foremost temperance leaders, Brigadier General John H. Cocke:

You have been appointed an officer of a Society formed, this spring, in New York, for the better observance of the Sabbath. This appointment was made on the observance that you appreciate the importance of this Institution to the cause of religion and all the best interests of our country.

The object of this note is to propose for your consideration the question, "Can we do any thing to vindicate the rights and promote the better observance of the Sabbath in Virginia?" It would I apprehend be entirely in vain to address religious considerations to most of our countrymen; for they feel not the force of religious obligation. *But if we could convince them that it is a matter of economy to honour the day of rest appointed by Heaven, it might in these times have some weight with them.* Will you think on this whole subject, and have the goodness to let me know your thoughts?¹

Rice had just returned home to Prince Edward County, Virginia, following his attendance in New York at the formation of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath. One of only a handful of Southern members--and the only one from Virginia--out of the more than two hundred ministers and lay leaders who attended the gathering, Rice's letter characteristically demonstrated his deep concern for the progress of religion and morality in his home state. At the same time, Rice showed

¹ John Holt Rice to John Hartwell Cocke, July 1, 1828, Misc. Box 3, John Holt Rice Faculty Writings (photocopy at UTS) [emphasis added]; Raymond H. Pulley, "General Cocke and the Temperance Crusade," *Virginia Cavalcade* 15 (1965): 22-27.

that he was under no illusions as to the daunting task that he, Cocke, and other Sabbath-keeping Virginians faced in attempting to reform their society's regard for this perceived vital institution. Perhaps expecting that improved Sabbath observance would be one of the favorable results from what was then taking place in his locale, Rice noted, "Under the preaching of Mr. [Rev. Asahel] Nettleton & Mr. [Rev. James W.] Douglass, there is a glorious work of revival going on in this region. The power of divine truth is deeply felt, and many are brought to its knowledge."²

Although Virginians did not experience the same degree of controversy regarding the Sabbath mails campaigns as was experienced in neighboring Kentucky, a number of Virginia Sabbatarians, mainly Presbyterians but at least a handful of Baptists, Methodists, and Episcopalians, participated between December 1828 and March 1830 in the collective expression of their respect for the Lord's day. And to a greater degree than was the case in Kentucky, a significant number of county justices of the peace, or "gentlemen justices," added the weight of their influence to the Sabbatarian cause as well.

The present chapter focuses on seven Virginia communities, all of which sent Sabbatarian petitions to Congress between late 1828 and early 1830. As in the previous chapter on Kentucky, communities representing different geographical subregions of the state and which garnered approximately fifty or more signatures are included in this study of Virginia. One exception is the town of Petersburg, Virginia, which produced a sparsely signed Sabbatarian petition. It is included because an Anti-sabbath petition--indeed, the only such memorial uncovered among Virginia materials, except from the vicinity of Wheeling which later became part of West Virginia--also came from Petersburg. The six

² Ibid.; [Lyman Beecher], *Address of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1828), 3-5.

other communities included herein are the counties of Accomack (also "Accomac"), Essex, Henrico (including Richmond), Prince Edward, Rockbridge, and Spotsylvania (including Fredericksburg).³

Presbyterians dominated the Sabbath petition drives in Virginia to a somewhat greater extent than was the case in Kentucky. In Kentucky more Presbyterians signed memorials than any other identifiable religious group in all four communities for which religious affiliation could be ascertained for a significant portion of Sabbatarian petitioners (Fayette, Shelby, Warren, and Washington counties). Yet in two counties, Shelby and Washington, significant numbers of non-Presbyterians also signed: Baptists and Methodists in the former, and Roman Catholics in the latter. By comparison, of the seven Virginia communities studied, Presbyterians are virtually the only denomination represented among Sabbatarians in three locales (city of Petersburg, and Prince Edward and Rockbridge counties)--similar to the cases of Fayette and Warren counties in Kentucky--while in two other areas (Richmond/Henrico and Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania) they still dominated the list of memorialists to a greater degree than was the case in the two most "inter-denominational" Kentucky counties (Shelby and Washington). Only in Accomac and Essex counties did Presbyterians' signatures fail to appear--there seem to have been no Presbyterian churches in those locales--and in both of those counties the dominant characteristic of Sabbatarians was not their religious affiliation, but their occupations as

³ Geographical subregions were suggested by Dr. Leonard W. Brinkman of the Geography Department, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in discussion with the author on October 3, 1995. As in Kentucky, some subregions are not represented, due to little or no petitioning in them.

"gentlemen justices" of the peace or officers in the local militia. Nevertheless, at least a few locally prominent Baptists signed the Accomac and Essex petitions.⁴

The number of local churches seems to be one factor that partly explains such Presbyterian dominance among Virginia Sabbatarians. At least a few Presbyterians had been in the region since the middle part of the seventeenth century. The "father" of Presbyterianism in the South, the Rev. Samuel Davies, had organized the first Southern presbytery, Hanover, in the 1750s. These early churches, in connection with the work of highly active ministers such as the Rev. John Holt Rice, had organized other churches so that, by the 1820s, Presbyterians were the dominant sect in some counties in Virginia, at least in numbers, if not in terms of evangelical influence. This was especially the case in Prince Edward and Rockbridge counties in Virginia and was in contrast with Kentucky, where Presbyterians had been present for only about four decades and where their numbers were significantly fewer, especially in relation to Baptists and Methodists.⁵

Of the seven "Sabbatarian" Virginia communities in this study, Accomac and Essex counties together represented a special case. An apparent lack of Presbyterian churches in the two counties make it impossible to verify any signatures as those of members of that denomination. Furthermore, Accomac and Essex seem to be linked, since a higher

⁴ In Kentucky, of the six communities studied, church records for early Calloway County appear to be lacking, while Maysville produced only an Anti-sabbath petition.

⁵ Some Scotch-Irish Presbyterians settled on the Eastern Shore of Maryland around the year 1649, probably the earliest Presbyterians in the region. Between about 1790 and 1820, many thousands of Baptists and Methodists left Virginia for Kentucky; see Walter Brownlow Posey, *Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861* (Lexington, Ky., 1966), 8, 30; William Warren Sweet, *Virginia Methodism: A History* (Richmond, Va., 1955), 150, 170-72.

percentage of "gentlemen justices" from these counties signed Sabbath petitions than from the other five Virginia communities.⁶

In 1974, Lynwood Miller Dent noted,

The level of government closest to the average Virginian in the antebellum period was the county court, a self-perpetuating body of magistrates which held supreme legislative, executive, and judicial power in the county. Composed of justices of the peace appointed by the governor, the county courts perpetuated themselves by retaining power over the nominees for new or replacement justices. Hence families or cliques, once in control of the county court, usually maintained their dominance.

One cannot examine the names of Accomac gentlemen justices without a sense that Dent's description must have been especially accurate in the case of this isolated Eastern Shore community.⁷

⁶ Apparently, Presbyterianism was "dormant on the Virginia Shore" between around 1800 and 1837, when Francis Makemie Memorial (Presbyterian) Church came into being. See Ralph T. Whitelaw, *Virginia's Eastern Shore: A History of Northampton and Accomack Counties* (2 vols., Richmond, Va., 1951), 2: 1404; and, Nora Miller Turman, *The Eastern Shore of Virginia, 1603-1964* (Onancock, Va., 1964), 166-69. Joseph Martin, *A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia . . .* (Charlottesville, Va., 1836), notes the presence of four Methodist houses of worship, one Episcopal, and one Baptist, in Accomac County, but this listing is not all inclusive. *Minutes, of the Accomack Baptist Association* (N.p., 1832), lists five Baptist congregations in the county. James B. Slaughter, *Settlers, Southerners, Americans: The History of Essex County, Virginia, 1608-1984* (Salem, W.Va., 1985), 109-12, notes the dearth of Presbyterian influence in the county. For example, in 1823 a Presbyterian minister preached for a time in Upper Essex, but soon left. The public house of worship in Tappahannock open to all denominations gave preference to the Episcopalians "as to which of the Sabbaths they will occupy the house, then the Baptists, then the Methodists, then the Presbyterians." See Slaughter, *Settlers, Southerners, Americans*, 109. The foremost historian of Presbyterianism in the South, Ernest Trice Thompson, makes no mention of Presbyterian churches in Accomac or Essex counties during the early Jacksonian era; see his *Presbyterians in the South* (3 vols., Richmond, Va., 1963-73), vol. 1.

⁷ Lynwood Miller Dent, Jr., "The Virginia Democratic Party, 1824-1847" (Ph.D. diss.,

Accomac countians sent three handwritten petitions to Congress, each with a different text, and apparently each one representing a different section of the county. One petition was marked, "Horn-Town," and was dated December 22, 1828; another purported to originate from, "Onancock E.S. [Eastern Shore]," and was dated December 23, 1828; and, in the case of the third memorial, the specific place of origin was unidentified, and it was undated. However, the first signer of this petition was "Wm. Gillett [Gellett], PMaster Aco C House," strongly suggesting Accomac Court House (also called "Drummondstown") as the place of origin. This practice was not uncommon: for example, Postmaster Thomas D. Welbourn was the first signer of the Horntown petition, while Onancock Postmaster Samuel C. White was the fifth signer of the Sabbath petition from his locale. After all, postmasters valued their days of rest--holy or otherwise--as much as did others. Furthermore, the simultaneous preparation of the Horntown and Onancock petitions suggests late December 1828 as the most likely date for the Drummondstown document. In any case, the preparation and signing of three petitions from a single county was highly unusual in the Upper South. Only Rockbridge County, Virginia, among the counties in Virginia and Kentucky, equalled Accomac's production of three petitions.⁸

Louisiana State University, 1974), 9. Richard R. Beeman offers another perspective when he notes that by 1829, "individuals with legal complaints were attempting to circumvent the county courts by going over the heads of local justices to the better-trained district court judges." Nevertheless, Beeman argues that "the legal and, more important, the social functions of the county courts remained virtually intact right up to the Civil War." See Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry: A Case Study of Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1746-1832* (Philadelphia, 1984), 216-17, 263.

⁸ Petition of inhabitants of Horntown and Accomac County, Virginia, (dated) December 22, 1828, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Onancock and Accomac County, Virginia, (dated) December 23, 1828, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); and, petition of inhabitants of Accomac County, Virginia, (n.d.), Petitions Received,

The most striking aspect of the Accomac petitions is that they were signed by so many gentlemen justices: no less than sixteen of twenty-four men known to be justices between late 1828 and late 1830 expressed themselves in favor of stopping Sabbath mails in their county. Among them were (Dr.) William D. Cropper, James Gillett (Gellett), and Thompson Holmes, who signed the Horntown petition. Moreover, the Horntown petition was also signed by no less than eight militia officers, members of the local 99th Regiment, Virginia Militia, further indicating the respectability of the Sabbath cause. Justice of the Peace "Levin S. Joynes, J.P." appeared to have been the first to sign the Onancock memorial--his signature was at the top of the left-hand column on the handwritten memorial--thereby suggesting that he may have been the author of the text. The petition stated that the citizens of Onancock and its vicinity "have for a long time viewed with sorrow the demoralizing effect produced by the transportation and opening the U.S. mail on the Sabbath, as well in this county as in other parts. . . ." Perhaps indicative that Onancock petitioners were not faced with the same dilemma as were some others for whom the discontinuance of Sabbath mails could lead to greater delays in local mail service, the memorial continued, "there exists not the least necessity for the running of the mail stage on that day, as it always lays by on Saturday." Regardless of the postal laws, Onancock residents apparently *never* received the benefits of seven-day-a-week mail services; they simply asked that the day for the mail to "lay by" be on the first instead of

RG233 (NA). Three other postmasters in Virginia communities who signed Sabbatarian petitions were those of Bedford County, the town of Otter Bridge (in Bedford County), and Westmoreland County, Virginia; see petition of inhabitants of Bedford County, Virginia, (n.d.), Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Otter Bridge and Bedford County, Virginia, January 19, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); and, petition of inhabitants of Westmoreland County, Virginia, (received) January 12, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA).

the last day of the week in order to avoid the "demoralizing effect" of Sabbath profanation. Whether such an argument lessened--or lessens--the moral force of their request is, perhaps, open to question.⁹

Furthermore, a unique aspect of the Onancock petition is that it was the only one from the Upper South uncovered in this study in which the majority of the petitioners included their occupations next to their names. Following Joynes' signature, those of eleven others who listed their occupations included three who identified themselves as "merchant"; two, as "mariner"; and, one each, as "tailor," "minister of the gospel," "attory at law," "Esqr," "M.D.," and "PMaster Onancock."¹⁰

The undated Accomac petition claimed the most signatures, one hundred twenty-one, compared with seventy-seven on the Horntown document and twenty-one on the Onancock memorial. This petition also contained the greatest number of justices' signatures, no less than twelve. Several of their names harkened back to the early days of Accomac's history, such as John W. and William R. Custis, and, George Scarburgh; or, reminded one of the tendency for particular families to control the county court for many

⁹ Ibid. The eight militia officers were designated by rank in the 1830 census for Accomac County, or were mentioned in the county court order books: majors Oliver Logan and William Watts; and, captains Jonathan D. Fields, Thomas Fletcher, Samuel Henderson, John Milligan, John Wallop, and William Welbourn (Welburn). Although many Accomac justices noted their title next to their names on the petitions, this study also relied upon Accomack County Order Books, 1827-1829, 1829-1832 (microfilm at VSLA), to identify gentlemen justices. The undated Accomac petition offered an argument similar to that of the Onancock petition's, regarding a "lay day" for the local mails.

¹⁰ Petition of inhabitants of Onancock and Accomac County, Virginia, (dated) December 23, 1828, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA).

years, such as Thomas and William Parramore (deputy sheriff), and William Parramore, Senior.¹¹

Included on this petition were the names of two locally prominent Baptists, the only Accomac signers identified by religious affiliation. These were the Rev. Levi (Levin) Dix and Elder William Laws, certainly two of the most influential Baptists on the Eastern Shore. Probably a number of fellow Baptists also signed the same petition, but this cannot be verified. In any case, Dix served as moderator of the Accomac Baptist Association and Laws as the standing clerk in (at least) 1825, 1831, and 1834. In the circular letter he issued in 1825, Dix indicated the disadvantages professing Christians often labored under in the early Jacksonian era. The moderator used the opportunity to remind the association of a resolution passed a year earlier--and apparently heeded but little--which encouraged "the Brethren of the several churches, to hold meetings for the public worship of God, on the sabbaths in which they have no preaching, and strive to edify each other by singing, prayer, and exhortation. . . ." Dix lamented,

Some of you have the Gospel preached only once a month, and none every Lord's day; and too many appear to think it of no consequence that they assemble no oftener.

. . . But alas, the members of many Baptist churches, instead of meeting often to make mention of the Lord, are frequently on the sabbath to be found engaged in worldly conversation, not to say worldly pursuits, to the great hindrance of their own spiritual prosperity; and to the injury of the cause of Jesus, by being stumbling blocks to others.

¹¹ Petition of inhabitants of Accomac County, Virginia, (n.d.), Petitions Received, RG233 (NA).

Dix regarded the Sabbath's observance essential to piety: "We are persuaded that the most happy result would follow . . . [from meeting weekly], the Sabbath would be revered by us, made a delight, and not pass unimproved; a spirit of prayer maintained; a congregation supported . . . your hearts enlivened with love to God, and revivals of religion produced." Thus, while Presbyterians were usually the sect found passing resolutions regarding Sabbath observance, in some cases Baptists did so as well.¹²

While Accomac County provided the Upper South's best example of a petition effort led by local leaders--in this case, by magistrates, militia officers, and Baptists--Essex County's Sabbath petitions indicated a similar phenomenon. Essex produced two petitions in early 1829, only one of which was identified as originating from the county. The other was marked as hailing from "sundry Citizens of Virginia" but bears the signatures of many Essex countians. Moreover, the petition was drawn up by James Mercer Garnett, prominent as an Essex justice, Virginia congressman, and delegate to the 1829-1830 Virginia constitutional convention, progressive agriculturalist, and, advocate of higher education for women. In the petition's text Garnett noted, "Human passions are quite sufficient of themselves, without any legal pretext or encouragement, to cause many more violations of the Sabbath, than human laws can prevent." He viewed the existing postal law as fostering the use of "this day, as one for ordinary business & amusement."¹³

¹² Ibid.; *Minutes of the Accomac Baptist Association* (Philadelphia, 1825); [*Accomac Association of Baptists, minutes for 1831*] (title page of publication missing); *Minutes of the Accomack Baptist Association* (N.p., 1834).

¹³ Petition of inhabitants of Essex County, Virginia, January 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of "sundry Citizens of Virginia," February 2, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). The latter petition was clearly written in the same hand as the first signer in the left-hand column, James M. Garnett of Essex County. Furthermore, a contemporary publication attributed this petition to Garnett; see [Jeremiah Evarts], *An Account of Memorials Presented to Congress . . . on the Sabbath* (New York,

As will be developed in Chapter Five, some Virginians saw a connection between the Sabbath and the morality of blacks. Basically, if blacks were allowed--or encouraged by whites--to engage in market trading on the Sabbath, they obviously were not receiving the benefits of religious worship and instruction on that same day. As historian Robert P. Sutton observes, by 1829 many eastern Virginians were experiencing "mounting negrophobia," fearing insurrection, as the long-avoided (by eastern conservatives) constitutional convention approached. Although hard evidence is lacking, perhaps Garnett--whose county's population was approximately two-thirds black--was thinking not merely of *whites'* "human passions" with regard to the misuse of the Sabbath.¹⁴

Though any "Sabbath-slave" link is tenuous, it is certain that of sixteen Essex justices identified around 1830, at least nine signed the petition *marked from* Essex (Garnett was the only justice to sign the unmarked Essex memorial). The first signature in the left-hand column was that of James Semple, a justice. Among the other justices out of the one hundred thirty-three petitioners were Walter Bowie, Austin Brockenbrough (who also served as sheriff in 1828), Richard Croxton, and Kemp Gatewood. Thus, many of Essex County's leading men defended the institution of the Sabbath.¹⁵

In addition to the support of Essex magistrates, local Baptist leaders affixed their signatures to the "main" Essex petition. Foremost among them was the Rev. Philip

1829), 17.

¹⁴ Robert P. Sutton, *Revolution to Secession: Constitution Making in the Old Dominion* (Charlottesville, Va., 1989), 54.

¹⁵ Petition of inhabitants of Essex County, Virginia, January 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); the petitioning justices not mentioned above were Peter J. (G.) Derieux, Warner Lewis, Lawrence Muse, and Richard Rouzee; Essex County Order Book 46, 1826-1830 (microfilm at VSLA).

Montague (1776-1852), pastor of the large Piscataway Baptist Church (later called "Mount Zion") for forty-one years, and the most prominent Baptist minister in the area. Montague served frequently on committees as a member of the Dover Baptist Association, "was for many years the presiding officer of the Baptist Mission Society of Virginia," and served on the board of managers of the Virginia Baptist General Association in 1823 and 1829. In 1830 he was elected moderator for a special meeting of the Dover Association called to determine how to respond to the Campbellite movement then making inroads in the region.¹⁶

Along with Montague, four other Piscataway Church "messengers" to the Dover Baptist Association signed the main Essex memorial: Henry A. (H.) Broughan, Washington H. Purkins, James Semple, and William L. Waring. Between 1826 and 1833, Montague represented the church all eight years; Broughan, five years (1826, 1828, 1830, 1831-32); Purkins, five years (1828-31, 1833); Semple, also an Essex justice, two years (1832-33); and, Waring, three years (1826-27, 1829). In short, *all* of Piscataway's messengers to the association meetings during the period of 1826 to 1833 signed the petition. Furthermore, Robert B. Semple, the foremost Virginia Baptist minister of his day and frequent moderator (at least for 1826, 1828-31) of the Dover Association, served as a

¹⁶ Petition of inhabitants of Essex County, Virginia, January 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). The "main" Essex petition (above) was the one identified as from the County of Essex, with 133 signatures; the "unidentified" Essex petition had 40 signatures, about half of which were clearly Essex men. Mildred K. Bates, *Mount Zion Baptist Church (formerly Piscataway), Essex County, Dunbrooke, Virginia* (Jefferson City, Mo., 1974), 32-33. In 1826, Piscataway reported 326 members; in 1827, 435 members; and, in 1828 and 1829, 470 members. See *Minutes of the Baptist Dover Association* (Richmond, Va., 1826); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (N.p., 1827); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1828); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (N.p., 1829).

vice-president of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath.¹⁷

Several other local Baptist leaders signed the main Essex petition, two of whose signatures highlight an important difference in the Sabbath mails issue between Virginia and Kentucky. Whereas in Kentucky, Campbellites produced *Anti-sabbatarian* petitions, in Virginia a few of them signed *Sabbatarian* memorials--and none of them seem to have produced Anti-sabbatarian petitions. Why this difference?

In Kentucky, the Baptist-Campbellite schism and the Sabbath mails controversy took place nearly simultaneously. Although Campbell's movement had been gathering momentum for some years, and some Baptist churches had already divided over Campbell's "reforms," it was late 1829 before Baptists finally acted in an official capacity to disfellowship Campbell's followers. Thus, the second phase of the 1828-1830 petition campaign which took place between December 1829 and March 1830 was perfectly timed for Campbellites to take advantage of the Sabbath issue to promote their theological differences with their Calvinist opponents.¹⁸

¹⁷ Petition of inhabitants of Essex County, Virginia, January 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). *Minutes of the Baptist Dover Association* (Richmond, Va., 1826); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (N.p., 1827); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1828); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (N.p., 1829); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (N.p., 1830); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1831); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1832); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1833). *First Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1829), 6. For a study of Semple's role in the development of the Baptist denomination, see Reginald Sewell Mills, "Robert Baylor Semple: A Study in Baptist Denominational Development, 1790-1831" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986).

¹⁸ For discussion of the Baptist-Campbellite schism in Kentucky, see Chapter 3 above.

In Virginia, the timing of the two phenomena--official disfellowshipping and the Sabbath petition campaign--was not as close as in Kentucky. According to Disciples' historian, H. Jackson Darst, the gradual separation between Baptists and Reformers in the Old Dominion took place in three phases: "Brotherly Dispute" between 1825 and 1830; the "Decrees" of 1830 and 1832; and, the "Elimination Process" between 1832 and 1836. Darst writes, "The years 1825-30 were in a real sense the period of discussion and evaluation of the position advocated by Mr. Campbell," and that the divisions of some churches in these years "did not reflect a general trend toward division." Moreover, in Essex County's Piscataway Baptist Church, it was early 1832 before division took place between Baptists and Campbellites--three years after the Essex Sabbath petitions had been signed, and two years after the end of the second phase of the petition campaign in early 1830. Thus, the signatures of Campbellite ministers John Daingerfield and Thomas M. Henley on the main Essex petition in January 1829 were not inconsistent with the view at that time that a schism was not imminent, that differences might yet be resolved.¹⁹

Daingerfield and Henley were messengers to the Dover Baptist Association from their respective churches in 1826, 1827, and 1828, the last meeting only three months before the Essex Sabbath petitions were signed. Though he was not present at the meeting, Daingerfield was listed as a messenger to the association as late as 1830 and so must be assumed to have been in "good standing" at that time. As Darst notes, official disfellowshipping began between December 1830 and the year 1832, and it was a slow process even after 1832. At the Dover Association meeting in October 1832, Thomas Henley was refused a seat, and the association resolved to "affectionately recommend to

¹⁹ H. Jackson Darst, *Ante-Bellum Virginia Disciples: An Account of the Emergence and Early Development of the Disciples of Christ in Virginia* (Richmond, Va., 1959), 3-17, 35-36; J.Z. Tyler, ed., *The Disciples of Christ in Virginia* (Richmond, Va., 1879), 87.

the churches in our connection to separate from their communion, all such persons as are promoting controversy and discord, under the specious name of 'Reformers.'" Henley and several other leading Campbellites were then declared to "have been separated from the fellowship and communion of regular [Calvinist] Baptist Churches. . . ." Even so, in 1833, "when Daingerfield was openly identified with the Reformers," the Dover Association--apparently hoping to salvage both the minister and the old Mathews Baptist Church building--failed to expel him from their communion. Finally, in 1835, they did so. By then, Sabbath mails petitions were but a dim memory.²⁰

Though Accomac and Essex petitions were signed by a number of justices and Baptists, the memorial from the town of Fredericksburg, Virginia, included the names of a number of magistrates and Presbyterian elders, similar to the case of Warren County, Kentucky. A town of 3,300 inhabitants, a port of entry by virtue of its location on the Rappahannock River, a mail distribution center for several states, and boasting two newspapers, Fredericksburg was a prospering community in 1830. Based upon the Anti-sabbath stance of Maysville, Kentucky--a town sharing several key characteristics--one might have expected Fredericksburg residents to have expressed Anti-sabbatarian sentiments. But far from expressing such views, Fredericksburg produced a Sabbatarian memorial, the most striking aspect of which was the high number of signatures of merchants and bank directors--the very group which in Maysville was on the opposite side of the Sabbath issue. In January 1829, town residents sent a handwritten petition, the text

²⁰ *Minutes of the Baptist Dover Association* (Richmond, Va., 1826); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (N.p., 1827); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1828); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (N.p., 1830); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1832); Darst, 42-43. For a more "Baptist" perspective on the division between Baptists and Campbellites in Virginia, see Garnett Ryland, *The Baptists of Virginia, 1699-1926* (Richmond, Va., 1955), Chapter 13.

of which was a copy of the "New York petition" (see Chapter Two), signed by eighty-six individuals. Indeed, the Fredericksburg petition represented the strongest expression on behalf of the Sabbath produced by a specific town, rather than a county, in Virginia.²¹

Of those petitioners, at least thirty were merchants, such as Bazil Gordon (who advertised for "2800 prime dry Spanish Hides"); Larkin Johnston ("winter shoes");

²¹ A total of three petitions were prepared by residents of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County, only the first of which was dominated by the signatures of Fredericksburg residents. Petition of inhabitants of the town of Fredericksburg, Virginia, January 19, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Spotsylvania County, Virginia, January 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Fauquier, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Prince William counties, Virginia, February 1, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). For Fredericksburg's importance as a mail distribution center, see John T. Goolrick, *Historic Fredericksburg: The Story of an Old Town* (Richmond, Va., 1922), 31-32; and, S.J. Quinn, *The History of the City of Fredericksburg, Virginia* (Richmond, Va., 1908), 60. Several Presbyterians of local influence signed the petition: the Rev. Samuel B. Wilson, pastor of the Fredericksburg Presbyterian Church for over thirty years; ruling elders, Layton G. Atkins (ordained 1831); David Grinnan (1824); Alexander Henderson (1824); David Henderson (1824); and, John P. Little (1824 or 1825); and, wealthy merchant James Vass, whose wife was a leading organizer of the Female Orphan Asylum connected with Fredericksburg Presbyterian. See Fredericksburg Presbyterian Church records, register of elders (microfilm at UTS); and, Edward Alvey, Jr., *History of the Presbyterian Church of Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1808-1976* (Fredericksburg, Va., 1976), 4-12, 18-19. Local justices who signed the petition from the town included William Allen, Anthony Buck, Archibald Hart, Samuel Phillips, John Scott, Reuben T. Thom, and Dr. John H. Wallace. Hart and Thom were Spotsylvania County justices, the rest were Fredericksburg justices. Another county justice, Benjamin Colman (Coleman), signed the Spotsylvania petition. Wallace's influence locally was suggested by the fact that he was chosen to chair a meeting of non-freeholders and freeholders of Spotsylvania and Fredericksburg, "friendly to the extension of the right of suffrage," held in April 1829; see *Virginia Herald*, May 2, 1829. See Fredericksburg City, Hustings Court Order Book I, 1827-1834 (microfilm at VSLA); Spotsylvania County, Minute Book, 1829-1832 (microfilm at VSLA); James Roger Mansfield, *A History of Early Spotsylvania* (Orange, Va., 1977), 221-22. The most prominent local Methodist preacher, John Kobler, was a signer of the Fredericksburg petition; see James B. Finley, *Sketches of Western Methodism: Biographical, Historical, and Miscellaneous* . . . (Cincinnati, 1854), 163-77.

William A. Knox ("Cooper's Patent Rotative Fire Engines"); John P. Little ("Fashionable Fancy GOODS"); Reuben T. Thom ("calicoes"); and, James Vass ("bolting cloths").

Though the procedure of obtaining signatures on petitions is generally unknown, in the case of Fredericksburg the petition probably was passed from shop to shop: no less than three *pairs* of the town's proprietors--William Brooke, Jr., and Joseph B. Ficklen (Ficklin); Nathan (Nathaniel) M. McGregor and John W. Mitchell; and, F. Strother and George W. Strother--affixed their signatures in consecutive order. That suggests that those pairs of petitioners were in the same location when they signed, most likely their place of business, such as "Brooke & Ficklen," McGregor and Mitchell," and "F. and G.W. Strother."²²

Many of the town's "merchant-petitioners" were also bank directors. In 1829, of the thirteen directors of the Fredericksburg branch of the Farmers Bank of Virginia, at least five were petitioners: William C. Beale, William Brooke, Jr., Anthony Buck, Samuel Gordon, and John Hart. Of thirteen directors of the Bank of Virginia, at least seven were petitioners, including Joseph B. Ficklin, Basil and William K. Gordon, and Hugh Mercer. Thus, of a total of twenty-six local bank directors, at least twelve affixed their signatures to the Fredericksburg petition. Undoubtedly, many of Fredericksburg's men of commerce--merchants, bank directors, or both--wanted to protect the traditional Sabbath in their community.²³

²² Merchants were identified from advertisements in the two Fredericksburg newspapers, the *Virginia Herald* and the *Political Arena*. Some of the merchant-petitioners not mentioned in the text were William Allen (vinegars, peppers); James Cooke (inkstands, glass); Archibald Hart (Windsor chairs, coffee); John Hart (sugar, tea); William Kellogg (paper, lamp oil); Edward McDowell (bonds, warrants); James B. Peake (salt, smoked herrings); and, Peter Spilman (velvets, fancy vestings).

²³ The other three Bank of Virginia directors were John Moncure, John Scott, and James Vass; see *Political Arena*, January 13, 1829.

At least one local writer deemed Fredericksburg's merchants influential with regard to moral reform efforts in the community. In May 1829, like hundreds of other communities nationwide, Fredericksburg organized a "Society for the promotion of Temperance." Six months later, "MERCATOR" wrote a letter to the "Merchants and Shop-Keepers of Fredericksburg and its Vicinity." He stated,

But we need no arguments to convince us that Intemperance is a great evil, and one (if no corrective is applied,) that will grow with the increasing population of our country. I say then again, let us do something. . . . Let the oldest and most influential of our *merchants* call a 'solemn assembly,' and publish to the world our honest views on this subject.--Tell our friends and *customers* that we are mutually concerned to root out Intemperance--that it is a common foe . . . and we shall soon have their hearty co-operation.

Though this study has not found evidence that such a "solemn assembly" was ever held, the very idea strikes a chord with Paul Johnson's Rochester, New York, in which the "merchant class" exerted economic pressure--coercion, in the eyes of many--on behalf of middle-class values. In any case, it appears that Fredericksburg merchants saw both Sabbath-keeping and temperance as good for their community--if not for their businesses.²⁴

Still, one must ask why Fredericksburg merchants, in contrast to their counterparts in Maysville, Kentucky, were favorable toward the Sabbath? Richard John notes the prevalence of a "distinctly anticommercial cast" among many Sabbatarians after 1825; yet, conversely, he also observes that some Atlantic seaboard merchants--obviously dependent upon commerce--opposed Sabbath mails. While rejecting the argument that such

²⁴ *Virginia Herald*, May 30, 1829, and November 14, 1829 [emphasis added]. Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York, 1978), 83-88.

merchants' dependence upon Sabbath mails, or lack thereof, determined their stand on the issue, John notes that Atlantic seaboard merchants simply did not depend upon lengthy overland transportation of the mails by stage, as did many of their inland counterparts. In many cases, Atlantic seaboard merchants received their mail--and thus the latest market news--directly from ocean-going vessels, rather than from stage coaches whose slow pace over generally poor roads could frustrate residents of less accessible locales.

Fredericksburg was such a town, for its residents received much of their mail directly from vessels steaming from the Atlantic up the Rappahannock to the town's port of entry. As in the case of Accomac County residents, Fredericksburg's merchants were unlikely to perceive the stopping of the mails on the Sabbath as causing any economic loss for themselves. Thus, they had no incentive for *opposing* the protection of the Sabbath as a day of rest for the mails.²⁵

Just beyond the town of Fredericksburg was Spotsylvania County. Several local Baptists signed the Spotsylvania petition prepared early in 1829. For example, Addison M. Lewis served as the standing clerk of the Goshen Baptist Association from (at least) 1827 until 1830, when he was preparing to leave Virginia. During these years, Lewis was listed as the minister of Bethany and Massaponax churches in 1827 and 1828; and of Bethany, County Line, and Massaponax churches in 1829 and 1830. Another Sabbatarian, John A. Billingsley, ministered to several local Baptist congregations as well: Elk-Creek,

²⁵ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 527. The *Virginia Herald*, April 4, 1829, noted that a daily mail line between Washington and Fredericksburg, by stage and steamboat, had commenced for the season. Presumably, the stage portion of the route was only between the post office and the port of each town--no more than a few miles--or, in cases in which the steamboats were unable to make the trip due to severe weather or other problems.

Mount-Hermon, and Waller's churches from 1827 through 1829; and, Mount-Hermon and Waller's churches in 1830.²⁶

While the names of gentlemen justices dominated the list of petitioners from Accomac and Essex counties and the town of Fredericksburg, only two justices were found among petitioners from the city of Richmond and neighboring Henrico County. This may be an incomplete, and, hence, a misleading assessment, because some evidence suggests that there may have been Sabbath petitions from Richmond which are no longer extant. In any case, it is clear that all four of the state's major Protestant denominations--Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopal--were represented among local Sabbatarians, at least to some degree. As was the pattern in most Upper South locales which produced Sabbatarian petitions, Presbyterians accounted for the vast majority of signatures identifiable by denominational affiliation.²⁷

Richmond was the location of two large Presbyterian churches, First Presbyterian and Shockoe Hill. As will be shown in Chapter Five, First Presbyterian accounted for much of the leadership of the Virginia Society for Promoting the Observance of the Christian

²⁶ *Minutes of the Baptist Association, in the District of Goshen* (Fredericksburg, Va., 1827); *Minutes of the Baptist Association, in the District of Goshen* (Fredericksburg, Va., 1828); *Minutes of the Baptist Association, in the District of Goshen* (Fredericksburg, Va., 1829); *Minutes of the Goshen Baptist Association* (Fredericksburg, Va., 1830).

²⁷ Petition of inhabitants of the city of Richmond, Virginia, February 5, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Henrico County, Virginia, January 19, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). The two justices were John S. Ellis and Jesse Snead, both of whom signed the Henrico petition; see *Henrico County Minute Book, 1827-1829* (microfilm at VSLA). The Richmond petition was signed by some seventy-three individuals, the Henrico petition, by forty-six. On January 2, 1830, the *Southern Religious Telegraph* reported that copies of a Sabbath petition were available for signature at *four* locations in Richmond, but I have located only the one Richmond memorial discussed above.

Sabbath and was probably the most active congregation in the Upper South. Additionally, both First Presbyterian and Shockoe Hill published church manuals which promoted Sabbath-keeping. The former was a wealthy church as well, which was clear from the list of members who subscribed to the building of the church's new edifice in 1827. Over \$12,000 was subscribed, at least one-half of which was pledged by those who later signed the Richmond Sabbath petition, including elder James Caskie, Fleming James, and Lewis Webb. The list of subscribers indicates that a number of Richmond's Sabbatarians were not only Presbyterians but also men of considerable financial resources.²⁸

Baptists were the next best-represented denomination among Richmond/Henrico petitioners. Similar to the case of Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania, Presbyterians' signatures were identified only on the *town* petition, whereas Baptists' signatures were somewhat more likely to be found on the *county* petition. That phenomenon was due, at least in part, to the prevalence of rural Baptist congregations in those two counties, as in many

²⁸ First Presbyterian Church, Richmond, session and trustee records (microfilm at UTS); *Historical Souvenir, The First Presbyterian Church, Corner Grace and Madison Streets, Richmond, Virginia* (Richmond, Va., 1904). Fleming and Edwin James pledged \$1,400 between the two of them (only Fleming was verified as a petitioner); elder (ordained 1822) James Caskie, \$1,400; elder (ordained 1814) David J. Burr, \$800 (two men with this name are listed in Richmond in the 1830 census, making positive identification impossible, but, most likely, the same individual was both the elder and the petitioner); John N. Gordon and James M. Ratcliffe, \$800 between the two of them; and, Lewis Webb, \$500. Seven members of First Presbyterian who subscribed amounts between \$250 and \$150 for the new edifice were the following: Charles P. Adriance; Amasa Converse; Thomas Cowles; J.H. Eustace; George Hutchison; Young Pankey; and, elder (ordained 1827) Samuel Reeve. Two bank directors also signed the Richmond memorial: George L. Sampson, of the Richmond branch of the Bank of Virginia (his was the first signature on the petition); and, Samuel Reeve, of the Richmond branch of the Farmers Bank of Virginia. That Fleming and Edwin James were among Richmond's leading merchants was shown by their advertisement for "Fall and Winter Goods" which required three-fourths of one column of one page to list the items for sale; see *Daily Richmond Whig*, January 14, 1829.

areas of the Upper South. The Richmond petition was signed by at least four locally prominent Baptists: wealthy merchants and Second Baptist Church messengers to the Dover Association, James C. (in 1830-31, 1833) and William Crane (in 1826, 1828, 1832); the long-standing editor (later the proprietor as well) of the weekly newspaper of Virginia Baptists (the *Religious Herald*), William Sands; and, the pastor of Second Baptist and a "pastor-messenger" in 1827-30 and 1832-33, James B. Taylor. The Henrico petition contained the signatures of at least five messengers to the Dover Baptist Association. Among them were Eli Ball, a leading minister in the association and a "pastor-messenger" from the two hundred-member Deep Run Church from 1826 through 1833; William Cottrell, messenger from Deep Run in 1828; and, Stephen Duval, president of the Tuckahoe Canal Company and a messenger from Deep Run in 1826-27 and 1829-30.²⁹

In addition to local Baptists, several leaders in Richmond's Centenary Methodist Church affixed their signatures to the city's petition. Presiding elder (in 1827, 1829-32) Lewis Skidmore signed, as did local elder (or local preacher) John H. Boyd and class leader William Willis.³⁰

²⁹ *Minutes of the Baptist Dover Association* (Richmond, Va., 1826); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (N.p., 1827); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1828); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (N.p., 1829); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (N.p., 1830); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1831); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1832); *Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association* (Richmond, Va., 1833). Louis H. Manarin and Clifford Dowdy, *The History of Henrico County* (Charlottesville, Va., 1984), 226-31. The January 9, 1829, *Daily Richmond Whig*, printed an advertisement of William and James C. Crane's for 600 Spanish hides, 250 Richmond slaughter hides, and tanner's oil. The two unnamed Dover Baptist Association messengers were John S. Ellis, Henrico justice and a messenger from Deep Run from 1829 through 1833; and, Jesse Snead, Henrico justice, Tuckahoe Valley coalpit proprietor, and a messenger from Richmond's one hundred-member (in 1830 when he signed the petition) Second Baptist in 1833.

³⁰ Floyd S. Bennett, *Methodist Church on Shockoe Hill, A History of Centenary Methodist Church, Richmond, Virginia, 1810-1960* (Richmond, Va., 1962), 16, 19, 22;

Suggesting broad Protestant support for the Sabbath in Virginia was the signature of the Rev. William F. Lee, the editor of the Episcopalians' *Southern Churchman* when it began publishing in 1835. In fact, three of the then current or future editors of Richmond denominational newspapers affixed their signatures to the city's 1830 memorial: in addition to Lee, the Rev. Amasa Converse, owner and editor of the Presbyterians' *Southern Religious Telegraph*, and William Sands, the editor of the Baptists' *Religious Herald*. The editor of the Methodists' *Christian Sentinel*, which began publishing in 1832, was the Rev. Ethelbert Drake. Though his name was not found among Richmond petitioners, in 1833 and 1834 Drake served as the treasurer of the Virginia Society for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath. Lee served as the society's earliest corresponding secretary and Sands as one of the society's eight "managers" in 1830-31. Thus, *all four editors* of Richmond's Protestant denominational newspapers in the early to mid-1830s were Sabbatharians. Through such newspapers, many thousands of Virginians associated with the major Protestant denominations were at least made aware of the issue of the Sabbath and its observance. Another widely-read publication, the American Tract Society's *Christian Almanac, for Virginia, For the Year . . . 1829 . . .*, also promoted Sabbath observance. The *Almanac* observed, "It cannot be doubted, that for many years we have been rapidly degenerating in regard to the observance of the Sabbath. The opening of post-offices and the travelling of the mail have lowered the sacredness of the day in every village in our land." Of course, *how many* agreed with or heeded all that they read is another matter, but a reasonable assumption is that some readers and their families must have been influenced to sanctify the day.³¹

Centenary Methodist Church, Richmond, Virginia, Register of Classes, 1827-1837, and Quarterly Conference Book, 1827-1837 (VSLA).

³¹ For Drake, see *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 5, 1833, and, April 11, 1834. For

Though no Anti-sabbatarian petition was found from Richmond, and the earliest Campbellite church in the city was not organized until 1832, at least one publication, presumably from Richmond, hinted at Reformer activity during the Sabbath petition campaigns. A pamphlet written by "A LAYMAN" entitled, "To Any Member of Congress," attacked Sabbatarian petitioners in language very similar to Campbell's *Christian Baptist*. The address opened thus: "You will have petitions again about *stopping the mail on a Sabbath day*, because the Christian religion ordains the Sabbath day to be kept holy. That is, because the priests will permit nobody to make hay when the sun shines on a Sabbath, but themselves." Employing numerous biblical references, "A LAYMAN" declared, "Public prayer and Sunday preaching, are the inventions of the clergy; they are no part of Christianity. They were brought into vogue to enable the clergy to find profitable employment for themselves, and a plausible pretense for swindling the people out of their money." As was standard practice with such publications, it charged the Presbyterian clergy with attempting "to acquire *political* influence in this country, and to inculcate the necessity of a provision for the priesthood, independent of the people. . . ." Thus, the question of Sabbath mails appears to have been an issue of some religious controversy in Richmond--but not one which produced Anti-sabbath petitions.³²

The city of Petersburg produced the lone Anti-sabbath petition from Virginia located by this study, but its chief characteristic was not denominational affiliation but, rather, association with a local mechanics' organization. Like Richmond and other parts of

Lee and Sands, see *Religious Herald*, November 12, 1830, and, April 15, 1831. *Christian Almanac, for Virginia, For the Year . . . 1829 . . .* (Richmond, Va., ca. 1828), 27-29.

³² "To Any Member of Congress," (N.p., n.d.), Hugh Blair Grigsby Pamphlets, vol. 12 (VHS).

eastern Virginia, Petersburg had been hard hit by the Panic of 1819 and suffered from a prolonged economic depression throughout most of the 1820s and 30s. The Petersburg Benevolent Mechanic Association was organized in 1825 with one hundred white artisans and manufacturers, to provide assistance for needy members and their widows and orphans. Members were added each year so that by 1830 there were approximately one hundred fifty to one hundred seventy-five members. The association conducted a day school, later a night school, and a library. According to historian Suzanne Lebsock, such an association was necessary because the city's government was one which "could have given lessons to Ebenezer Scrooge" in terms of its reluctance to expend funds for poor relief.³³

The mechanics' association shared in the city's hard times. In early January 1830--within three weeks of the signing of the Petersburg Anti-sabbath petition--the board of officers' annual report stated:

... many members have to complain that much work executed in foreign work shops has been introduced and sold in this town, where the public could have been as well served had their patronage been given to the mechanics of the place; for want of which patronage, many work shops have not perhaps had more than half employment: yet the ability to advance the workshops from any state of depression is by strictly adhering to the pledge given in the 14th Article of our Constitution. Do this: give a preference to a member of this Association, and recommend him to the patronage of others. Then in each member will be found a friend, a benefactor and a patron.

³³ Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York, 1984), 213-15; James G. Scott and Edward A. Wyatt, IV, *Petersburg's Story, A History* (Petersburg, Va., 1960), 70. Richmond's economic troubles are noted in Virginus Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of A City* (Charlottesville, Va., 1990), 103. For glimpses of the relationship between mechanics and Sabbatarians in New York City, see Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York and Oxford, 1984), 140, 145-46, 225-26.

Apparently, some Petersburg mechanics had *economic* reasons, if not other reasons, to oppose anything perceived as depriving them of much-needed business on *any day* of the week on which it could be obtained. That included the halting of mails one day a week.³⁴

Of some one hundred eighty-three petitioners, at least thirty were members of the association. They included Joseph Badger, a saddler; Mordecai Barbour, a miller; Samuel R. Coldwell, a cabinet maker; Roger Mallory, a flour manufacturer; Henry O. McEnery (McEmery), a tobacconist; Samuel H. Myers, a tobacconist; John Niblo, a tavern keeper (at least until it burned in 1827); Nathaniel B. Nichols, a watchmaker; Thomas L. Wilson, a printer (who was elected to give the oration at the anniversary meeting in January 1830); and, William H. Young, a coachmaker.³⁵

A number of the association's officers, as well as some of the leading citizens of the town--including some who were both--affixed their signatures to the remonstrance. Such men included the following: Dr. John Bragg, a Petersburg physician; Daniel C. Butts, a miller and the vice-president of the association in 1830; William Cooke, a watchmaker and an association director in 1829-30; James Davidson, a mill stone maker and the secretary of the mechanics' organization in 1829-30; Patrick Durkin, Petersburg's mayor in 1829-30; James McFarland, Jr., a city alderman in 1829; Charles F. Osborne (whose signature appeared first on the petition), an association member, an alderman in 1829, and

³⁴ Petersburg Benevolent Mechanic Association records, vol. I: 1825-1874 (microfilm at UVA); Petersburg Benevolent Mechanic Association records, 1825-1836 (VHS). The Petersburg petition was *received* in Congress on February 8, 1830, but the date of the petition's preparation is unknown; the association's annual meeting was held on January 11, 1830, in the city's Masonic Hall.

³⁵ *Ibid.*; Scott and Wyatt, *Petersburg's Story*, 140, 153, 155.

Petersburg's mayor in 1830-31; and, Francis G. Yancey, an alderman in 1829 and president of the Petersburg association at least for its first five years (1825-30).³⁶

Besides local mechanics, a significant number of bank directors signed the Petersburg petition. Of the thirteen directors of the city's Bank of Virginia branch bank, no less than six signed, one of whom was association member and local politician Charles F. Osborne. Of the thirteen directors of the Petersburg branch of the Farmers Bank of Virginia, at least three affixed their signatures: Robert B. Bolling, Samuel Mordecai, and Alden B. Spooner. Thus, of twenty-six directors of the Petersburg branch of the two Virginia banks, at least nine petitioned to keep the mails moving and post offices open on the Sabbath. Recalling the case of Fredericksburg, bank directors there and in Petersburg expressed their views on the Sabbath out of proportion to individuals in other professions (except justices, in certain counties)--one-third to one-half were petitioners--and, depending on the town, on opposite sides of the issue!³⁷

³⁶ Scott and Wyatt, *Petersburg's Story*, 140, 153, 155; Petersburg City, Hustings Court Minute Book, 1827-1832 (microfilm at VSLA). At least one petitioner highlighted the difficult nature of the Sabbath issue for some individuals. Colonel Samuel Winfree, a director of the Petersburg branch of the Bank of Virginia in 1829 and the town's mayor in 1832-33, signed his name to the Anti-sabbath memorial in January 1830. Surprisingly, Winfree served in 1833-34 (at least) as a vice-president of the Virginia Society for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath. Making the apparent irony complete, Winfree was ordained a ruling elder in Richmond's First Presbyterian Church in 1835. Yet, Winfree's example was instructive: rather than demonstrating personal inconsistency, or even a radical change of heart, it may well have been that he was one of those Jacksonian Americans who, although deeply concerned for the preservation of the Sabbath as an institution of religious and civic importance, nevertheless could not bring himself to support the stopping of the mails on the Sabbath--a measure often portrayed as coercive, undemocratic, and a violation of the "separation of church and state." See *Daily Richmond Whig*, January 7, 1829; Scott and Wyatt, *Petersburg's Story*, appendix; *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 5, 1833, and, April 11, 1834; *Historical Souvenir, The First Presbyterian Church*.

³⁷ *Daily Richmond Whig*, January 7, 1829. The other five Petersburg branch Bank of

Generally, historians since Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., have viewed Anti-sabbatarians as having been politically aligned with Jacksonian Democrats. In the case of Petersburg, this assessment was accurate. In early 1827, a Jackson meeting promoted by forty-one local citizens included fifteen or more Anti-sabbath petitioners, at least six of whom were also Petersburg mechanic association members. The "Jackson-mechanic-petitioners" were Daniel C. Butts, James Davidson, Roger Mallory, Charles D. McIndoe, John Pollard, and Joseph C. Swan. At least one other Jackson man, Edward Pescud, was an association member but appeared not to have signed the Anti-sabbath petition.³⁸

Although Petersburg mechanics made a strong statement against stopping Sabbath mails, a few of them stood on the opposite side of the issue. Local Sabbatarians, at least several of whom were members of the local Presbyterian church, produced a petition signed by seventeen individuals. The lengthy, handwritten, memorial appeared to be an original text from the pen of William M. Atkinson, a Petersburg attorney and Tabb Street Presbyterian Church elder (ordained 1824). Atkinson also served a number of years as the

Virginia "director-petitioners" were Daniel Dugget (Dugger), John C. Hobson, Thomas N. Lee, William H. Macfarland, and Samuel Winfree. In Fredericksburg, twelve of twenty-six directors petitioned to stop the mails and close post offices on the Sabbath.

³⁸ The nine other Jackson men who signed the local Anti-sabbath petition were Otway B. Barraud, R.R. Dobbin, Thomas Faris, Theo. F. Gilliam, William H. Macfarland, John E. Meade, William H. Nalle, Edward L. Pegram, and Samuel Winfree. Due to the poor condition of the original manuscript and the quality of the penmanship, the Petersburg petition was one of the most difficult from which to read the names of petitioners. *Petersburg Republican*, March 6, 1827; Petersburg Benevolent Mechanic Association records, vol. I: 1825-1874 (microfilm at UVA); Petersburg Benevolent Mechanic Association records, 1825-1836 (VHS). In 1828, William H. Macfarland was a district elector on the Jackson ticket; see *Intelligencer and Petersburg Commercial Advertiser*, September 26, 1828.

general agent for the Virginia Bible Society and later was ordained in the Presbyterian ministry.³⁹

Atkinson's was the first signature on the Sabbath petition and was followed by that of Allin Archer, a brick mason, member of the Petersburg mechanic association since 1825, and one of its directors in 1829-30. Among the remaining signatures was that of Andrew S. Holderby, a Tabb Street Presbyterian elder and an association member who left the mechanic group in 1829. Other Tabb Street Presbyterians who signed were elder Hugh Nelson (ordained 1825); A.G. McIlvaine (ordained deacon in 1830, elder in 1834); and, minister John J. Royall, who preached there from late 1829 to March 1830.⁴⁰

Whereas Petersburg Presbyterians produced one of the *smallest* Sabbath petitions in terms of the number of signers, Prince Edward County Presbyterians prepared the *largest* single memorial among the Upper South states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. By the early nineteenth century, a number of Presbyterian churches dotted the locale, including the church at the Presbyterians' Hampden-Sydney College, in Prince Edward County; Briery Presbyterian Church, near Keysville; Buffalo Church, in Pamplin; Cumberland Church, in Farmville; and several others in neighboring counties. Reflecting

³⁹ Petition of inhabitants of the city of Petersburg, Virginia, February 22, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); Tabb Street Presbyterian Church, Petersburg, Virginia, register of elders (microfilm at UTS); East Hanover Presbytery minutes, February 22, 1833 (microfilm at UTS). For Atkinson's role as agent of the Virginia Bible Society, see Patricia Aldridge, ed., *Virginia Presbyterians in American Life: Hanover Presbytery (1755-1980)* (Richmond, Va., 1982), 67.

⁴⁰ Tabb Street Presbyterian Church, Petersburg, Virginia, register of elders (microfilm at UTS); Petersburg Benevolent Mechanic Association records, vol. I: 1825-1874 (microfilm at UVA); Petersburg Benevolent Mechanic Association records, 1825-1836 (VHS).

the prevalence of Presbyterians in Prince Edward, Virginia's 1836 gazetteer noted, "The Presbyterian denomination are more numerous than in any other Co. in the state."⁴¹

In the early 1820s, Presbyterians established Union Theological Seminary which was located near Hampden-Sydney College. A Southern Presbyterian seminary had long been the dream of the Rev. John Holt Rice, who became the school's principal organizer and its first Professor of Theology. In 1829 a large number of the Prince Edward County Sabbath petitioners were men who either had attended or were alumni of Hampden-Sydney, Union, or both, or were connected in an official capacity with either or both Presbyterian schools.⁴²

Nearly six months prior to the signing of the Prince Edward Sabbath petition, Briery Presbyterian Church demonstrated concern for the sacred day. In August 1828, just three months after the formation of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath and immediately following a sermon on the Fourth Commandment, the

⁴¹ James W. Douglass, comp., *A Manual for the Members of the Briery Presbyterian Church* . . . (Richmond, Va., 1828), 3; Aldridge, *Virginia Presbyterians in American Life*, 46-47; Briery Presbyterian Church, session records (microfilm at UTS); Buffalo Presbyterian Church, session records, 1804-1871 (microfilm at UTS); Cumberland Presbyterian Church, session minutes, 1797-1833 (microfilm at UTS); Martin, *Gazetteer of Virginia*, 268. The Rev. Samuel Davies had been instrumental in establishing Presbyterianism in Virginia, in 1755 organizing Hanover Presbytery, the first presbytery in the South. Presbyterians established Hampden-Sydney (originally "Sidney") College in Prince Edward County in the 1770s, for many years among the most influential Southern institutions of higher learning. The Briery church structure was located just beyond the southern boundary of Prince Edward, in Charlotte County; the Buffalo church was situated near the western edge of Prince Edward County; and, the Cumberland church was located near the northern edge of Prince Edward.

⁴² Eleanor R. Millard, comp., *A General Catalog of Trustees, Officers, Professors, and Students of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia* (published with the following work); Ernest Trice Thompson, *A History of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia* (N.p., 1979), 7-8.

session minutes stated, "... a society [was] partially formed for promoting the observance of the Lords [*sic*] day." Even the "partial" formation of such a society was significant, for only two or three Sabbath societies auxiliary to the General Union seem to have been formed in the South.⁴³

As Rice had noted in his letter of July 1, 1828, the Prince Edward region experienced an extensive revival that year, in which one of the principal evangelists was the Rev. Asahel Nettleton, a Congregationalist from New England thoroughly Calvinist in his theology. Over one hundred twenty new members were received, and by the close of 1828 the church's communing membership stood at nearly two hundred.⁴⁴

One consequence of the revival at Briery appeared to be an increased concern for the Sabbath. Briery may not have been alone in such a development--many churches in Virginia and Kentucky experienced revival in 1828--but in Briery's case the connection was more distinguishable. Of the approximately two hundred church members, no less than eighteen affixed their signatures to the January 1829 Prince Edward petition, and at least one-half of those had just been received as members during the 1828 season of revival. Recently received church "member-petitioners" included Robert Allison, Edward F. Booker, Milton P. Cayce, and, James H. and Watkins Dupuy.⁴⁵

⁴³ Briery Presbyterian Church, session records, August 3, 1828 (microfilm at UTS).

⁴⁴ Douglass, *A Manual for the Members of the Briery Presbyterian Church*, 7. Bennet Tyler and Andrew A. Bonar, *Nettleton and his Labours* (London, 1975 [1854]), 268-80.

⁴⁵ Douglass, *A Manual for the Members of the Briery Presbyterian Church*, roster of church members; petition of inhabitants of Prince Edward County, Virginia, January 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); for Lindley's life's sketch, see Millard, *A General Catalog of Trustees, Officers, Professors, and Students of Union Theological Seminary*; Thompson, *A History of Union Theological Seminary*, 46. Other Briery petitioners, members brought into the church prior to 1828, included Adam Calhoon, an elder; James H. Lacy, a physician; and, Henry N. Watkins, an elder and a trustee of the church. Other

As mentioned earlier, a number of Hampden-Sydney and Union Seminary men also participated in the Sabbath mails petition effort. Though the specific leadership role taken by Rice is unknown, he had organized a similar petition drive in 1814 during the first phase of petitioning against Sabbath mails. Whether directly or indirectly, then, his influence was most likely considerable regarding the 1829 petition. As the organizer of many Presbyterian churches in the region, a pioneering editor of several Southern religious periodicals, principal founder of the Virginia Bible Society and of Union Theological Seminary, and possessed of a gentle and loving spirit combined with a deep commitment to Calvinism, Rice was the foremost Southern Presbyterian minister of his day.⁴⁶

At least eleven individuals, including Rice, associated with the two Presbyterian schools signed the Prince Edward petition, some of them men of local prominence. Among them were Dr. Peyton R. Berkeley, a trustee of Hampden-Sydney College; Jonathan P. Cushing, president of the college and later a vice-president in the Virginia Society for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath; the Rev. Hiram P. Goodrich, Professor of Bible at Union and a graduate of the seminary; James Madison (the first one to sign the petition), a wealthy Farmville tobacco manufacturer and a trustee

recently received Briery "member-petitioners" included Edwin Edmunds, Daniel Lindley (Lindly), William H. Venable, and Lillius D. Womack (Womach).

⁴⁶ For Rice's earlier petition efforts, see Chapter 1 above. Rice edited the *Christian Monitor* (1815-17), the *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine* (1818-28, under several different titles), and the *Family Visitor* (began 1822); he organized the Bible Society of Virginia in 1813; see Aldridge, *Virginia Presbyterians in American Life*, 65-66, 72; Herbert Clarence Bradshaw, *History of Prince Edward County, Virginia . . .* (Richmond, Va., 1955), 246; A.J. Morrison, *College of Hampden Sidney, Dictionary of Biography, 1776-1825* (Hampden Sidney, Va., n.d.), 254-60; Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1: 237-40, 258-59, 276-83; Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J., 1962), 93-96.

of Hampden-Sydney College; Peter McVicar (MacVicar), for many years Professor of Mathematics at the college; Richard N. Venable, a trustee of the college; and, Henry E. and Henry N. (also a Briery elder and church trustee) Watkins, both of them attorneys and college trustees.⁴⁷

In addition to those petitioners officially connected with the schools, some students of the college and the seminary also signed the Sabbath memorial. They included John Burwell, a student at Hampden-Sydney in 1829-30, and later a college tutor and clerk; Nathaniel F. Cabell, who attended the college from 1821-25 and went on to practice law; David Flournoy, a student from 1820-25 and later a farmer; Hugh A. Garland, a student from 1821-25 and later a lawyer; and, Landon C. Garland, in college from 1826-29, later a professor, and, eventually, a Vanderbilt University chancellor.⁴⁸

Altogether, approximately forty of some two hundred thirty-four petitioners were identified from the Prince Edward region, nearly all of them associated with, or students of, Hampden-Sydney College, Union Seminary, or both; or members of Briery or other nearby Presbyterian churches. And as in Accomac and Essex counties, a significant number of local justices signed the Prince Edward memorial.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ John Luster Brinkley, *On This Hill, A Narrative History of Hampden-Sydney College, 1774-1994* (Hampden-Sydney, Va., 1994), 87-136, covers Cushing's presidency in detail; Millard, *A General Catalog of Trustees, Officers, Professors, and Students of Union Theological Seminary*; Thompson, *A History of Union Theological Seminary*, 42; Bradshaw, *History of Prince Edward County*, 155-60, 223; Morrison, *College of Hampden Sidney*, 259.

⁴⁸ The question of "graduation" is unclear for some students, but is of no concern here. *General Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Hampden-Sidney College. Virginia. 1776-1906* (Richmond, Va., n.d.), 60-67.

⁴⁹ Examples of Presbyterians from other nearby churches who signed the Prince Edward petition were William N. (V.) Page and Nathaniel Penick, both of them ruling elders in Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Farmville, Virginia; see Cumberland Presbyterian

Eleven gentleman justices--of approximately twenty-two active justices in the county--signed the Prince Edward petition. Among them were John J. Flournoy, James Madison, Nathaniel Price, Moses Tredway (Treadway), and Henry E. Watkins. Those five petitioning justices were Presbyterians: Flournoy was a member of Briery Presbyterian from 1822 until 1828; Price was an elder in Buffalo Presbyterian; Tredway was an elder in Cumberland Presbyterian; and, Madison (also an elder in Cumberland) and Watkins were Hampden-Sydney trustees.⁵⁰

As in other cases in which a high percentage of gentlemen justices signed local Sabbath petitions, the text of the Prince Edward memorial may be instructive. A handwritten, original text, its argument was one to which many civil magistrates--even those unfamiliar with Calvinism or the concerns of other evangelicals--might readily assent. Referring to the Sabbath, the memorial observed,

It promotes *national wealth*: because labouring men and beasts of burden, are much more able to perform the services required of them when permitted to enjoy the weekly rest. . . . It subserves the general interests of *virtue*: not only because, as a religious institution its appropriate services strengthen every pious disposition, and thus sustains the cause of *sound morality*; but because all its influences tend to promote *order*, and diffuse *peace and good will* through the whole

Church, session minutes and register, May 1, 1826, membership list (microfilm at UTS).

⁵⁰ The six non-Presbyterian "justice-petitioners" were Samuel Allen, Samuel Baldwin, John Clark, Vincent Philips (Phillips), Joseph Redd, and Henry Thweatt. Prince Edward County, County Court Orders, No. 22, 1828-1832 (microfilm at VSLA). In searching records from December 1828 through January 1830, I located the names of twenty-two justices who attended various court sessions--therefore, I consider them to have been "active" justices. Douglass, *A Manual for the Members of the Briery Presbyterian Church*, list of members; Buffalo Presbyterian Church, session records, October 6, 1822 (microfilm at UTS); Cumberland Presbyterian Church, session minutes and register, August 13, 1825 (microfilm at UTS); Bradshaw, *History of Prince Edward County*, 157, 159.

community.

Presbyterians or not, of all men civil magistrates certainly perceived the benefits of "national wealth," "virtue," "sound morality," "order," "peace and good will" throughout their community.⁵¹

Thus, such justices and Presbyterians argued--as did many Sabbatarians--that the protection of the Sabbath was a matter not only of morality and religious conviction, but of wealth, order, and good will. For many the Sabbath represented the *coinciding* of those institutions deemed essential to the maintaining of a peaceful, prosperous, and orderly community with the Calvinist view of the obligation of a community to maintain its covenant relationship with God by adherence to His moral law. It was the institution of the Sabbath, above all others, which was essential in fulfilling the requirements of *both* sets of concerns--one of which was social-economic in nature, the other, moral-religious.

While Presbyterians and justices, and sometimes both, dominated the Sabbath memorial from Prince Edward, a number of those men apparently supported Andrew Jackson in 1828 and in 1832. In both years the Jackson ticket claimed nearly all the votes from Prince Edward County. In 1828 the vote in Prince Edward was 323 for the Jackson ticket, 8 for the Adams ticket. Four years later, Jackson's ticket again polled 323; Henry Clay's elector polled 2 votes. Moreover, some Sabbatarians actively supported Jackson. In 1827, Sabbatarians Jaquelin A. Berkeley, Thomas E. Haskins, and Henry E. Watkins were appointed members of the county's Jackson Committee of Correspondence and Vigilance. In 1832, the county's Jackson committee included "justice-petitioners" John J. Flournoy, James Madison, Nathaniel Price, Joseph Redd, Henry Thweatt, and Henry E.

⁵¹ Petition of inhabitants of Prince Edward County, Virginia, January 26, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) [emphasis added].

Watkins. Of those six, four were Presbyterians. Finally, local historian Herbert C. Bradshaw found neither any record of an anti-Jackson meeting held in Prince Edward County in 1827 nor evidence of the existence of an anti-Jackson committee in the county in 1828.⁵²

It may be that Jackson's membership in the Presbyterian Church was a factor in the political support of a predominantly Presbyterian county such as Prince Edward. As Richard John notes, despite Jackson's stormy past, many evangelicals considered him theologically sound, especially compared with John Quincy Adams, thought by many to be a Unitarian. Yet the distinction between Jackson the (Calvinist) Presbyterian and Jackson the Southern slaveholder may have been particularly difficult for Prince Edward's Presbyterians to make. As Calvinists perceived, theological orthodoxy included unwillingness to tamper with social institutions, including the "peculiar institution." That was a genuine concern in a county populated by some 5,500 whites and nearly 8,600 blacks. In any case, a number of Prince Edward *Sabbatarians*--like Petersburg *Anti-sabbatarians*--supported Andrew Jackson for president.⁵³

⁵² Bradshaw, *History of Prince Edward County*, 185-88.

⁵³ Ibid., 186-87; Martin, *Gazetteer of Virginia*, 268; John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 565. Another glimpse of politics and the Sabbath comes from the 1829-30 constitutional convention. I located two Sabbatarians among eastern conservatives and two among western reformers and their allies: James M. Garnett of Essex and Richard N. Venable of Prince Edward were conservatives; William Campbell of Bedford and Thomas R. Joynes of Accomac were among the western reformers and their allies. In fact, Alexander Campbell, the author or editor of so much Anti-sabbatarian print, was also a delegate to the convention and was among the western reformer camp. See Sutton, *Revolution to Secession*, 185, 194, 197, 201. For William Campbell, see petition of inhabitants of Bedford County, Virginia, (n.d.), Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). Another glimpse of Presbyterian support for Jackson just prior to his taking office was shown by a letter from an individual in Staunton, Virginia, who wrote to Congressman William McCoy, "I think that the Government ought to set an example in keeping Holy, that Day that the Governor of the Universe has consecrated;--And the present seems to be

In terms of religion and Sabbatarianism, Rockbridge County resembled Prince Edward to a considerable degree. As in the latter county, Presbyterians dominated Rockbridge; around 1830, nine of thirteen county churches (not including Lexington, the county seat), were Presbyterian. Several of these churches were of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian denomination, separate from the main branch of Presbyterians in America. They held the Sabbath in the highest regard, for example, practicing what was termed the "Long Sabbath," a four-day Sabbath beginning on Thursday and culminating in the administration of the Lord's Supper on the Lord's day. Understandably, the Long Sabbath was only an occasional practice, but it was indicative of the Scots' firm attachment to the weekly Sabbath. As in Prince Edward, virtually all Rockbridge Sabbath petitioners identified by denominational affiliation were Presbyterians, and some petitioners were justices.⁵⁴

Rockbridge countians produced three Sabbath petitions: one was dated January 4, 1829 and was pre-printed and signed by eighty-seven individuals; another was undated

an auspicious time for commencing the business, as we are about to have a *Presbyterian* president,--without, however, (you may say) any aid of union [of church and state]" See William Clarke to William McCoy, January 21, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA).

⁵⁴ Edmund Pendleton Tompkins, *Rockbridge County, Virginia, an Informal History* (Richmond, Va., 1952), 78-79; Martin, *Gazetteer of Virginia*, 424-27; Oren F. Morton, *A History of Rockbridge County, Virginia* (Staunton, Va., 1920), 106. Lexington had two houses of public worship, one Presbyterian and one Methodist; thus, ten of fifteen churches in the town of Lexington and county of Rockbridge were Presbyterian. Though always a problem to some degree, Rockbridge County petitioners were especially difficult to identify positively because of a number of individuals with the same names listed in the 1830 census. For example, local Presbyterian minister and future president of Washington College, Henry Ruffner, was probably a petitioner, but there were two individuals named "Henry Ruffner" in the 1830 census. Similarly, there were three listed as "James McClung," and there were several listed as "John P. Wilson" and "Matthew Wilson."

(presumably from early 1829), and was a handwritten memorial containing thirty-nine signatures; and, the third was received in Congress on January 25, 1830 and was handwritten, containing fifty-five signatures. The first signature on the pre-printed petition was that of New Providence Presbyterian Church ruling elder John Weir, suggesting that the large local congregation may have supplied a number of the signatures on that memorial. The Rev. Henry Ruffner, pastor of the joint (Associate Reformed and mainline Presbyterian) Timber Ridge and Fairfield Presbyterian Church, and New Providence Presbyterian elders John P. and Matthew Willson, were probably petitioners, but they could not be identified positively. At least three Rockbridge justices also signed the memorial: John Alexander, Robert S. Campbell (also a future Presbyterian elder), and William Lusk.⁵⁵

The undated petition's first signer was the Rev. Samuel Houston, among the most prominent of local Presbyterians. Houston pastored for over fifty years, was nine times the moderator of the Lexington Presbytery, its stated clerk from 1805 to 1826, and a

⁵⁵ Petition of inhabitants of Fairfield, Rockbridge County, Virginia, (received) February 2, 1829, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Rockbridge County, Virginia, (n.d.), Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); petition of inhabitants of Rockbridge County, Virginia, January 25, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA). E.D. Junkin, *A History of the Church and Congregation of New Providence, Lexington Presbytery, Virginia* (N.p., 1871), 21; Weir was an elder by 1819, Matthew Wilson was ordained in 1828, John P. Willson was ordained in 1832. New Providence Presbyterian Church, session book, April 1819 and August 8, 1830 (microfilm at UTS). Rockbridge County, Minute Book, 1827-1831 (microfilm at VSLA); I searched the minutes between December 1828 and January 1830. George West Diehl, *The Brick Church on Timber Ridge* (Verona, Va., 1975), 54-55, 61; Ellison A. Smyth, "A History of Presbyterianism in Rockbridge County, Virginia (Down to the year 1870)" (M.A. thesis, Washington and Lee University, 1938), 21, 127, 130.

trustee of Washington College. Another notable Presbyterian signer was Thomas Lecky, an elder in the High Bridge (Associate Reformed) church from 1823 to 1856.⁵⁶

This study has matched only a few of the many original texts of Sabbath petitions with their authors, but the text of the aforementioned petition was written in the hand of the Rev. Houston. Referring to the Old Testament book of Proverbs, Houston declared, "It is long since it was said righteousness or obedience to God's laws exalteth a nation. And we earnestly wish our nation exalted even above all the nations."⁵⁷

The third petition, prepared in January 1830, was also the result of the efforts of local Presbyterians. A dozen or more signers of the 1830 petition had also signed the undated Rockbridge petition, thus arguing for an 1829 date for the latter. Furthermore, the 1830 text stated, "Your Memorialists are grieved that they are *again* under the necessity of petitioning Congress. . . ." Among the individuals signing both petitions were the Rev. Houston (though the third petition was prepared in another's hand), elder Thomas Lecky, William Houston, and Samuel Walkup. Houston had been a previous pastor of Falling Springs Presbyterian Church in Glasgow, Virginia (southern Rockbridge County). His signature was followed immediately by the current pastor, the Rev. Jonathan D. Ewing; and following his name, in near-perfect succession, were those of five elders in the Falling Springs church, including Abner A.P. Grigsby, John Laird, and William McNutt. Moreover, even Lexington's *Intelligencer* newspaper promoted the Sabbath, encouraging

⁵⁶ Smyth, "A History of Presbyterianism in Rockbridge County," 71-72, 92; Diehl, *The Brick Church on Timber Ridge*, 54-55.

⁵⁷ Petition of inhabitants of Rockbridge County, Virginia, (n.d.), Petitions Received, RG233 (NA).

parents to teach their children the "*marked difference* between the Sabbath and the rest of the week" and to sanctify "that holy day."⁵⁸

As was the case in Kentucky, the courts of the Presbyterian Church in Virginia--synod, presbytery, and session--were somewhat active with regard to the Sabbath as well. Poor Sabbath observance was often associated with the more tangible problem of intemperance, as the Synod of Virginia indicated in late 1825. In discussing the state of religion within the bounds of the synod, which included most of the state, the Presbyterian body noted "the prevalence of sins & vices . . . not only destructive to the soul, but deeply injurious to the best interests of Society." Among those vices synod named "the profaning of the holy & reverent name of God, disregard of the sabbath, & the intemperate use of ardent spirits. . . . & particularly the last."⁵⁹

Although synod acknowledged the vice of Sabbath profanation, it was the Presbytery of Winchester which came closest to confronting the problem head-on. At its annual meeting in May 1826, the Presbyterian general assembly had passed resolutions encouraging presbyteries and sessions to devote greater attention toward the observance of the Lord's day. The assembly called for church discipline, if necessary, to rescue the Sabbath from increasing profanation. While two Kentucky presbyteries adopted the resolutions nearly verbatim--albeit with a noteworthy difference--of the nine presbyteries

⁵⁸ All five Falling Springs elders were ordained and serving as elders in 1830; the two unnamed elders were Joseph and Thomas Paxton. Petition of inhabitants of Rockbridge County, Virginia, January 25, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA) [emphasis added]; Falling Springs Presbyterian Church, session records, January 9 and May 8, 1830 (microfilm at PCUSA); Smyth, "A History of Presbyterianism in Rockbridge County," 86; *Intelligencer*, January 26, 1826.

⁵⁹ Synod of Virginia, minutes, October 1825 (microfilm at UTS).

in Kentucky and Virginia, Winchester was the *only* one to experience a serious attempt to apply the Sabbath resolutions to a local setting.⁶⁰

Meeting at Gerrardstown (approximately twenty miles west of Harpers Ferry, in present-day West Virginia) in October 1826, Winchester Presbytery received the report of the committee it had assigned the task of proposing a course of action in the wake of the general assembly's Sabbath resolutions. The committee stated,

... there is too much reason to conclude that the sabbath is most shamefully & wickedly violated in the bounds of this Presbytery, & that, by many of the members of the church, & that this offence has not been noticed as it should be, neither from the pulpit, nor by the judicatories of our church, & that it is high time to exercise more vigilance, & put forth more vigorous exertions, in suppressing this dangerous vice.

The committee added its approval of the assembly's resolutions, and it recommended that ministers preach on the subject at the "earliest opportunity" and that presbytery institute an annual inquiry on the Sabbath's observance within its bounds. The members of the committee were not named, but the Rev. James M. Brown of the Gerrardstown (and Falling Water) churches proved a likely candidate.⁶¹

In March 1828, in a session meeting of the Gerrardstown church, Brown presented the elders with the presbytery's proceedings on the Sabbath from its meeting seventeen months earlier. Though the course of the following discussion is unknown, the session

⁶⁰ For discussion of Kentucky presbyteries, see Chapter 3 above. The nine presbyteries included in this study were those whose boundaries were entirely within the states of Kentucky and Virginia.

⁶¹ Winchester Presbytery, minutes, October 2, 1826 (microfilm at UTS). Falling Water (Waters) Presbyterian Church was located northwest of Harpers Ferry, Virginia, just south of the Potomac River, and approximately twenty miles from Gerrardstown.

concurred "entirely" with presbytery, and resolved, "They feel the duty incumbent on every office bearer in the church to exercise strict watchfulness over his own conduct & the conduct of others in relation to this matter." Most likely at the Rev. Brown's insistence, the session of the Gerrardstown church was preparing to take action regarding the Sabbath.⁶²

Six months later, in another session meeting, Brown again brought the Winchester Presbytery 1826 Sabbath resolutions before the elders: "Whereupon resolved that there are difficulties in acting on this injunction of Presy concerning which the advice of that body is desirable." Brown was to draft a letter to presbytery and submit it to the session, which approved it at the next meeting. At some point, Brown's letter was adopted by the sessions of *both* the Gerrardstown and Falling Water churches.⁶³

In the letter, Brown began by noting that it was with "some embarrassment" that the Gerrardstown and Falling Water sessions felt constrained to seek the advice of presbytery on this "subject deeply important to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom." He went on to describe the specific Sabbath day practices that existed in his locale:

We have found that it is the general custom of professors of religion in our bounds, when engaged in hauling their produce to market, to keep their teams employed in pursuing their journey on the Lord's day. This we regret to say has been the practice for a long time amongst us, & we fear too generally throughout the bounds of this Presbytery. Custom has sanctioned it so long that it is scarce thought of as a sin, & it is openly justified even by those who have named the name of Christ.

⁶² Gerrardstown Presbyterian Church, session minutes, March 8, 1828 (microfilm at UTS).

⁶³ Ibid., September 4 and October 1, 1828.

Brown described a local situation which probably applied to numerous locales throughout the nation, but which often was merely alluded to rather than being addressed directly. Of special significance was the fact that such practice involved not merely the general populace but professing Christians, and that it had gone on so long that "custom has sanctioned it."⁶⁴

The distressed minister's letter continued, entreating presbytery to advise his "feeble sessions" whose "influence is likely to accomplish very little even in our own bounds if we alone attempt to check this course." Furthermore, the two sessions were "at a loss where to begin & of whom to make an example by exercising the discipline of the church for the crime of profaning the Sabbath, for there is scarce a farmer in the neighborhood who has not been guilty repeatedly of the things of which we complain. . . ." Brown feared that the singling out of an individual for discipline might produce a negative effect. Such an individual, Brown reasoned, might respond, "Why am I selected as the object of the censure of the church when others & even the elders of the church have often done the same & no notice has been taken of it." Lest presbytery assume the problem was limited only to the hauling of produce to market on the Lord's day, Brown added, "We have selected only one strong case of the violation of the sabbath for the sake of turning the attention of Prsy to the subject." Other violations included "unnecessary visiting amongst friends & neighbors, & making the church yard the place to form arrangements for worldly business during the week."⁶⁵

Winchester Presbytery appointed a committee, consisting of Brown and the Rev. James Black, to look into the matter. Six months later, the Brown-Black committee offered its

⁶⁴ Winchester Presbytery, minutes, October 16, 1828 (microfilm at UTS).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

report, which the presbytery adopted. First, the ministers addressed the sessions' use of the term "feeble sessions," by which term "it is supposed that they mean, they are few in number. But that discipline which they exercise . . . do not derive their validity & their efficiency from the number of members . . . but from Christ . . . by whom they have been invested with authority, & in whose name they act." The ministers concluded that portion of their response by expressing their hope that "these sessions . . . will see that they ought not merely because they are few in numbers to refrain from exercising the discipline of the church. . . ." ⁶⁶

The second issue to which the committee responded was that of the sessions' being "at a loss where to begin, & of whom to make an example. . . ." While empathizing with the difficulty of the situation for the two sessions, the committee noted that presbytery could not relieve the sessions of their responsibility to exercise the discipline and government of the church. ⁶⁷

In their conclusion, the Winchester Presbytery committee admonished, "If professors of religion felt a deeper sense of religious obligations, more ardent love to God & his ordinances they would seek for opportunities to enjoy the blessedness of that hallowed day, rather than exert their ingenuity in devising reasons to justify the criminal desecration of its sacred hours." Finally, presbytery repeated "the injunction of 1826; not to give it greater authority than it already possesses, but to manifest their continued views of its importance," and they recommended that church sessions publish to their congregations "the above injunction of Presy so that all persons may be aware of the consequence of the offence in future . . . & may be without excuse or just ground of complaint." Thus, at

⁶⁶ Ibid., April 24, 1829.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

least two church sessions and one Upper South presbytery attempted to deal forthrightly with a deeply-rooted and growing moral problem, the depth of which was captured in the use of the phrase, "Custom has sanctioned. . . ." But after April of 1829, neither the Gerrardstown church nor Winchester Presbytery seems to have even mentioned the issue again, perhaps because they saw no acceptable means of dealing with the problem.

Perhaps they should be judged negligent, but the Gerrardstown church may have come closer, and the Winchester Presbytery *did* come closer--than any other Upper South church, or presbytery--to exercising church discipline for Sabbath profanation.⁶⁸

This chapter has focused on the Sabbath mails petitions sent to Congress between late 1828 and early 1830 from seven communities in Virginia. Generally, the distinguishing characteristics of the signers of the memorials were their affiliation with local Presbyterian churches or their membership in local county courts--and sometimes both. In the cases of Fredericksburg and Petersburg, Sabbatarian merchants and bankers and Anti-sabbatarian mechanics and bankers, respectively, represented a significant portion of the petitioners. That a number of Virginians were desirous of halting the transportation of the mails and closing post offices on the Sabbath is clear; much less so is the question of the actual observance of the Sabbath, even by Sabbatarians. The proceedings of Winchester Presbytery, mentioned above, addressed the problem of widespread violations of the Sabbath by members of the church, even by elders. Apparently, such practices had gone on for years, without church members being disciplined, so as to have become sanctioned

⁶⁸ Ibid. The records of the Falling Water church appear to be not extant. At the very time that Winchester Presbytery was dealing with the Sabbath, other benevolences such as Bible, Tract, and Colonization societies were "receiving encouraging attention," and the "cause of Temperance [was] likewise gaining ground. . . ." See Winchester Presbytery, minutes, April 25, 1829 (microfilm at UTS).

by local custom. Clear evidence from other locales has not been found, but allusions to poor Sabbath practices and the lack of any evidence of discipline in local Presbyterian churches for Sabbath profanation--though discipline *was* exercised for such offenses as intemperance, fighting, and sexual sins--suggests that similar situations existed beyond the bounds of Winchester Presbytery.⁶⁹

In July 1828, the Rev. John Holt Rice had asked, "Can we do any thing to vindicate the rights and promote the better observance of the Sabbath in Virginia?" Prior to late 1830, Sabbath mails petition campaigns seem to have represented the only major activity in response to Rice's inquiry. A partial explanation for that occurrence was suggested in an anonymous letter to Rice, the editor of the *Literary and Evangelical Magazine*, which illustrated the great difficulties in focusing one's thoughts upon the worship of God on the Sabbath, to the exclusion of worldly concerns.⁷⁰

An individual using the pen name (in Greek) "SABBATICHOS" wrote a letter to Rice entitled, "The Rainy Sabbath." "SABBATICHOS" identified himself as "a tiller of the soil" and a Presbyterian in whose family "the Sabbath is a valued and honoured day." He continued, "But sometimes the Sabbath is a *very* rainy day. In this case I find it extremely difficult to conduct myself and family through the day, in a manner that I like to reflect on afterwards."⁷¹

⁶⁹ Robert Bell Woodworth, *A History of the Presbytery of Winchester (Synod of Virginia)* . . . (Staunton, Va., 1947), 167, notes, "The two most common grounds of discipline in the records of the earlier Sessions were illicit sexual relations on the part of women and drunkenness on the part of men." My own examination of numerous session minutes for churches in Virginia and Kentucky generally confirms this assessment.

⁷⁰ John Holt Rice to John Hartwell Cocke, July 1, 1828, Misc. Box 3, John Holt Rice Faculty Writings (photocopy at UTS).

⁷¹ *Literary and Evangelical Magazine*, September 1825, 475-80.

The Presbyterian writer proceeded to relate the events of the last Sabbath which had been the cause of remorse.

In the morning, the wind came directly from the North East; the clouds hung low and looked watery. This created considerable solicitude; and most of the time, which ought to have been employed in preparation of the heart, was spent in watching . . . the weather. . . . Thus the *prime* of the day was lost. At length all doubts were settled, for the rain came in torrents. . . . We then attempted to set ourselves seriously to the proper duties of the season. But it is mortifying to think of the causeless interruptions, and the wanderings of thought and conversation from appropriate subjects, to things entirely unsuitable which took place.⁷²

"SABBATICHOS" recounted how he and his wife had "in family prayer remembered our boys who are at College. . . ." Then after a pause, his wife had asked him "if the tobacco on the creek low grounds, was not in danger of being destroyed?" Their thoughts progressed, for "Conversation respecting our absent sons, naturally led the mind to the expenses of their education, and the means of defraying them, and this to the probable fate of the growing crop." The pious husbandman recalled that his wife's question led to their conversing with "great anxiety on things, utterly *out* of our control."⁷³

Later on, "SABBATICHOS" sought to meditate in private, but to his dismay, "lay down, and slept profoundly until dinner was ready. I rose ashamed that on God's day I had wasted time in sleep, which on any other day I should have employed in attention to my own business." After dinner, he again attempted to "redeem the time" in family

⁷² Ibid., 476.

⁷³ Ibid., 477.

devotions, but "the drowsiness increased with the rain. . . . And I felt how hard it is to get through the Sabbath well, without the privileges of God's house."⁷⁴

The humbled Presbyterian recounted the remainder of the day, closing with two questions: "*How do families make out to spend the Sabbath profitably, when they have no opportunities of public worship?*" And, "*How can christians bear to be deprived, three Sabbaths out of four; or one out of two, of the privileges of God's House?*" I confess that with all my helps; with a faithful pastor, and regular worship, I make out very poorly in a rainy day." While "SABBATICHOS" may have been no more pious than most of his fellow Presbyterians--though perhaps he was considerably more so--certainly he was only one of many tobacco-growing Virginians sometimes unable to attend public worship and subject to the myriad of anxieties which contributed to an unprofitable Sabbath. Thus, the meager evidence uncovered regarding actual Sabbath observance in Virginia in the late 1820s suggests that, even among those whose regard for the day was generally the highest, the difficulties of living "in the world but not of it" were sometimes enough to discourage even committed Sabbatarians. Yet, in spite of seemingly overwhelming pressures and difficulties, Virginia Sabbatarians would soon launch a new initiative to promote the observance of the Christian Sabbath.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ibid., 477-78.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 480.

Chapter 5

Presbyterians, the Virginia Society, and the Sabbath, 1830-1836

In April 1828 the Richmond, Virginia, *Visitor and Telegraph*, published a drama in five acts entitled, "Sunday Occupations." In Scene I, Thom, the carriage driver, has just finished preparing the carriage for Miss Eliza Jones, the wealthy planter's daughter, who is about to leave for dinner at Dr. Bloomfield's. Enroute to her sweetheart's residence, she plans to hear the sermon at the Old Church. Meanwhile, Mr. Jones, Eliza's father, awaits the return of a servant boy from the post office, sent there to dispatch some letters. Mr. Jones remarks to Frank, one of his servants, "I am sorry to be obliged to send on the Sabbath, but the mail goes out to-day, and it was important that my letters should go by this mail." In solitude, Frank remarks to himself, "Master say he don't like to send to the Post-Office Sunday. He send every Sunday. Last Sunday he make me go, when the rain was pouring." In Scene II, the family is at the breakfast table discussing their plans for the day. Mrs. Jones informs her husband that they and their two daughters, Eliza and Mary, plan to "go to Dr. Bloomfield's to dinner, and return in the morning. We must pass the Old Church, and can stop and hear the sermon." Mr. Jones: "We must certainly attend church, but I am not very well pleased with the idea of visiting on the Sabbath." In Scene III, Mrs. Jones and daughter Mary are on the porch when Mrs. Jones asks: "Mary, my dear, why don't you go and dress with the other girls?" Mary responds: "I intend to wear the dress I have on." Mrs. Jones: "Wear that Quaker dress to Dr. Bloomfield's? Is it possible?" And Mary answers: "The dress is plain, but neat, and as fine as becomes a christian. I am sorry that you have made the appointment to the Dr's to-day, for I think it will be a violation of the Sabbath. But if you all go, I hope I may be allowed to stay at home, where I can spend the day more agreeably to my inclination and duty." In exasperation Mrs. Jones

declares: "Oh! you Presbyterians are too scrupulous. What can be the harm to make a friendly visit, if it be Sunday?" While many people would have agreed with Mrs. Jones' assessment of over-scrupulous Presbyterians, Virginians would soon witness even greater zeal for the Christian Sabbath.¹

From late 1828 to early 1830, Sabbatarians in Virginia, in concert with Sabbatarians nationwide, participated in two petition campaigns in an attempt to persuade Congress to stop the delivery of the mails on the first day of the week and to allow post offices to close on that day. While those campaigns served as the focal point for the last chapter, this chapter focuses upon activities to promote the Sabbath other than those surrounding the petitioning of Congress.

As previously noted, the theological roots of Sabbatarians were found in Calvinism, with which the doctrines of the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians were most closely associated among American religious groups. By the early nineteenth century, Presbyterians were an influential, though not a large, denomination in the Upper South, and they were the sect most active in the region on behalf of the Sabbath.²

The "Sunday Occupations" drama in 1828 foreshadowed the activities of many Virginia Presbyterians on behalf of Sabbath observance. The key organization in the state in which Presbyterians appear to have played the leading role with regard to the Sabbath was the Virginia Society for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath. Also known as the "Virginia Sabbath Society" or simply the "Virginia Society," it was organized in November 1830 in response to the failure of the Sabbath mails petition

¹ *Visitor and Telegraph*, April 26, 1828.

² G.I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* (Philadelphia, 1964), 170-73.

campaigns. Since Congress refused to uphold Christian and republican morality by repealing the offensive postal law, Virginia Sabbatarians elected to take matters into their own hands. Like Mary in the aforementioned drama, many of the society's members were what Mrs. Jones labelled as "too scrupulous" Presbyterians. Interestingly, twenty-two of the original eighty members were of Mary's sex, but, unfortunately, their role in the society was never addressed in print. Nevertheless, through the Virginia Society's published reports, anecdotes, reasoned arguments, sermons, tracts, and personal example, these Sabbatarians hoped to persuade many who, like Mr. Jones, were somewhat inconsistent in their Christianity with regard to the keeping of the Sabbath. Furthermore, the society showed both its concern for the souls of slaves, like Thom and Frank, and for the influence for good or evil upon them and the community at large resulting from Sabbath observance or non-observance by whites and blacks alike.³

The Virginia Society is a subject worthy of historical examination, because it was one of only a handful of Sabbath societies organized in the South during this period; and it remained active for six years, from 1830 to 1836. This was a considerably longer existence than that of the national Sabbath society, the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath, which was organized in 1828 and essentially was defunct by 1832. While historians such as Robert Abzug, Richard John, and Paul Johnson have dealt with the General Union and its role in the Sabbath reform efforts of the early

³ *Religious Herald*, November 12, 1830; *Southern Religious Telegraph*, August 12, 1831. Two publications of the Virginia Society I have found are Horace Hooker, *Lecture on the Temporal Benefits of the Sabbath* . . . , rev. ed. (Richmond, Va. 1835), and *The Following Address . . . is now Publishing by The Virginia Society for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (N.p., ca. 1830). The latter publication addresses the Sabbath mails controversy and was probably published in 1830 or 1831 while the petition campaigns were still fresh.

Jacksonian era, apparently no historian has focused on an Upper South, or even a Southern, Sabbath society. The attention devoted to the General Union and to Northern Sabbatarianism has necessarily led to an incomplete and skewed perspective on Sabbatarianism in this period. This is understandable, given the fact that the vast majority of organized activity on behalf of the Sabbath took place in New England and the Middle Atlantic region.⁴

The present study, however, indicates that Virginia Sabbatarianism, as viewed primarily through the activities of the Virginia Society, differed from its Northern counterpart in two distinct ways: first, in its refusal to participate in what many considered coercive activity; and, second, in its concern for the Sabbath day practices not only of whites, but of whites with regard to blacks, of blacks themselves, and even of blacks with regard to whites. Together, these distinctives--which were not unrelated--point to a *Southern* brand of early Jacksonian Sabbatarianism.

Initially, the Virginia Society was comprised of eighty members but within five months had grown to a membership of one hundred forty-two. Although membership figures for later years have not been uncovered, the society seems to have grown, based on the higher number of vice-presidents several years later. For example, in April 1831 the society had

⁴ As far as this study has determined, neither Kentucky nor Tennessee of the Upper South states had a state Sabbath society during this period. The *Southern Religious Telegraph* published articles on the Virginia Society in every year between 1831 and 1836. The most extensive coverage was between 1832 and 1834 when the *Telegraph* published the reports of the anniversary meetings in early April of each year. Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York, 1994); Richard R. John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously: The Postal System, the Sabbath, and the Transformation of American Political Culture," *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (1990), 517-67; Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York, 1978).

only one vice-president and eight "other directors." Near its peak three years later, however, the society boasted twenty-one vice-presidents and eight "other managers."⁵

The Presbyterians seem to have been the denomination best represented in the Virginia Society. Certainly this was the case among the society's leadership. For example, of the twenty vice-presidents in 1833, those in the Presbyterian camp included Jonathan P. Cushing, president of Hampden Sydney College; Dr. Lewis Marshall, president of Washington College; the Rev. Dr. George Baxter, professor at Union Theological Seminary; the Rev. Dr. Conrad Speece, pastor in Augusta County; James Caskie, elder in First Presbyterian Church, Richmond; and Col. Samuel Winfree, soon to be an elder in Richmond's First Presbyterian Church. In fact, First Presbyterian was the best represented congregation among the leadership of the society. In addition to elders Caskie and Winfree, another elder, the pastor, and two other church members were all officers in the Virginia Society in 1833 and 1834.⁶

⁵ *Religious Herald*, November 12, 1830, April 15, 1831; *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 11, 1834.

⁶ *Historical Souvenir, The First Presbyterian Church, Corner Grace and Madison Streets, Richmond, Virginia* (Richmond, Va., 1904); *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 5, 1833, April 11, 1834. The pastor of First Presbyterian Church was the Rev. William J. Armstrong; the unnamed elder was Charles Goddard; and the two other church members were George L. Sampson and J.H. Eustace. Sampson was a merchant, a director of the Richmond Branch of the Bank of Virginia in 1829, and served as the recording secretary of the Virginia Society in 1831, 1833, and 1834 (the only years for which I have found officers listed). For Sampson's advertisements--for flour, tobacco, and wheat--see *Southern Religious Telegraph*, June 17, 1836, and August 12, 1836. The list of bank directors is published in the *Daily Richmond Whig*, January 7, 1829. This study uses the term, "Presbyterian camp," because Cushing, and perhaps also Marshall, was not formally a member of the Presbyterian denomination. However, as the presidents of Presbyterian institutions, Cushing and Marshall were more closely associated with the Presbyterians than with any other religious group.

While Presbyterians seem to have dominated the Virginia Society, the other major Protestant denominations were also represented among the society's leadership. For example, three Baptists, the Rev. James B. Taylor, William Crane, and William Sands, were among the eight directors of the society elected in 1831. Taylor was the pastor of Richmond's Second Baptist Church. Crane was a Richmond merchant who had provided the funds for Sands to initiate the newspaper of Virginia Baptists, the *Religious Herald*, of which Sands was the editor and later, the proprietor. In 1833 and 1834, Methodist officers in the Virginia Society included the Rev. Stephen Olin, president of Randolph Macon College and the Rev. Ethelbert Drake, editor of the Virginia Methodists' *Christian Sentinel* newspaper. During this same period, Episcopalian leaders included the Rev. Dr. Adam Empie, president of the College of William and Mary, the Right Reverend Richard Channing Moore of Richmond, and the Right Reverend Dr. William Mead of Frederick County.⁷

The leadership of the Virginia Society was not the only aspect of the organization in which the major Protestant denominations were represented. In the society's annual report in 1832, the board of managers observed that the Synod of Virginia of the Presbyterian Church had recently adopted resolutions aimed at improving the sanctification of the Sabbath. Furthermore, they wrote, "We rejoice . . . that the same subject has been presented to the Baptist and Episcopal Churches in this State through the medium of their respective publications, and that an increasing interest appears to be felt in it." The next

⁷ *Religious Herald*, April 15, 1831; *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 5, 1833, April 11, 1834. Margaret Cook, the director of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, in Williamsburg, Virginia, stated that in 1833 Moore served as Bishop and Meade as Assistant Bishop. For that reason, both men were referred to as "Right Reverend." Personal communication with the author, March 16, 1998.

year, the board reported that the "highest ecclesiastical bodies in our state of two denominations," have taken measures to impress upon their members "the sacred duty of promoting the observance of the Lord's day." The two bodies referred to were the Protestant Episcopal Church's Diocese of Virginia and the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The 1833 report also mentioned, "we are assured that very successful efforts in this cause have been made in the Baptist denomination." Thus, *all four* of the major Protestant denominations in Virginia--Presbyterian, Episcopal, Methodist, and Baptist--supported the Virginia Society's efforts on behalf of the Sabbath through their ecclesiastical bodies, their publications, or both.⁸

While historians have neglected the Virginia Society and Southern Sabbatarianism, historians of Northern Sabbatarianism generally include the account of Josiah Bissell, the wealthy Rochester, New York, merchant and Presbyterian elder who initiated a Sabbath-keeping stage and packet line in 1827. Bissell hoped to show that Sabbath-keeping enterprises could compete successfully with those whose proprietors had but little regard for the Sabbath. Several historians have pointed to Bissell as an example of the willingness of Sabbatarians to exert economic coercion in order to bring Sabbath-breaking businesses into conformity with Sabbatarian standards.⁹

⁸ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 13, 1832, April 12, 1833.

⁹ Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 114-16, considers Bissell's venture an example of a "radical Sabbatarian campaign"; Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, 74-75, 83-88, emphasizes the coercive nature of boycotts such as Bissell's Pioneer Line encouraged; John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 535-37, deals with Bissell but does not emphasize coercion.

Although his Pioneer Line eventually failed, Bissell was instrumental in the forming of the General Union in New York City in May 1828. Richard John has termed the General Union "Bissell's brainchild," and his influence seems to have been evident in the adoption of Article VI of the constitution, which contained the pledge for members of the General Union. It read, "we will, as circumstances admit, encourage and *give a preference* to those lines of conveyances, whose owners do not employ them on the Sabbath." The perceived significance of Article VI was that it threatened the harmony of communities--it was tantamount to a boycott of Sabbath-breaking enterprises--and thereby appeared to many to represent "coercion" rather than moral suasion. Though this article was repealed a year later, even while reminding Christians of the duty of keeping "our persons and our property from partaking in other men's sins," the question of economic coercion remained a contentious issue among many Northern Sabbatarians. Among Southern Sabbatarians, however, this study has failed to uncover any evidence that economic coercion was ever considered. In fact, the evidence suggests that it was specifically rejected.¹⁰

¹⁰ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 537. *Address of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1828), 7-8 [emphasis added]; *First Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1829), 3, 11. For further discussion of the rejection of "coercive" measures by Southern Sabbatarians, see the example from Kentucky in 1826 involving the West Lexington Presbytery and the Synod of Kentucky (Chapter 3 above). None of the three Virginia presbyteries (Hanover Presbytery divided into East Hanover and West Hanover in 1829, forming a fourth presbytery) paraphrased or quoted any of general assembly's Sabbath resolutions in 1826, though Winchester Presbytery stated that it "highly [approve] of the resolutions of the Assembly upon this subject" and recommended ministers and church sessions to bring the matter before the churches in the presbytery. Yet, this should *not* be considered an endorsement of coercion with regard to Sabbath observance, as there was no reference to the specific behaviors or activities to be practiced or avoided. See West Lexington Presbytery minutes, September 21, 1826 (typescript at PCUSA); Synod of Kentucky minutes, October 16, 1826 (microfilm at PCUSA); Winchester Presbytery minutes, October 2, 1826 (microfilm at UTS); *Minutes of the General Assembly*, May 30, 1826.

For example, although the Virginia Society modeled its name after the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath--with whom it corresponded in 1831--it chose not to affiliate itself officially with the national organization, despite the fact that the General Union had called for auxiliaries around the country to associate with the national society. More importantly, one such call came in 1830 from none other than the Rev. John Holt Rice, one of only a handful of Southern officers in the General Union and probably the most influential Southern Presbyterian of his day. As previously noted, Rice had been influential as an editor and as an organizer of Presbyterian churches in Virginia, and had been the principal founder of the Virginia Bible Society and of Union Theological Seminary. The offer of the presidency of the College of New Jersey at Princeton to Rice had testified to his influence in both North and South. But in spite of Rice's stature and his call for Sabbath auxiliaries, of the approximately twenty-seven such auxiliaries known to have been formed in the late 1820s and early 1830s, only two were from the South: one from Tennessee and another from Virginia. As other historians have suggested, white Southerners in general understood the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships among all whites. From this perspective, affiliation with a Northern Sabbath society hinting at coercive behavior could appear disruptive of social harmony under the "peculiar institution."¹¹

¹¹ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, August 12, 1831; *Religious Herald*, June 4, 1830, April 15, 1831. For Rice's life's work in Virginia, see Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South* (3 vols., Richmond, Va., 1963-73), 1: 237-40, 258-59, 276-83; also Patricia Aldridge, ed., *Virginia Presbyterians in American Life: Hanover Presbytery (1755-1980)* (Richmond, Va., 1982), 62-74. At least two Presbyterian congregations, both located in Richmond, supported the Virginia Society at least nominally. The Shockoe Hill Church manual listed the Sabbath society as one of the several "religious institutions" to which members were encouraged to contribute. Similarly, First Presbyterian Church, of which John Holt Rice had been the first pastor, included the

More direct evidence of the reluctance of Southern Sabbatarians to engage in coercion is found in several statements by individuals and groups. For example, in response to a General Union circular regarding the state of Sabbath observance around the country, William M. Atkinson, a Petersburg attorney, general agent for the Virginia Bible Society, and later a Presbyterian pastor, remarked, "I would suggest the very great importance of prudence, particularly in avoiding the very appearance of coercion. We ought to try to keep people's consciences on our side, and leave them no excuse, even to themselves, for opposition, or else the reaction may be very pernicious." Another respondent, the Rev. Joseph Caldwell of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, stressed the need for "pressing measures for a more holy observance of the Sabbath, on the community at large." Such measures "ought to be unremittingly prosecuted, but always prudently," Caldwell advised.¹²

Also, in 1832 the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia responded to a circular from the Virginia Society by recommending that all its church members and "all

Virginia Sabbath Society among benevolences to which members were encouraged to contribute. Though First Presbyterian Church had a number of wealthy members, this study has failed to uncover evidence of funds collected for the Sabbath society, though funds were collected for benevolences such as Union Theological Seminary, the education of poor and pious youth, East Hanover Presbytery, and the commissioners' fund. See *Shockoe Hill Church Manual* (Richmond, Va., 1831), 28; First Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Virginia, session records (microfilm at UTS). Also, the pastor and three elders of First Presbyterian Church were among the officers of the Virginia Society in 1833 and 1834: the Rev. William J. Armstrong; and elders James Caskie, Charles Goddard, and Samuel Winfree (elected elder in 1835). Two other members of First Presbyterian Church were officers in the society, virtually assuring that this was the best represented congregation among the leadership of the Virginia Sabbath Society. *Historical Souvenir, The First Presbyterian Church, Corner Grace and Madison Streets, Richmond, Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 5, 1833, April 11, 1834.

¹² *Third Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath . . .* (N.p., 1831), 15, 18-19. Note that Atkinson authored the Petersburg, Virginia, Sabbath memorial in early 1830 (see Chapter 4 above).

the friends of religion and good order" sanctify the Sabbath day. The Episcopalians added that they "would not, however, be understood to approve or recommend the promotion of this object by any other means than argument and example. In this respect, they fully acquiesce in the views of the Society." Though the Virginia Society advocated only example and persuasion in pursuit of its object, the Episcopalian body made a public pronouncement *against* coercive measures.¹³

The Virginia Society took a similar stance in its annual report of 1833, declaring, "it does not come within our design to seek the enactment of new laws, or to enforce those already in existence, against the violation of the Sabbath; but leaving these in the hands of the civil magistrate, we confine ourselves to the application of *moral* power. . . ." Though it is only fair to note that by the early 1830s nearly all Sabbatarians, North and South, had realized the futility of any measures which appeared coercive, Southerners had seemed especially sensitive to this issue from the start.¹⁴

Of course, the need of Southerners for maintaining social harmony among whites cannot be divorced from their anxieties related to blacks. Virginia Sabbatarians indicated their concern for the consequences of Sabbath observance for both races. In August 1828 one such individual using the name, "LOOKER ON," wrote two letters specifically for the *Visitor and Telegraph* on the subject of Sabbath observance. In the first letter, "LOOKER ON" noted with satisfaction the recent formation in New York of the General Union before focusing on his main topic: the use of Sabbath schools on the Sabbath day for teaching piety to children. Noting the "flood of moral pollution" which he attributed to "the want of proper restraint in families," "LOOKER ON" proposed the forming of

¹³ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, June 15, 1832.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, April 12, 1833.

"*family Sabbath Schools*." If a pious man or woman "would set apart a few hours on the Sabbath, invite the children for a few miles around, to come in and read, recite lessons--and receive elementary and religious instruction, they would do an incalculable amount of good; and exert an influence that would be felt to the end of time."¹⁵

Though the first letter of "LOOKER ON" indicated a deep concern for the Sabbath day activities of the children in the community--presumably white children--the author's second letter emphasized the Sabbath practices of adults, both white and black. "LOOKER ON" complained of the habit of some people who, when going to market, "make it their almost invariable rule to start from home on Sabbath morning." Upon remonstrating with such persons for the practice, "LOOKER ON" reported one would likely be told "that this is no violation of the Sabbath!--that they can spend the day when travelling on the road, as appropriately as at home." "LOOKER ON" continued the hypothetical response,

And as for the slaves it is far better for them to be going to market . . . than to be loitering about home;--that they are committing less sin . . . that, if not thus employed, they would be in some mischief--getting drunk or pillaging the property of their masters. . . . Therefore to keep them employed with their teams on the road . . . instead of being a sin or a grievance, is really an act of mercy to the . . . negroes. . . .¹⁶

¹⁵ *Visitor and Telegraph*, August 2, 1828.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, August 9, 1828. In 1826, the well-known British Antisabbatarian, Anne Royall, described scenes she had witnessed on the Sabbath during her travels in Virginia three years earlier. In one passage she wrote, ". . . I derived no little amusement from looking at the great number of waggons [*sic*] which (though Sunday) were going and returning from Alexandria; the road, which passed near the door, was full from morning till long after dark. These waggons [*sic*] were conveying flour to Alexandria, which affords a good market for that article." Royall also described the Sunday market in Alexandria in detail. Alexandria was a major crossroads for both travellers and goods. See [Anne N. Royall], *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners, in the United States. By a Traveller* (New York and London, 1970 [1826]), 98, 102-12.

Another practice of which "LOOKER ON" complained was "that of keeping stores and grog shops open on the Sabbath." This common practice, he observed, was responsible for "incalculable" evils:

Some merchants attend . . . to selling goods on the Sabbath, particularly whisky to negroes; as if [they] . . . were not wicked and faithless and thievish enough already. . . . The apology generally made for this practice, is that negroes have no other opportunity than the sabbath for trading and attending to their own concerns.--Poor apology. . . . There are but few men, who would not grant to their servants an hour or two in the week . . . to attend to [business] for themselves.

In conclusion, that Sabbatarian--unlike those in the Virginia Society--called for the use of civil authority to put down the aforementioned violations of the Sabbath and to enforce the laws of the Commonwealth respecting that day. Though "LOOKER ON" was distressed by the poor Sabbath practices of children and adults, and of whites and blacks individually, the Sabbath day activities of *whites with regard to blacks* was an integral part of the issue.¹⁷

Just over a year later, in late 1829, another individual penned four letters specifically for the *Visitor and Telegraph* on the subject of Sabbath violation. This writer, "Z," was

¹⁷ *Visitor and Telegraph*, August 9, 1828. In contrast with the Virginia Society and many other Sabbatarians, "LOOKER ON" here indicated his approbation of the use of the power of the state, or "coercion," with regard to Sabbath observance. It is noteworthy that Virginia, like most (if not all) states at the time, penalized laboring on the Sabbath day. In a recent essay, Thomas E. Buckley, S.J., notes that the "same [Virginia] lawmakers who passed the [1786] Statute for Religious Freedom approved another act that penalized working on the Christian sabbath." Moreover, the law had been written by none other than Thomas Jefferson, indicating, that Virginia legislators "did not read Jefferson's text [in the Statute for Religious Freedom] to require civic neutrality toward religion or toward a religiously based morality." See Buckley, "After Disestablishment: Thomas Jefferson's Wall of Separation in Antebellum Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 61 (1995), 448-49.

concerned with the impact of Sabbath profanation by *whites upon blacks*. "Z" observed, "There is one subject on which the power of the Press has never . . . been brought to bear, that deeply affects the morals and domestic peace of our Southern country. The subject . . . is the practice indulged by many of our citizens, of making purchases from the colored people on the Lord's day." Viewing the practice as "a long-standing evil in our country," "Z" set about to reform the public conscience regarding the matter. In discussing the problem, "Z" wrote that at nearly every tavern and post office along the mail stage routes in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, "you will find servants with their articles of commerce" ready to trade on the Lord's day as the mail stage passes town.¹⁸

Compounding this evil, "Z" noted the prevalence of business establishments which many blacks frequented on the Sabbath, which provided opportunities for the sale of "such articles as negroes generally deal in." "Z" warned, "There are many thousands who thus assemble around the taverns, the grog-shops, the stores, the post offices of our land!"¹⁹

In an effort to capitalize upon the Sabbath mails petition effort in Virginia, "Z" asked,

Does the transportation of the mail on the Sabbath, cause, in the same bounds, more to violate it, than this dealing with servants? Every man who would sign a memorial to stop the transportation of the mail on the Lord's day, ought to feel deeply interested in the suppression of every general violation of it. . . . It is said that the transportation of the mail prevents many of our citizens attending the sanctuary on this day. . . . and it is equally true that many of your trading blacks are kept from the church. . . .²⁰

¹⁸ *Visitor and Telegraph*, September 12, 1829 (the first two letters from "Z" were published in this issue; the third and fourth letters were published on September 26 and October 3, 1829, respectively).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, September 12, 1829.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

"Z's" reference to Sabbath mails petitions brings up several possibilities. First, because I have found only one petition from Richmond Sabbatarians--which was not produced until several months *after* "Z's" letters were published--it seems logical that "Z" may have been from a community *outside* of Richmond. But regardless of where "Z" hailed from, the use of Sabbath mails petitions in the argument may indicate that even six months after the first phase of the 1828-1830 petition campaign (from December 1828 through March 1829), public sentiment on the issue remained higher than is generally understood. In any case, "Z" perceived that all who purchased articles from blacks on the Sabbath were "guilty of calling them away for the sake of gain, from the house and worship of God."²¹

Next, "Z" recalled one of the evils arising from the absence of blacks from public worship. Instead of hearing the Bible, they hear profanity and slanders, "and treasuring up marvellous tales of spirits, witches, ghosts . . . tell [them to] your children when they go home." Thus, "Z" exhibited concern not only for the consequences *for blacks* of Sabbath-breaking *by whites*, or of Sabbath profanation *by blacks* themselves, but also for the ramifications for white children under the influence of immoral, Sabbath-breaking blacks.²²

"Z" concluded by reminding whites of their ultimate responsibility for blacks' immoralities: "Now if [slaves] are neither taught to read nor instructed in the . . . Bible during the week, and are drawn away from the sanctuary on the Sabbath . . . in what

²¹ Ibid. The second phase of the campaign, corresponding with the next session of Congress, took place from December 1829 through May 1830.

²² Ibid.

differs their condition from that of the heathen. . . . Is *this* their guilt? Did they bring it upon themselves?"²³

In the second communication, "Z" addressed the problem of Saturday night thefts by blacks in anticipation of selling their goods in the market the next day. "Z" declared, "The great number of thefts that are committed on a [Saturday] night show that they are committed in anticipation of the market on Sunday," and perceived that the blacks' "midnight depredations" were more common in those locales where Sabbath day trading with them was "most extensively practised." "Z" observed that upon being assured that whites would buy from them, blacks were "kept devising ways . . . to furnish you with the articles--and should every honest way fail, then perhaps you may see them . . . examining into the condition of the corn-house . . . chicken-house--or spring-house . . . for your money they must have, if, to procure it they should be compelled to steal." "Z" reasoned that this habit was due to the fact that stolen items could not be hidden for long without the danger of discovery, thus, "the stealing of them is deferred to the last night in the week." "Z's" conclusion followed: ". . . do not encourage them to bring any thing to you on the Sabbath to sell, for in doing so you encourage them in stealing."²⁴

²³ Ibid. Frederick L. Bronner notes that in many rural parts of the South the Sabbath was often observed with "laxity," probably in large part to the scarcity of churches and ministers. Furthermore, he cites travellers who noted that "the Negroes had the day to themselves." Also, Bronner quotes a contemporary source, noting that, to the black, the Sabbath was "a short jubilee, and, with the peculiar skill of their race, they make the most of it--condensing the occupation and jollity of seven days into one." In his own words, Bronner continues, "Yet . . . there was another side to the picture, for of that colorful multitude of holiday slaves *two-thirds, the majority women, were on their way to church*, into the galleries of which they congregated in great numbers." See Bronner's "The Observance of the Sabbath in the United States, 1800-1865" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1937), 92-93, 148 [emphasis added].

²⁴ *Visitor and Telegraph*, September 12, 1829. Note that although this was "Z's" second letter, it appeared in the same issue as did the first letter. Apparently the first letter had

The final paragraph of "Z's" second writing was a strong, if not dramatic, expression of Calvinist theology. "Z" wrote,

All men whether white or black are by nature totally depraved. But whence have you learnt that the depravity of our blacks is greater than your own? Their forefathers might have maintained the same argument with respect to those of your color when they were stolen from Africa by the whites. The truth is there was a door opened to gain money by stealing the African; and now you open a door for the African to gain your money by stealing, and he thinks not of turning his back on it.--'The carnal mind is enmity against God,' whether the skin be white or black; only prepare the way for sin, and it is ready to walk in it."²⁵

In the third letter, "Z" discussed the habit of lying as a natural accompaniment to stealing. Again, "Z" referred to the consequences of the practice of whites trading with blacks on the Sabbath: ". . . I do not say that every article that is stolen and every lie that is told, are consequences of trading with negroes on the Sabbath. But I do say that it is the core--the grand cause of the evils that have been ascribed to it."²⁶

As had "LOOKER ON" a year earlier, "Z" encouraged slave owners to provide their slaves a part of some other day of the week, perhaps half of every other Saturday, for the purpose of trading in the local market. In conclusion, "Z" warned, "You will presently hear the account which your servants will have to render to their judge and your judge-- And shall it then be heard from your servants, 'I had no other time?'" than on the Sabbath for market trading.²⁷

been intended for the previous week's newspaper.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., September 26, 1829.

²⁷ Ibid.

In the final letter, "Z" called for readers to demonstrate their "independence of character" in the setting of a good example with regard to the Sabbath. "Z" emphasized the evil consequences for the community of Sabbath trading with the blacks, warning, "Will you not pause in your course lest the judgments of God come down upon you? Shall this practice of dealing in any way with the negroes of the land on the Sabbath be put down or not?!"²⁸

Though the identities of "LOOKER ON" and "Z" are unknown, they published in the Richmond Presbyterian newspaper and appear to have been Calvinist in their theology. The most logical assumption, therefore, is that these two were probably Virginia Presbyterians. One may only surmise how representative were the opinions of "LOOKER ON" and "Z" regarding the evils of trading with blacks on the Sabbath, but their arguments certainly reached a relatively large audience. As discussed in Chapter Four, the *Visitor and Telegraph*--and its successor, the *Southern Religious Telegraph*--received the patronage of Virginia and North Carolina Presbyterian judicatories, and in 1831 the paper claimed some 3,000 subscribers. In 1830, it had over eighty agents authorized to receive subscriptions in Virginia and North Carolina, and a handful in several other states. By 1836, there were some one hundred and thirty agents in Virginia and North Carolina alone. Historian Ernest Trice Thompson notes that the *Telegraph* was "One of the most influential Southern Presbyterian papers" at the time. Moreover, the anonymous writers' description of the scale of the problem hints that trading with blacks on the Sabbath, including the related issue of Saturday night thefts, was widespread, even if some professing Christians did not share their degree of concern over the matter. Indeed, more

²⁸ Ibid., October 3, 1829.

than a few professing believers practiced the very thing of which the two writers complained so vigorously.²⁹

Of significance is the fact that "Z's" basic theme was repeated in the Virginia Society's annual report of 1834, which discussed the consequences of Sabbath day market trading: "The influence of Sunday markets upon the morals of the towns where they exist, and the neighboring country, is such as to grieve the heart of every Christian. . . . They collect a very large crowd of colored people to the annoyance of the neighborhood, and thus involve in the sin of Sabbath breaking multitudes who are but imperfectly acquainted with their moral obligations, and ought not to be tempted to violate them."³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., August 2, 9, 1828, September 12, 26, 1829, October 3, 1829. Had "LOOKER ON" and "Z" been Virginia Baptists, they probably would have sought publication in the Richmond newspaper, the *Religious Herald*. This newspaper was the unofficial organ of Virginia Baptists; its editor, William Sands, was a Sabbatarian petitioner who not infrequently published Sabbath-related articles and editorials. Examples of Virginia presbyteries' patronage of the *Visitor and Telegraph* and its successor, the *Southern Religious Telegraph*, are found in Hanover Presbytery minutes, October 20, 1828 (microfilm at UTS); Lexington Presbytery minutes, June 21, 1834 (microfilm at UTS); and, West Hanover Presbytery minutes, October 17, 1834 (microfilm at UTS). Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 1: 380-81. The Rev. Amasa Converse was the proprietor and editor of the *Southern Religious Telegraph* as he had been of the *Visitor and Telegraph*. Furthermore, Converse was a member of East Hanover Presbytery and was instrumental in that presbytery's work in promoting better Sabbath observance. "Autobiography of Reverend Amasa Converse, (1795-1872)" (typescript at PCUSA). Authorized agents, by state, are listed in the *Southern Religious Telegraph*, June 12, 1830, and July 29, 1836.

³⁰ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 11, 1834; *Religious Herald*, April 18, 1834; *Christian Sentinel*, April 18, 1834. The denominational newspapers of Virginia Presbyterians (*Telegraph*), Baptists (*Herald*), and Methodists (*Sentinel*) each published the text of the fourth annual report of the Virginia Society. Virginia Episcopalians did not yet have a weekly newspaper (the *Southern Churchman* began in 1835).

Furthermore, the same issue was addressed by an unidentified North Carolinian who wrote the *Southern Religious Telegraph* and whose letter was published in early 1831. While the author's main topic was that of teaching slaves to read the Bible rather than Sabbath observance specifically, "A NORTH CAROLINIAN" noted,

The practice of slaves running at night and on the Sabbath, is the source of, by far the larger portion of evils connected with this species of our population. A practice, now extremely prevalent, of negroes carrying their plunder to our country towns and other places, on the Sabbath, and trading to those who consider themselves very respectable gentlemen, is . . . sufficient to bring down upon us the just vengeance of Heaven.

Apparently, other Southerners shared the anxieties of "LOOKER ON" and "Z" over the practice of blacks trading in Sunday markets along with its associated evils.³¹

³¹ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, February 19, 1831. Another excellent example of Southern Sabbatarians expressing concern over Sunday market-trading by blacks--which apparently disrupted public worship by whites--was seen in the activities of the Savannah Union for Promoting the Better Observance of the Christian Sabbath. In 1828, the newly-formed society garnered signatures to a petition urging the city council to enforce the local statute which prohibited the sale of items on the Sabbath. The petitioners complained that worshippers were forced "to listen to the rude cry of the blacks offering their articles for sale, under the very windows of their churches." See *Savannah Daily Georgian*, August 2, September 11, 1828. Yet another aspect of the Sabbath market-trading issue concerned the religious instruction of blacks. The Nat Turner "rebellion" of August 1831 heightened the concern of whites regarding the religious instruction of blacks. If blacks were going to market on the Sabbath instead of remaining at home or attending public worship, obviously they could receive but little religious instruction. For example, in 1834 the East Hanover, West Hanover, and Winchester presbyteries strongly recommended religious instruction of blacks within their boundaries; see East Hanover Presbytery minutes, April 26, 1834 (microfilm at UTS); West Hanover Presbytery minutes, April 19, 1834 (microfilm at UTS); Winchester Presbytery minutes, April 25, 1834 (microfilm at UTS). See also *Southern Religious Telegraph*, August 26, 1836, which published a letter on the subject of the religious instruction of slaves. In it, the writer noted, "Much less may I believe that he [any 'Christian Master'] can . . . permit them [slaves] to labor on the Lord's day . . . since our religion so plainly teaches us that God has given one day in seven to be a day of rest, not only to man, but to the beasts."

Although thus far this chapter has focused on the distinctives which set Southern Sabbatarians apart from their Northern counterparts, this approach has in no way been intended to convey the idea that Southerners were *less* interested in the moral-religious aspects as opposed to the social-economic aspects of the Christian Sabbath. As indicated in Chapter Three regarding Kentucky, these aspects were, in any case, largely inseparable. One must not forget that Sabbatarians in both North and South were grounded in genuine and deeply-rooted convictions regarding the fundamental importance of the institution of the Sabbath. As the Virginia Society's corresponding secretary, the Rev. William F. Lee, declared, "The Sabbath lies at the foundation of Christianity, and is essential to the continuance of all our civil and social blessings. Without it, Christianity and our free institutions must be swept from the face of the earth."³²

Although the foregoing discussion might lead one to think that Virginia Sabbatarians, and Presbyterians in particular, were *primarily* concerned with the Sabbath day activities of whites with regard to blacks, such was not the case. Virginia Sabbatarians, like those elsewhere, were concerned principally with the observance of the Sabbath by whites, though in a slave society the day's observance by whites could hardly be divorced from that by blacks.

As discussed above, Presbyterians appear to have been the religious group most concerned with white-black Sabbath observance issues, as well as being those most active in the Virginia Sabbath Society. However, Virginia Presbyterians did not limit their

³² *Southern Religious Telegraph*, August 12, 1831. This deeply-rooted respect for the institution of the Christian Sabbath is discussed in Roy Zebulon Chamlee, Jr., "The Sabbath Crusade: 1810-1920" (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1968), Chapter 2.

activities on behalf of the Sabbath either to racial issues or to the confines of the Virginia Society. In some cases, they also were active regarding Sabbath-keeping, *specifically by whites*, within the courts of the Presbyterian Church: the sessions, presbyteries, and synod. For example, at least four Virginia Presbyterian churches published session-approved church manuals which addressed Sabbath observance.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Briery Presbyterian Church in the rural community of Keysville, Virginia, was one of the oldest Presbyterian churches in the South, having been organized around 1760. In 1828 a revival broke out in its vicinity which brought many new members into the church. Probably in response to this influx of over one hundred twenty new members, the session ordered the publication of *A Manual for the Members . . .*, which was printed in December 1828. Among the sixteen-question "self-examination" section was one addressing the Sabbath. Question one was of a general nature: "Do you sincerely desire to know and to do your duty, and how do you evince your sincerity?" The next question entered into specifics, and its immediate mentioning of the Sabbath suggests the importance attached to this institution. Question two read: "Do you endeavor to keep the Sabbath? Do you regularly and seasonably attend on the public worship of the congregation? Do you endeavor to BE STILL; to be attentive; frequently to lift up your heart to God during the service; to sing with the spirit, and the understanding, making melody in your heart?" Also noteworthy was the fact that the Briery congregation organized a church Sabbath society in 1828, apparently with the intent of becoming an auxiliary to the General Union which had organized in May of that year. Though I found no additional information about the society, the very fact of

organizing a Sabbath society with the intent of affiliating with the General Union set it apart from all but a few churches and communities in the entire South.³³

Three years later Briery's Sabbath-related church manual question appeared elsewhere. Shockoe Hill (Presbyterian) Church in Richmond published a church manual in 1831 and included the identical wording from the Briery manual for its second question in the self-examination section. In keeping with the Shockoe Hill church's view of the importance of Sabbath observance was the fact that the "Sabbath Society" was listed as one of the several religious institutions to which church members were encouraged to "distribute a portion, however small, if it be according as the Lord has prospered them. . . ." ³⁴

A third example involves the active and wealthy First Presbyterian Church, Richmond, which in 1833 published a church manual by order of the session. Its manual addressed Sabbath observance even more explicitly than did the one used by sister churches at Briery and Shockoe Hill. Question eleven of the manual asked, "Are you conscientious in keeping holy the sabbath day, not profaning that day yourself, nor permitting any of your family to profane it by labor, or amusement, or visiting; but seeking to make it to yourself and to all around you, a means of preparation for an eternal Sabbath?" Most likely, one or more of the six officers of the Virginia Sabbath Society who also were elders or members

³³ James W. Douglass, comp., *A Manual for the Members of the Briery Presbyterian Church, Virginia* (Richmond, Va., 1828), 3, 7, 55; *Visitor and Telegraph*, August 9, 1828. The fourth church in Virginia which published a manual which addressed Sabbath-keeping was the (Tabb Street) Presbyterian Church in Petersburg, which borrowed Briery's questions for self-examination; see *Manual for the Members of the Presbyterian Church in Petersburg, Virginia* (Petersburg, Va., 1833), 42.

³⁴ *Shockoe Hill Church Manual* (Richmond, Va., 1831), 7, 27-28.

of First Presbyterian were those responsible for the emphasis placed on Sabbath observance in their church's manual.³⁵

Although it is impossible to measure the results of the use of church manuals which addressed Sabbath observance, at the very least such manuals provided a formal means of bringing the issue of the Sabbath directly to the minds and hearts of the members of certain Presbyterian churches. In addition to signing Sabbath mails petitions, hearing sermons on Sabbath observance, reading Sabbath tracts and pamphlets, and following the activities of the Virginia Sabbath Society, church manuals provided yet another vehicle for reminding Presbyterians, if not members of other denominations, to "Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy."

In addition to church manuals, another means Virginia Presbyterians used to advance the cause of the Sabbath was by activities within their presbyteries. Although only one Virginia presbytery, East Hanover, seemed more than moderately concerned with Sabbath-keeping, one must bear in mind that a number of far more tangible moral reform issues continually confronted religious leaders. The most prominent of these was intemperance, the evils of which, unlike Sabbath-breaking, were readily apparent even to the most casual observer. Presbyteries in Virginia, and elsewhere, regularly supported such causes as temperance, Bible, tract, education, colonization, and missionary societies. When seen within the context of the competition for limited funds and energies offered by such an array of moral reform causes, the attention devoted to the relatively *intangible* issue of Sabbath observance, modest though it was in most cases, becomes significant.

³⁵ *Manual for the Members of the First Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Virginia* (Richmond, Va., 1833).

An examination of the minutes of Virginia presbyteries between 1826 and 1836 indicates that, in fact, temperance was the moral reform issue which generally received the greatest attention. For example, in April 1828 Lexington Presbytery noted, "deploring the prevalence of intemperance and desiring to encourage the opposition which is made to this vice in many parts of our country, *Resolved* that they highly *approve of Temperance Societies* and cordially recommend the institution of them to the people within the bounds of this Presbytery." Two years later, Winchester Presbytery observed, "Public feeling has been awakened on the subject of temperance; & the good effected in the suppression of intemperance is far beyond the most sanguine expectations of the friends & promoters of the cause."³⁶

In any case, at least three of the four Virginia presbyteries devoted some attention to Sabbath observance. In April 1830, located between a narrative of the progress of temperance and "Sabbath schools" and the mentioning of missionary efforts, Winchester Presbytery noted the progress of the Sabbath: "The discussion of the question about sabbath mails is doing much good by exciting enquiry into the duties, privileges, and proper employments of the Sabbath. The progress of correct feeling on this subject is very apparent and highly pleasing." Evidently, Winchester Presbytery leaders perceived a "silver lining" in the recent defeat of the Sabbath mails petition campaigns.³⁷

³⁶ Lexington Presbytery minutes, April 26, 1828 (microfilm at UTS); Winchester Presbytery minutes, April 19, 1830 (microfilm at UTS). Similar examples are found throughout the minutes of the Virginia (and Kentucky) presbyteries.

³⁷ Note that Hanover Presbytery divided into East Hanover and West Hanover in 1829. Although not all Virginia churches were under the care of presbyteries within Virginia--for example, Baltimore (Maryland) Presbytery included some churches located in Virginia--I have chosen to consider only those presbyteries all or nearly all of whose churches were located within Virginia (East Hanover, West Hanover, Lexington, and Winchester). Also, note that the term "Sabbath schools" is basically unconnected to the issue of Sabbath

The other Virginia presbytery to address the Sabbath cause in a limited sense was Lexington Presbytery. In October 1834, the presbytery adopted a resolution regarding Sabbath observance, which read,

Resolved that this Presby . . . fearful . . . that due regard is not paid to the Sanctification of the Lord's day; do earnestly desire that . . . attention be paid to this subject by all our Ministers, Sessions & church members: and believing that the driving of teams to or from market, running of boats, the driving of cattle, and travelling on the Sabbath day, are not consistent with the holy observance of that day, recommend that measures be adopted to bring those practices to a speedy close, that they may cease to be . . . heard of among . . . our churches.³⁸

Lexington Presbytery complained of the same basic violations of the Sabbath as had confronted Winchester Presbytery several years earlier but appeared not to have been any more successful than the latter in dealing with the problem. The evidence indicates that the practices of "driving" teams and cattle, "running" boats, and traveling on the Sabbath were so commonplace even among church members and leaders and had been going on uncorrected for so long that many ministers and elders felt there was little that they could do other than periodically to bring the issue before the churches and members under their care. For example, in 1836 Lexington Presbytery again addressed the issue, adopting unanimously the Sabbath resolutions recently-passed by the general assembly. Perhaps it was telling that the Lexington presbyters waited until the very end of their meeting to adopt the resolutions, which included the traditional but unfulfilled call for the "firm and efficient discipline to all known violations of the Sab. on the part of her members."

observance, although the schools were, in fact, held on the Sunday. Winchester Presbytery minutes, April 19, 1830 (microfilm at UTS).

³⁸ Lexington Presbytery minutes, October 18, 1834 (microfilm at UTS).

Immediately following the adoption of the Sabbath resolutions was the resolution stating the location and time for the next meeting of presbytery, some eight months later. Thus, it appears that in some cases the calls for Sabbath observance and the discipline of the church for Sabbath-breaking were a matter of *form over substance*--they were expected to be stated but were not taken too seriously.³⁹

Far more serious, however, was East Hanover Presbytery, which provided the foremost example of a Virginia Presbyterian court active on behalf of the Sabbath. Significantly, the Rev. Amasa Converse, editor and proprietor of the *Southern Religious Telegraph*, was a member of this presbytery. Converse consistently promoted the cause of the Sabbath in the pages of his weekly newspaper, and East Hanover's minutes indicate that he was one of the leading Sabbatarian reformers within the bounds of that presbytery.⁴⁰

For example, on October 21, 1831, Converse was one of two members of presbytery chosen "to propose resolutions on the sanctification of the Lord's day." Undoubtedly, the appointment was neither unexpected nor undesired, for the very next day the committee

³⁹ For the earlier case referred to, see Winchester Presbytery minutes, October 2, 1826, October 16, 1828, April 24, 1829 (microfilm at UTS). Lexington Presbytery minutes, August 29, 1836 (microfilm at UTS).

⁴⁰ Converse was ordained as an evangelist under the care of Hanover Presbytery in 1826; see Hanover Presbytery minutes, May 5, 1826 (microfilm at UTS). He remained in Hanover until the division into East and West Hanover presbyteries in 1829, at which point he joined East Hanover; see East Hanover Presbytery minutes, December 10, 1829 (microfilm at UTS). Note that Converse's coverage of the Sabbath in the *Southern Religious Telegraph* was such that this newspaper represents by far the best source for primary material relating to the Sabbath in Virginia in the time period with which this study is concerned.

reported its recommendations. This was in contrast to the usual practice of appointing committees which would report at the next presbytery meeting several months later.⁴¹

Following consideration and amendment of the proposal by presbytery, its members adopted a five-part resolution. The first section deplored "the frequent violation of the . . . Lord's day by the unnecessary labours & wordly conversation" of professing Christians, especially by those whose social standing may "give to their example a great weight of authority." The second section protested against the practices of traveling on the Sabbath "in public conveyances such as stages & steamboats, & by so doing, sanctioning & encouraging . . . the continuance of these public conveyances on that hallowed day," by which many were deprived of the opportunity of public worship. Third, presbytery expressed its view that instances in which professing Christians travelled to or from "our Towns" in "the prosecution of their secular business" constituted "one of the greatest obstacles to maintaining sound principles & correct practice" regarding the Sabbath. Fourth, presbytery recommended that its churches formally recognize "the principle & pledge adopted by the General Union . . . as being according to the word of God & obligatory on them as Christians." The final resolution appointed Converse and two others as a committee "to prepare & publish an address to the Churches on this subject."⁴²

Several points from the East Hanover resolutions are noteworthy. First, as was generally the case with religious bodies' expressions of concern over Sabbath observance, the emphasis was not upon Sabbath-breaking by the general populace, but by (white) church members themselves, professing Christians. As was often noted by religious

⁴¹ East Hanover Presbytery minutes, October 21, 22, 1831 (microfilm at UTS).

⁴² Ibid.

leaders, professing believers must first improve their own Sabbath-day practices--only then could they expect others to take their solemn proclamations seriously.

Second, the resolution expressed concern over the setting of poor examples by those whose "standing in society" gave their examples "a great weight of authority." This, too, was consistent with the general patterns of moral reformism and specifically so with regard to the Sabbath mails petition campaigns, which had expressed fears over the example being set by the federal government and her representatives, the locally respected postmasters. Needless to say, this was another aspect of Sabbath observance related strictly to whites.

While Virginia presbyteries in general, and East Hanover Presbytery in particular, were involved on behalf of the Sabbath, the highest court within the Presbyterian Church in Virginia--the synod--was by no means inactive. First, the Synod of Virginia, like its counterpart in Kentucky, followed the recommendation of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in declaring the second Thursday in November 1830 a day of fasting and prayer with regard to the widespread profanation of the Sabbath.⁴³

A year later, the Virginia synod amended and adopted a report of a synod-appointed committee pertaining to Sabbath observance. The report stated that the committee "are deeply sensible of the wide spread profanation of the sacred day which prevails in our land; not only amongst those who make no profession of the fear of God, but also to a lamentable degree amongst the members of our Churches. . . ." Following this opening

⁴³ Synod of Virginia minutes, October 29, 1830 (microfilm at UTS). Though the Virginia synod failed to state specifically the reason for the day of fasting and prayer, most likely this was simply an oversight in the taking of the minutes. The Synod of Kentucky, however, stated the reason for the day of fasting. See Synod of Kentucky minutes, October 20, 1830 (typescript at PCUSA).

expression, the committee proceeded to the following resolutions. The five resolutions, which were quoted in the 1832 annual report of the Virginia Society, began, "... it is solemnly recommended to all our ministers to impress upon their hearers by frequent and zealous preaching and admonition, the great duty of Sanctifying the Sabbath day."⁴⁴

The next two resolutions reiterated the responsibilities of church sessions and church members, especially heads of families: "That Church Sessions advance in their vigilance . . . in exercising the wholesome discipline of the church for suppressing all profanations of the Sab. day," and, "That Synod most solemnly admonish all church members . . . and especially heads of families, to consider afresh this all important subject, and to exert their

⁴⁴ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 13, 1832; Synod of Virginia minutes, October 31, 1831 (microfilm at UTS). It is difficult to determine the degree to which ministers fulfilled the request to preach on the subject of Sabbath observance. Though I have uncovered evidence that some sermons on Sabbath observance were preached in the South during the 1820s and 1830s, relatively few such sermons seem to have been published. This is in contrast to the New England and Middle Atlantic regions, in which a significantly larger number of sermons on Sabbath observance were published. Based upon the Scripture texts used, two Virginia Presbyterians who appear to have preached sermons at least touching upon Sabbath observance were the Reverends Francis McFarland and James Morrison. See Francis McFarland Papers, "Hebrews" sermon folder (PCUSA); James Morrison Papers, sermon book (VSLA). Sermons on Sabbath observance *delivered (or written) and published* in the South by Southerners (or men living in the South) during the period encompassed by this study include the following: Charles Coffin, "A Sermon," *Calvinistic Magazine* 4 (1830), 76-87; and, Charles Coffin, "On the Sabbath: Sermon II," *Calvinistic Magazine* 4 (1830), 203-15; J.[Joseph] P. Cunningham, *Man's Interest in the Sabbath* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1832). Also, in approximately 1828, Joseph Henry Lumpkin, Esquire, of Lexington, Georgia, published a pamphlet on Sabbath observance entitled, *An Address to the religious community of Georgia, in six essays*; see *Third Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath . . .* (N.p., 1831), 21-22. The *Western Luminary*, May 11, 1831, referred to a recent sermon delivered in Port Gibson, Mississippi, by the Rev. Jeremiah Chamberlain, entitled, "On the Obligation, Perpetuity, and Importance, of the Sabbath." The *Luminary* expected that the sermon was to be published, but if it was, it appears to be not extant. From 1822 to 1826, Chamberlain served as the president of the Presbyterians' Centre College in Danville, Kentucky.

utmost wisdom and influence to stop the torrent of the profanation, and promote the sanctification of the Lord's day."⁴⁵

Synod's fourth Sabbath resolution incorporated a practice of the temperance movement, the use of "abstinence" pledges. Furthermore, its wording was borrowed nearly verbatim from the proposed pledge of a Virginia Society circular issued in 1831, again indicating the influence of Presbyterians in the Virginia Society. The resolution stated,

That it be recommended to the congregations under our care to enter into the following agreement, viz. Believing that all worldly business and travelling on the Christian Sabbath except for purposes of piety, necessity or mercy, and all worldly visiting or amusements on that day, are contrary to the Divine will, and injurious to the social, civil and religious interests of men; we agree that we will abstain from all such violations of the Sabbath, and that we will use our influence to persuade our own families and others to do the same.

Noteworthy, perhaps, is the fact that although the proposed pledge required the abstention of "worldly business and travelling" and the use of one's "influence" regarding Sabbath observance, the pledge stopped short of calling for the giving of preference (i.e., a boycott) to those businesses which kept the Sabbath over those that did not. As discussed earlier, such a pledge would have provided opponents with the opportunity to charge "coercion" on the part of Sabbatarians. The final resolution charged pastors with reading the foregoing preamble and resolutions in their churches.⁴⁶

The foregoing discussion has addressed a number of statements made by individuals, the Virginia Society, and the courts of Virginia Presbyterians regarding the promotion of

⁴⁵ Synod of Virginia minutes, October 31, 1831 (microfilm at UTS).

⁴⁶ Ibid.; *Southern Religious Telegraph*, June 15, 1832.

Sabbath observance. The making of reports and the adopting of resolutions were important means of Sabbath promotion. This was the logical outcome of the early decision of the Virginia Society, written into their constitution, to rely solely upon moral suasion rather than upon other means for promoting the Sabbath. Most of these efforts represented the attempt, at least in part, to *educate* the public in general, and the religious community in particular, on the Sabbath and its proper observance: what Richard John terms an early example of "consciousness-raising."⁴⁷

However, Virginia Sabbatarians also were active in other ways. Although closely related to the reports and resolutions mentioned above, the printing and distribution of pamphlets, tracts, and other Sabbath-related documents represented a significant Sabbatarian activity. For example, in 1834 the annual report of the Virginia Society noted that the "attention of the Board during the last year, has been directed chiefly to the circulation of tracts among the people, and to obtaining information as to the present state of public feeling and practice in relation to the Sabbath." During the previous year, the society had printed and distributed two thousand copies of a pamphlet intended to refute the most common excuses offered for profaning the Lord's day. Soon afterward, the society printed and distributed a second edition of an equal number of copies. Additionally, two thousand copies of the third annual report of the Virginia Society were printed and circulated, bringing the total number of documents distributed for the year to six thousand.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 538; *Religious Herald*, April 15, 1831.

⁴⁸ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 11, 1834. Another example of the Virginia Society's efforts to promote the Sabbath by means of printed matter was the printing of five thousand copies of an address on the federal postal law which required the laboring of thousands of postal workers on the Sabbath. See *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 13, 1832.

Another society activity involved the reporting of Sabbath practices in various parts of the state and accounts of the progress made in the observance of the day. For example, in 1834 a vice-president in the Shenandoah Valley reported, "In this region there is doubtless . . . a great deal of profanation of the Sabbath day; by idle visiting and secular conversation; by driving wagons and live stock to market. . . ." On a positive note, however, he observed that "amongst our Presbyterian population, I think there is a very visible improvement in this respect of late years, and that the improvement is still advancing. We have more preaching and more reading than formerly on the importance of the Sabbath day. . . ." Similarly, a vice-president located in the Tidewater area opined that "during the last six or eight years, there has been in this place a very obvious improvement in the observance of the Sabbath. . . . by the mass of society a decent respect is now shown to that holy day . . ." and its worship services. A third vice-president, a resident of one of Virginia's southern counties, noted, "I am of opinion that open violations of the Sabbath, though lamentably frequent, are yet *not so often* to be observed in this part of the country, by any means, as formerly. I know of no stores in this county, kept under lawful licenses, which are open on Sundays." He continued, ". . . the families, with which I am acquainted, have but slight dinners and very little cooking now on the Sabbath; so that the servants may be as much disengaged on that day as possible. Hunting, fishing, &c. are not practiced on Sunday by *any* persons . . . certainly by none who would be thought respectable."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Ibid., April 11, 1834. Most likely, the unnamed vice-president in the Shenandoah Valley was either Dr. Lewis Marshall, president of Washington College in Lexington, or the Rev. Conrad Speece, long-time Presbyterian pastor in Augusta County.

In addition to printing and circulating Sabbath-related publications and reporting on Sabbath practices throughout the state--and also in Scotland, England, and elsewhere--Virginia Sabbatarians encouraged ministers to preach on the subject of the Sabbath. Once again, Presbyterians were in the forefront. In 1833, the Virginia Society reported that many Presbyterian ministers had preached on the subject, in compliance with the synod's request. A year earlier, the society's managers had planned to have some minister deliver an address in Richmond quarterly "on the nature and importance of the Sabbath." For some reason, however, by early 1832 this plan had been "but partially carried into execution." Nevertheless, in 1833 the society observed that through its efforts "many thousands have had the claims of the Sabbath presented to them by means of the press, and from the sacred desk."⁵⁰

But what were the results of these efforts at moral suasion? It is extremely difficult to render an assessment, in part due to the intangible nature of Sabbath observance. Ultimately, only an individual's conscience could judge whether or not one "had kept" the Sabbath. Furthermore, Sabbath observance was rarely addressed except by those who were partial regarding the issue. Nevertheless, pieces of evidence exist which, taken together, provide a basis for cautiously drawn conclusions.

As noted above, the Virginia Society and Presbyterians addressed the results of efforts to promote better Sabbath observance in the state. Of course, such evidence must be used carefully since the Virginia Society was no impartial observer. But the society seems to have taken a realistic approach to its evaluations, as shown by a statement in 1834. Following the extracts of the reports of three of the society's vice-presidents addressing Sabbath practices in their locales, the board of managers noted the following: "While the

⁵⁰ Ibid., April 12, 1833, April 13, 1832.

Board have reason to believe that the description here given of the observance of the Sabbath, is too favorable to apply to many other counties, they have no doubt that the improvement in that respect extends throughout the State." Furthermore, the society acknowledged that while Sabbath violations continued to abound in many locales, nevertheless, in many individuals, families, and churches "a deeper interest" in the sanctification of the day was observed. For example, in 1832 the managers reported having heard "of the formation of some few [Sabbath] societies" in Virginia, but none had been officially reported. Nor do they seem to have been reported later. And in 1833, East Hanover Presbytery expressed its conviction that "the sanctity of this day is being acknowledged & felt more deeply by our churches every year."⁵¹

Virginia Sabbatarians, particularly Presbyterians, and the Virginia Society seem to have enjoyed modest successes during their approximately six years of existence. Yet they, like Miss Mary Jones in "Sunday Occupations," ultimately failed to stem the "torrent" of Sabbath profanation then engulfing their state in the early Jacksonian period. Their concern for the Sabbath indicates that Southern Sabbatarians, at least Virginia Presbyterians, held some views distinct from their more active and better-organized Northern brethren--especially those in the vicinity of Rochester and New York City. The evidence presented herein suggests that Southerners were unwilling to be perceived as advocating coercion, economic or political, regarding Sabbath-keeping; and they were concerned not only with the Sabbath day activities of whites, but also with Sabbath observance of whites with regard to blacks, as well as with the activities of blacks

⁵¹ Ibid., April 11, 1834, April 12, 1833, April 13, 1832; East Hanover Presbytery minutes, April 27, 1833 (microfilm at UTS).

themselves, and with the consequences of blacks' Sabbath profanation upon the white community.⁵²

A final issue which, to some degree, paralleled the Sabbath illustrated the web of relationships existing between moral-religious and social-economic, or civil-temporal, concerns. From about 1831 on, disagreements at the annual general assemblies between "Old School" Presbyterians--who held strictly to the confessional standards of the church and opposed any official Presbyterian involvement in interdenominational missionary societies--and "New School" Presbyterians--who leaned the other way--threatened to divide the church. In 1837-38, schism finally took place, which resulted in a division between churches generally along sectional lines, with the vast majority of Old Schoolers in the South, and New School churches primarily in the North. While the details of the schism are beyond the scope of this work, the principle of "immediate abolition" advocated by some Northerners was a part of the controversy--probably the third most important issue, following those of doctrinal purity and the control of missionaries--and represented, to Old Schoolers, *both* a violation of the church's confessional standards regarding the spirituality of the church and, of course, a threat to the South's "peculiar institution."⁵³

⁵² Ibid., April 13, 1832.

⁵³ At least three Kentucky presbyteries were adamantly opposed to their denomination's support of independent missionary societies (i.e., the American Home Missionary Society), which the presbyteries feared could be used to alter the very character of their church; see Muhlenburg Presbytery minutes, October 1, 1831 (microfilm at PCUSA); Transylvania Presbytery minutes, October 15, 1831 (typescript at PCUSA); West Lexington Presbytery minutes, April 6, 1831 (PCUSA). For discussion of the events leading to the Old School-New School division in 1837-38, see George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven and London, 1970), Chapter 3; Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (Phillipsburg,

In that context, the unanimity of Virginia presbyteries indicated that moral-religious and social-economic concerns went hand-in-hand--as was indicated by the example of Richard M. Johnson in Kentucky (see Chapter 3 above). By 1835-36, Virginia presbyteries were expressing great anxiety regarding the purity and unity of the Presbyterian Church, at least three of them in April 1835 calling for the prayers of their members for the upcoming general assembly. As a schism appeared on the horizon, all four presbyteries enacted resolutions similar to East Hanover's which condemned the "principles, plans, and efforts of the abolitionists, as impolitic, unscriptural & cruel." West Hanover Presbytery took the strongest measure, in October 1836 refusing to send commissioners to the next general assembly until that body shall "disclaim all right & authority to interfere with the relation between Master & Slave." Although such a view may appear to have been explained solely by the *social-economic* self-interests of Southerners, the strict Calvinist principle of the spirituality of the church forbade attempts to change social institutions in any way other than by the indirect means of the spreading influence of the gospel--therefore, a *moral-religious* concern. Although *both* Old and New Schoolers held the Sabbath in equally high regard, the coinciding of moral-religious and social-economic concerns with regard to abolitionism in the mid-1830s provides a useful parallel to the coinciding of the same sets of concerns respecting the Sabbath in the same era. Thus, although Virginia Sabbatarians in the early Jacksonian era viewed Sabbath observance primarily as a moral-religious issue--especially its observance by whites--Sabbath-keeping was also a social-economic issue--especially its observance by blacks.⁵⁴

N.J., 1962), 31-35; Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, vol. 1, Chapters 24 and 25.

⁵⁴ East Hanover Presbytery minutes, April 18, October 23, 1835 (microfilm at UTS); Lexington Presbytery minutes, April 25, October 17, 1835 (microfilm at UTS); West

Hanover Presbytery minutes, April 18, October 29, 1836 (microfilm at UTS); Winchester Presbytery minutes, April 25, October 16, 1835 (microfilm at UTS). In Kentucky, the influential West Lexington Presbytery passed similar resolutions in late 1836, for example, stating, "That the General Assembly . . . 'have no right to assume or exercise jurisdiction in regard to the existence of slavery.'" See *Southern Religious Telegraph*, November 4, 1836. To some degree, the evidence presented herein seems to support the now out-of-fashion "social control" thesis of moral reformism. Yet, one fundamental problem with that thesis was that it ignored or failed to take seriously the genuine moral-religious concerns of reformers. The evidence suggests that among Upper South Sabbatarians, *social control* and *genuine moral-religious concerns* were both cut from the same bolt of cloth. For a recent description of the "social control" thesis, see John W. Quist, "Slaveholding Operatives of the Benevolent Empire: Bible, Tract, and Sunday School Societies in Antebellum Tuscaloosa County, Alabama," *Journal of Southern History* 62 (1996), 513. Other problems with the "social control" thesis are addressed in Lawrence Frederick Kohl, "The Concept of Social Control and the History of Jacksonian America," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (1985): 21-34.

Chapter 6

The Gentlemen Sabbatarians

This study has argued that the Sabbath movement in the Upper South during the early Jacksonian era witnessed the convergence of two sets of priorities, one, moral-religious, and the other, social-economic. A Fayetteville, North Carolina, judge expressed the view of many in the plainest language when he wrote, "According to my experience, the observance or non-observance of the Sabbath, is a pretty sure index of the state of morals and religion in any community." Indicating the coinciding of moral-religious ("irreligion") and social-economic ("fraud") concerns, he continued, "When Sabbaths are desecrated, irreligion, fraud, and all manner of abominations characterize the people." Calvinists emphasized Sabbath observance as a fundamental test of one's--and of the community's--faithfulness in upholding the moral obligations of God's covenant with his people. Moreover, they and a number of evangelicals in the region--and the nation--valued the Sabbath as the institution, above all others, upon which genuine religion--the gospel's progress--depended; and upon which expectations for the coming millennium were grounded. Upper South Presbyterians were, by far, the denomination most closely associated with such convictions.¹

On the other hand, a number of men who made no profession of Christian faith joined evangelicals in emphasizing the Sabbath as essential to maintaining peaceful, prosperous,

¹ *Third Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* . . . (New York, 1831), 20-21. As discussed above in Chapter 3, Kentucky Campbellites represented a significant exception to evangelical support for the Calvinist Sabbath. See also Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London, 1989); Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities*, 2d ed. (New York and Oxford, 1984), 42-45.

and law-abiding communities. Civil magistrates (especially justices of the peace), merchants, bank directors, and militia officers--certainly, a number of individuals crossed the boundaries of those categories--were those most clearly identified with the social-economic or civil-temporal priority. Such men had at least one thing in common, even those who claimed not a shred of Calvinist or evangelical influence: they all held occupations in which the erosion of social values, amicable community relations, and respect for law and order was readily apparent, if not frightening. Magistrates dealt regularly with the consequences of such erosion in the county courts, while merchants and bank directors sought assurances that their goods, loans, and capital were secure.

Of course, the fact that particular individuals seemed to "fit" into both the moral-religious and the social-economic categories indicates the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of drawing sharp lines between them. In Kentucky, Sabbath petitioners included such men as Asher W. Graham, a lawyer and judge, a (former) Bowling Green town trustee, and (later a) Presbyterian elder; Charles Baird, a stockholder in the Frankfort and Shelbyville Turnpike Company, Shelby County justice of the peace, and a Presbyterian elder; Andrew Cunningham, a Washington County justice and a Presbyterian elder; and, John B. Smith, a Washington justice and a Roman Catholic. Likewise in Virginia, memorialists included James Vass, a merchant, a director of the Fredericksburg branch of the Bank of Virginia, and a Presbyterian (whose wife was instrumental in organizing the local female orphan asylum); Samuel Reeve, a director of the Richmond branch of the Farmers Bank of Virginia, and a Presbyterian elder; Jesse Snead, a Tuckahoe Valley coalpit proprietor, Henrico County justice, and (later a) Baptist messenger; and, James Madison, a Farmville tobacco manufacturer, Prince Edward County justice, Hampden-Sydney College trustee, and a Presbyterian elder. Such men, among many identified in

this study, highlight the danger of attributing activity on behalf of the Sabbath to a single motivation.²

Not only is it difficult, if not impossible, in some cases to distinguish between the two sets of priorities underlying the activities of Sabbatarians, but also at least a few individuals seem to have experienced difficulty in deciding whether to emphasize moral-religious *or* social-economic concerns. Perhaps fittingly, it was the South's leading Presbyterian divine, the Rev. John Holt Rice, whose case best indicated that dilemma. In his 1828 letter to Gen. John Hartwell Cocke respecting measures to promote the observance of the Sabbath in Virginia, Rice declared,

It would I apprehend be entirely in vain to address religious considerations to most of our countrymen; for they feel not the force of religious obligation. But if we could convince them that it is a matter of economy to honour the day of rest appointed by Heaven, it might in these times have some weight with them.

In other words, Rice was advocating that Sabbatarians emphasize the social-economic priority ("it is a matter of economy"), because of his perception of the futility of emphasizing moral-religious concerns ("they feel not the force of religious obligation").

² For Graham, see Chapter 3 above; and, H. Levin, ed., *The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky* (Chicago, n.d.), 86-87. For Baird, see Chapter 3 above; and, Frankfort and Shelbyville Turnpike Company records, 1818-1873 (ms. and microfilm at KHS). For Cunningham and Smith, see Chapter 3 above. For Vass, Reeve, Snead, and Madison, see Chapter 4 above. Attorneys and, in some cases, militia officers and postmasters, also supported the traditional Sabbath out of proportion to their numbers. Like justices, merchants, and bank directors, their occupations--particularly in the absence of known church affiliation--suggest their support to have been grounded in social-economic, rather than moral-religious, concerns.

Because both priorities were valid, Rice chose to emphasize the one most likely to meet with a favorable reception.³

Yet two years later when he addressed the New York meeting of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath, Rice was reported as having said that "one reason why no more had been accomplished in effecting an observance of the Sabbath is, that there has not been enough of religion brought into the subject. He hoped the Society would look more and more to God for help." However, Rice's apparent shift in emphasis is extremely difficult to verify. In his letter to Cocke, Rice was referring specifically to Virginia society at large--primarily those not professing Christian faith--whereas in his address before the General Union, he may have been referring to the meager efforts on the Sabbath's behalf by that body in particular--nearly all of whom were professing Christians and thus, receptive to "more religion" being brought into the subject.⁴

Aside from Rice's apparent dilemma, other Sabbatarians sometimes indicated a perceived misplaced emphasis in the arguments used to promote Sabbath observance. For example, in response to a General Union circular in 1831, the Rev. Ebenezer Porter of Andover, Massachusetts, recommended,

There should be a more general, continuous, systematic effort on the part of ministers, to *instruct* their hearers as to the perpetuity and moral obligation of the fourth commandment. Here we stand on firm and high ground, which we . . . must maintain, or nothing is done. The *civil* bearings of the subject

³ John Holt Rice to John Hartwell Cocke, July 1, 1828, Misc. Box 3, John Holt Rice Faculty Writings (photocopy at UTS).

⁴ *Second Annual Report of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath . . .* (New York, 1830), 14.

are all important too, but secondary.

Thus, Porter viewed moral-religious concerns regarding the Sabbath as primary, and the social-economic or civil-temporal aspects of secondary importance. Presumably, such an observation would not have been necessary, unless some in the Sabbath movement had chosen to emphasize the latter set of concerns.⁵

In fact, the Virginia Society for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath was one Upper South organization which--at least by 1835--chose to emphasize the social-economic or civil-temporal concerns, as opposed to moral-religious ones. Although the Virginia Society published a number of tracts and pamphlets on the subject of Sabbath observance, only two are now extant. One is an 1835 pamphlet, *Lecture on the Temporal Benefits of the Sabbath*. . . . This pamphlet was a revision of an address by the Rev. Horace Hooker, the editor of the *Connecticut Observer* several years earlier when he had authored the work.⁶

In the address, Hooker began by noting that "it would delight the speaker to dwell on the influences of the Sabbath in preparing men for heaven" were the occasion proper for him to do so. Classifying his "TEMPORAL BENEFITS" as "either Physical, Intellectual, or Civil," Hooker first addressed the physical benefits of "rest from labor." Like a number of other Sabbatarians, Hooker recalled the abolition of the Christian Sabbath in favor of the tenth-day rest, or decade, in revolutionary France: "I find it stated that 'It was ascertained in France, by experiment, that the labor of nine days, instead of six, increased the exhaustion of man, and diminished the aggregate amount of labor.'" Hooker went on

⁵ *Third Annual Report of the General Union*, 15.

⁶ Horace Hooker, *Lecture on the Temporal Benefits of the Sabbath* . . . , rev. ed. (Richmond, Va., 1835).

to argue the propriety of terming "the law of the Sabbath" as "*a law of his physical nature*," essential to man's health.⁷

Next, Hooker dealt with the intellectual benefits of the Sabbath. "The mind," Hooker stated, "from its connexion [*sic*] with the body, needs its periods of relaxation." Such periods the Sabbath provides when one rests the mind from worldly concerns. Hooker viewed the Sabbath as particularly important in his day, for

The present is an age of excitement, and our own country seems to be the very fountain-head of it. . . . Wealth with us stands in the place of rank, and birth, and merit. . . . Hence the intensity of desire manifested in its acquisition. Political parties are rife, and the state of our civil affairs often calls forth the deepest anxiety of the heart. Canals, and rail-roads, and steam-boats are . . . stimulating every power of body and mind to the highest pitch. Where, then, is the sedative influence of the Sabbath more needed than in the United States? Where its holy calm more desirable than with us?⁸

Finally, Hooker addressed the civil benefits of Sabbath observance at greater length than either the physical or intellectual benefits. In doing so, however, he by no means neglected moral-religious issues. Hooker observed, "Whether we view the Sabbath as instituted by God, or as adopted by man, important duties have been ingrafted into this day of rest. It is the foundation on which is erected moral machinery of immense power," in support of which he mentioned the worship of God, "religious reading and meditation."

⁷ Ibid., 4, 6, 9. For three of the many examples of Sabbatarians recalling the abolition of the Christian Sabbath in France in the 1790s, see James Blythe, *A Portrait of the Times; Being a Sermon . . . Synod of Kentucky . . . Sept. 7th, 1814* (Lexington, Ky., 1814), 24; *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 11, 1834; *Southern Churchman*, April 15, 1836.

⁸ Hooker, *Lecture on the Temporal Benefits*, 11, 14. For a similar description, see Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics*, rev. ed. (Urbana and Chicago, 1985), 122-48, 324-27.

Like many Sabbatarians--whether Calvinists, magistrates, merchants, or bankers--Hooker viewed the civil benefits of the Sabbath as virtually inseparable from the worship of God and religious instruction, which were the aspects of Sabbath observance most closely connected with moral-religious concerns. Perceived civil benefits were both positive and negative in nature. In the words of America's most famous physician of the early national period, Dr. Benjamin Rush, Sabbath schools offered the advantages of religious knowledge and culture. At the same time, Sabbath observance tended to prevent the acquiring of "habits of idleness and a love of pleasure, which extend their influence to every day of the week." Such habits, it was naturally assumed, were the prerequisite to crime. Thus, despite Hooker's title for the address, ". . . *Temporal Benefits of the Sabbath* . . .," the substance of the address included not only strictly social-economic or civil-temporal issues but incorporated moral-religious concerns as well.⁹

However difficult it was to distinguish between moral-religious and social-economic concerns, the evidence indicates that by 1835 the Virginia Society--if not Sabbatarians nationwide--had adopted the term "temporal" for identifying the focus of their concern. Probably the term was deemed more palatable, more acceptable, to an audience considered, as it was by Rice, unreceptive to "the force of religious obligation." But whatever the rationale, it seems no accident that at the annual meeting of the Virginia Society in 1836--apparently the last year in which the society was active--the society adopted a resolution, "That the temporal benefits of the Sabbath are such as to commend it to the observance of all men." Moreover, the remarks of the Rev. C.W. Andrews immediately following the introduction of the resolution indicated the rationale behind it. The Episcopalian minister acknowledged, "We have brought forward this resolution . . .

⁹ Hooker, *Lecture on the Temporal Benefits*, 15-17.

not as presenting the strongest view of the subject, or the view most agreeable to our feelings, but in obedience to the request of the Committee of Arrangement." Apparently, Andrews and others would have preferred an argument more "religious" in nature, presenting the Sabbath as a divine commandment rather than simply of social-economic or civil-temporal benefit to man--but the perceived need for socially acceptable arguments dictated otherwise.¹⁰

Moreover, it is noteworthy that Andrews' four aspects of "temporal benefits" stemming from Sabbath observance--"those which pertain to the *body*, the *intellect*, the *estate*, and the *social condition* of man"--were nearly synonymous with Hooker's "Physical, Intellectual, or Civil" benefits. Andrews addressed the first two aspects, the most basic and easiest to relate, in terms similar to Hooker's. Andrews' third aspect, "the management of [one's] estate," was essentially an *economic* argument in favor of Sabbath observance. He recalled a favorite Sabbatarian anecdote: "It was stated by an intelligent gentleman of New York, that of all the merchants he had known in that city for twenty-five years who kept their counting rooms open on Sunday, every one [went] broke." The Christian, according to Andrews, perceived the hand of providence in such ruin. But contrariwise, one not professing Christian faith

has accounted for it upon rational principles, by supposing that the mind, which is forever running upon a favorite project, without days of rest, and opportunities to rectify the judgment, will be almost certain to attach an unwarrantable importance to the cherished scheme. By the protracted and exclusive prosecution of one thing, men loose [*sic*] the power of just com-

¹⁰ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 8, 1836; *Southern Churchman*, April 15, 1836. The two newspapers reported slightly different wordings of the resolution, but the essence was the same. I have elected to use the wording from the *Southern Churchman*, which published the longer of the two articles.

parison; hence they fall into extravagant calculations and hazardous adventures.

Thus, Andrews concluded that whether one viewed such ruin through Christian or rationalist lenses, the argument was sustained.¹¹

Andrews' fourth and final aspect of the "temporal" benefits of Sabbath observance was the "social condition." This referred to family relationships in particular, noting that by the observance of a day of rest, ". . . avocations of families are suspended, and they are brought together in the contemplation of subjects calculated . . . to elevate the standard of domestic duty and unite their best affections." By comparison, Hooker had referred to the Sabbath as "'A FAMILY COMMANDMENT,'" one exerting "a most favorable influence on *domestic comfort and happiness*."¹²

Quite clearly, the Virginia Episcopalian's four temporal benefits accruing from Sabbath observance emphasized social-economic priorities. Yet, Andrews went on to discuss moral-religious concerns as well. Recalling that the institution of the Sabbath, like that of marriage, was instituted in the garden prior to man's fall, the minister declared, "But as if this were insufficient, it comes to us again, encircled with all the glory which attended the declaration of the moral law. Its language is *remember*--in a style of unusual solemnity . . . which annihilates every cavil and objection--*Remember* the Sabbath day to keep it holy."¹³

Although the Virginia Society certainly addressed *both* sets of priorities--moral-religious and social-economic--by 1835 and 1836, the organization evidently perceived it

¹¹ *Southern Churchman*, April 15, 1836.

¹² *Ibid.*; Hooker, *Lecture on the Temporal Benefits*, 21.

¹³ *Southern Churchman*, April 15, 1836.

as advantageous to couch its arguments in non-religious or "temporal" terms. Moreover, the society devoted most of its print to social-economic or civil-temporal concerns. That circumstance by no means equated to a lessening of interest in moral-religious priorities. At least three issues--not previously addressed in this study--illustrated the depth of moral-religious concern regarding the Sabbath. Those were, first, the perceived role of the Sabbath in the conversion of the "heathen"; second, the unanimity among denominations respecting the Sabbath in the midst of intense denominational rivalries; and, third, the cooperation of Sabbatarians with other moral reformers, and their participation in other benevolences and reforms.

The first of these concerned the considerable print which Jacksonian religious periodicals devoted to the efforts of missionaries to convert the heathen, deemed those who had, for the most part, never been exposed to the influence of the gospel. Of course, the intensity of evangelicals' desire to hasten the expected millennium was integral to concern for the heathen around the world and was a mark of the Second Great Awakening. But an oft-neglected aspect of concern had to do with the Sabbath. Many, if not most, evangelicals and evangelical missionaries perceived the observance of the Sabbath by the heathen as an indicator of the gospel's progress among them and, hence, also as an indicator of progress toward the millennium. Such evangelical concern over Sabbath observance was evident with respect to groups such as the Cherokees in the United States, the natives of the British West Indies, and, perhaps especially, the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) natives, to name a few.¹⁴

¹⁴ Handy, *A Christian America*, Chapter 2. The reference to groups such as the Cherokees, British West Indies natives, and Hawaii natives is based upon my own examination of religious newspapers and periodicals from the early Jacksonian period.

In 1828, the *Western Luminary* addressed the specific issue of Sabbath observance among the Cherokees. The Presbyterian newspaper reported that "the voice of the red men's council of the wilderness, (as expressed in the Cherokee Legislative resolve below) admonish us to remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy." The resolution followed: "That the business of the council . . . be suspended on the Sabbaths, and also that the merchants, and pedlars [*sic*] and mechanics, at New Town, close the doors of their shops and suspend all business. . . ." A stiff fine of fifteen dollars was the penalty for Sabbath profanations in New Town, no doubt a measure many white Sabbatarians would have desired for their own communities. Interestingly, in his *Presbyterians in the South*, historian Ernest Trice Thompson notes that in some cases the efforts of Presbyterian missionaries among the Choctaws were met with "'violent prejudices'" against them on the part of whites who opposed the tribe being taught to observe the Christian Sabbath. Perhaps such a "civilized" and "Christian" practice as careful Sabbath observance made it more difficult, at least for some whites, to justify the taking of Indians' lands.¹⁵

However, Sabbath observance was of concern not only among native peoples in America. The *Western Luminary* also addressed the issue among British West Indies natives, whose observance of the day was reportedly far different from the Cherokees'. Speaking of Jamaica, the newspaper quoted a Mr. Gilgrass, who reported,

The Sabbaths are spent generally as follows:--The slaves turn out to pick grass for the horses, mules, oxen, sheep, &c. . . . After breakfast, a driver, with an overseer, accompanies the slaves to the Negro ground, given to them

¹⁵ *Western Luminary*, July 16, 1828. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South* (3 vols., Richmond, Va., 1963-73), 1:197. William G. McLoughlin notes the existence of Cherokee statutes against Sabbath-breaking in *The Cherokees and Christianity, 1794-1870: Essays on Acculturation and Cultural Persistence* (Athens, Ga., and London, 1994), 113, 206.

in lieu of allowance from the master; here they spend the blessed Sabbath, toiling hard all day. This is their rest.

Gilgrass concluded with an issue which concerned Sabbatharians in Richmond, Virginia, and elsewhere: "The Sabbath is the chief market-day in all the islands."¹⁶

One corner of the world which enjoyed special attention from the evangelical press was the Sandwich Islands in the Pacific. The combination of a lush tropical "paradise," relatively recent "discovery" by Anglo-Americans, and a most favorable early progress of the gospel there made the islands a natural focal point for evangelicals. In 1820, the first Congregationalist missionaries arrived from New England under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Interestingly, its corresponding secretary for many years was Jeremiah Evarts, the author of one or more mass-produced Sabbath petitions and one of the nation's leading Sabbatharians. By the late 1820s, a number of articles were being published covering the progress of the gospel--and of the Sabbath--in the islands.¹⁷

For example, in 1827 the *Western Luminary* published two articles in the same issue, "A SABBATH IN HAWAII," and "MORAL STATE OF THE INHABITANTS OF HAWAII." In the first of these, the Rev. Mr. Bishop reported that after only five weeks of missionary work in a particular village, ". . . the whole of this populous village came together, about 1000 persons. I preached in the open air . . . with more than usual freedom, and to highly attentive audiences." The second article assessed that the "present state of the people, is the most favourable that can be conceived, for the reception of

¹⁶ *Western Luminary*, January 18, 1826. For a discussion of the view of some Virginia Sabbatharians toward Sunday markets, see Chapter 5 above.

¹⁷ For Evarts' role in the Sabbath mails campaign of 1828-29, see Chapter 2 above.

Christianity, and the arts of civilization." Linking the issues of education and the Sabbath, the report claimed that nearly 4,800 pupils would probably be reading the New Testament in their own language within the current year, and stated, "Wherever schools are established, the Sabbath is observed. . . ."18

Another Upper South religious newspaper, the *Southern Religious Telegraph*, likewise showed interest in Hawaii. In 1830 the Presbyterian newspaper published an article pertaining to Hawaii, entitled, "Observance of the Sabbath and Temperance," in which it was reported that a local governor had established regulations regarding the Sabbath and temperance. The anonymous reporter acknowledged that "I never had the happiness to live in any part of it [the United States], in which the external observance of the Sabbath appeared to be so carefully maintained," and concluded that "the people generally believe the Sabbath to be a divine institution, and consequently that it ought to be sacredly observed." Seemingly, a number of American Sabbatarians looked longingly upon the Sabbath's observance--whether perceived or actual--of various indigenous peoples only recently touched with the "inextricably combined" advantages of "civilization and Christianity."19

But recently-arrived missionaries and short-term visitors were not the only ones who commented on the Sabbath's observance in Hawaii. A missionary of twenty-one years in Hawaii, Congregationalist minister the Rev. Hiram Bingham recorded his thoughts

18 *Western Luminary*, March 14, 1827.

19 *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 24, 1830 [emphasis in original]. For a discussion of the intermingling of "civilization and Christianity" in the vision of many evangelicals, see Handy, *A Christian America*, Chapter 2. For other religious periodicals addressing Sabbath observance in Hawaii, see *Christian Advocate* 5 (1827): 410-15; *Visitor and Telegraph*, June 14, 1828. The *Christian Advocate* also addressed the Sabbath's observance in India; see vol. 11 (1833): 376-77.

concerning the natives in the vicinity of Hilo. In 1829, five years after the establishment of a mission station there, Bingham felt that the natives were interested in learning "the doctrines and duties of Christianity," observed the Sabbath carefully, and were attached to the missionary couple living among them. Another of Hawaii's earliest missionaries, the Rev. C.S. Stewart, wrote that "on the Sabbath, the real state of the people, struggling from barbarity to civilization, is more observable than at any other time." That Sabbath observance was not always as careful as the missionaries desired or as some observers recorded--especially after the first decade of the work in Hawaii--was evident in a letter by the Rev. Ephraim W. Clark, who wrote in 1833, "There has been a great falling off in our schools, in attendance on public worship, & drunkenness, fornication, & sabbath breaking have again stalked abroad. . . ." Although American evangelicals generally were favorably impressed with the Sabbath observance of Hawaiian natives in the late 1820s and early 1830s, what many of them seemed unable to appreciate was that their own country was rapidly moving away from the kind of society--agrarian, rural, and pre-industrial--in which strict Sabbath observance on the community level was more or less feasible. In any case, articles in religious periodicals addressing Sabbath observance among indigenous peoples around the world only recently influenced by the gospel were a means by which Upper South Sabbatarians were reminded that the Sabbath was, indeed--first and foremost--a moral-religious concern.²⁰

²⁰ Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands* . . . (New York, 1847), 353-54; C.S. Stewart, *Journal of a Residence in the Sandwich Islands, during the years 1823, 1824, and 1825* . . . , 3d ed. (London, 1830), 166. Rev. Ephraim W. Clark to Rev. Rufus Anderson, September 28, 1833, Papers of Rev. Ephraim Weston Clark, Missionary Letters, 1816-1900 (Mission Houses Museum Library, Honolulu, Hawaii).

A second issue which demonstrated the persistence of moral-religious concern for the Sabbath was that of interdenominational agreement with respect to the day in the midst of sectarian conflicts on other issues. Historian Robert T. Handy has observed:

On the Sabbath issue, Protestants whose background had been in state churches readily teamed up with those who had opposed all religious establishments. . . . Protestant forces across a wide sweep of denominational and theological opinion persistently struggled for the Sabbath as a day apart--a day that would characterize American civilization as Christian.²¹

Evidence from Jacksonian Americans themselves indicated the harmony which prevailed among the major denominations on the issue of the Sabbath, in spite of disagreements in other areas. In 1830, the *American Baptist Magazine* published a letter by the Rev. Mr. Train, of Framingham, Massachusetts. In the aftermath of the unsuccessful Sabbath mails campaigns, Train wrote, ". . . wofully [*sic*] divided in sentiments as Christians are in other respects, such remarkable unanimity in relation to the sanctification of the Lord's day, is a subject for devout thankfulness to the great Head of the church." Even more important for this study was the fact that in the early to mid-1830s, the editors of *all four* major denominational newspapers in Richmond, Virginia--whose periodicals served as the organs of the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopalian churches--were Sabbatarians; in fact, three of them were officers in the Virginia Society while the fourth, Amasa Converse, was active in his presbytery.²²

²¹ Handy, *A Christian America*, 45.

²² *American Baptist Magazine* 10 (1830): 357-61. For a discussion of the denominational newspapers in Richmond, Virginia, and their views of the Sabbath, see Chapter 4 above. The four newspapers were the *Southern Religious Telegraph* (Presbyterian), the *Religious Herald* (Baptist), the *Christian Sentinel* (Methodist), and the *Southern Churchman* (Episcopalian).

In the Upper South, Presbyterians and Methodists provided an excellent example of unanimity regarding the Sabbath in the midst of often bitter sectarian conflicts which raged in Kentucky and Virginia in the late 1820s. The two churches disagreed vehemently in such areas as doctrine, church government, and the practices of acquiring new members.²³

For example, in the late 1820s in the Shelbyville-Louisville area of Kentucky--if not beyond--controversy between Methodists and Presbyterians raged. A Louisville, Kentucky, Methodist minister, the Rev. George C. Light, was one of a number of Methodists who had taken part in the spreading of a rumor concerning Presbyterian designs for a union of "Church and State." Locally prominent Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Archibald Cameron, who organized several churches and pastored for over three decades in the counties of Jefferson, Nelson, and Shelby--and, perhaps, was one of the accused--refuted the charge. In 1830, Cameron published--as an appendix to the *Calvinistic Magazine*--a pamphlet entitled, *Further Exposure of the Folly and Falsehood of the Rev. George C. Light and Others, as Exhibited by Them in a Pamphlet Entitled 'A Refutation'* Cameron stated the issue at stake as "*whether there were Missionaries, as secret agents, employed by the Presbyterians, to carry on a plan for uniting Church and State; or a plan for securing to themselves an establishment?*" He charged "Mr.

²³ Richard J. Carwardine notes that Presbyterian-Methodist controversy raged also in East Tennessee; see his *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven and London, 1993), 115. In 1827, Presbyterians began the *Calvinistic Magazine*, published in Rogersville, Tennessee, largely in response to what they perceived as abuse at the hands of Methodists in Tennessee and Kentucky. Methodists responded two years later by initiating their own periodical, the *Gospel Herald*, published in Lexington, Kentucky. As an example of the editorial warfare that was carried on by both sides, in one of its earliest numbers the *Gospel Herald* referred to the *Calvinistic Magazine* as being "extensively known for the ceaseless and bitter warfare it has carried on, against the doctrines, discipline, ministry and religious character of the Methodist Episcopal Church." For the above quotation, see *Gospel Herald* 1 (1829): 49.

Light" and several others with gathering up "false and illusive materials, which they employ against 'Mr. C. [Cameron] the Presbyterian church,' and all those who stated the truth, in correction of the misrepresentation which they have made. . . ."24

In view of such bitter controversy, it is significant that Light was one of three Louisville ministers--prominent Presbyterian minister Gideon Blackburn was another--who had signed a lengthy public resolution respecting the Sabbath which was published in 1827. Although Light agreed with the Presbyterians on the Sabbath *just prior* to the Sabbath mails campaigns of 1828 to 1830, the Methodist minister apparently allowed his controversy with the Presbyterians to affect his judgment, or at least his public stance. In Cameron's 1830 pamphlet, he alluded to Light's having misrepresented the Sabbath mail petitioners as though they sought to halt the transportation of the mails on the Sabbath even "in time of war, and in cases of necessity." Such was not the case, however, a fact which Light surely would have known.²⁵

Regardless of whether Light experienced a change of convictions regarding the Sabbath, or succumbed to less admirable motives, it was clear that Methodist periodicals

²⁴ For Cameron, see E.D. Shinnick, *Some Old Time History of Shelbyville and Shelby County* (Frankfort, Ky., 1974), 13-14; *The Biographical Encyclopaedia of Kentucky* . . . (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1878), 93. *Calvinistic Magazine* 4 (1830), app. published by A. [Archibald] Cameron, *Further Exposure of the Folly and Falsehood of the Rev. George C. Light and Others* . . . (Shelbyville, Ky., 1830) [emphasis in original].

²⁵ *Western Luminary*, February 28, 1827. For Blackburn's role as a Sabbatarian, see Chapter 1 above. Cameron, *Further Exposure of the Folly and Falsehood of the Rev. George C. Light* . . ., 26. For a discussion of the view of Sabbath petitioners regarding transportation of the mails during time of war or national crisis, see Chapter 1 above. In fact, Shelby County, Kentucky, petitioners--many of whom were members of one of the churches ("Mulberry-Shelbyville Presbyterian Church") pastored by Cameron--specifically stated that they would not object to transportation of Sabbath mails in time of war; see petition of inhabitants of Shelby County, Kentucky, January 18, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); Chapter 3 above.

advocated the traditional Sabbath. The Methodist newspaper, the *Christian Advocate and Journal*--which William Warren Sweet noted was "one of the first papers in the United States to have a nation-wide circulation"--as well as regional publications, such as the *Gospel Herald* (Lexington, Kentucky), *Christian Sentinel* (Richmond, Virginia), and *Western Christian Advocate* (Cincinnati, Ohio), all supported traditional--essentially Calvinist--Sabbath observance, despite conflicts with their Presbyterian (Calvinist) brethren.²⁶

The tension between Methodists and Presbyterians in Virginia was similar, though perhaps not quite as intense as in Kentucky. In the late 1820s, controversy raged in the central portion of the state but seemed not to affect the stance taken on the Sabbath by either denomination. An 1829 pamphlet published by Virginia Presbyterians was entitled, *Review of the Controversy Between the Methodists and Presbyterians in Central Virginia*. According to the Presbyterian author the Rev. Henry Ruffner, in early 1827 the Lexington Presbytery had decided to publish a pastoral letter "with the view principally of defending the Presbyterian doctrines and institutions, against the unfair and violent attacks of Methodist preachers." Although the scarcity of Methodist records from the early Jacksonian era makes it exceedingly difficult to reach firm conclusions in such a case, this study found no evidence of Methodist opposition to the Sabbath mails campaigns or to traditional Sabbath observance in Virginia. In any case, a handful of Methodists joined a larger number of Presbyterians in signing the memorial from Richmond, Virginia, in January 1830. Moreover, the organ of Virginia Methodists, the *Christian Sentinel*,

²⁶ William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1840: The Methodists* (Chicago, 1946), 70. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 30, 1828; May 22, 1829; April 30, 1830; *Gospel Herald* 1 (1829): 39-40; *Christian Sentinel*, April 4 and April 18, 1834; *Western Christian Advocate*, July 11 and December 26, 1834.

promoted Sabbath observance and the work of the Virginia Society in the early 1830s. It could hardly have been otherwise, for the *Christian Sentinel's* editor, the Rev. Ethelbert Drake, served as treasurer of the society.²⁷

Despite intense rivalry and controversy between the Methodists and Presbyterians in the Upper South, both continued to uphold the Sabbath as a fundamental pillar of morality and genuine "religion," and to oppose Sabbath mails. As discussed above in Chapter Three, the lone significant exception to agreement on the Sabbath among the religious community in Kentucky was the followers of Alexander Campbell, many of whom were drawn from Baptist churches. A major tenet of Campbell's beliefs was the rejection of the moral law of the Old Testament, by far the most prominent aspect of which was the Sabbath commandment. Although moral-religious and social-economic priorities were especially difficult to distinguish in some Kentucky communities, it seems clear that to *both* Calvinists and Campbellites, the Sabbath was *primarily* a moral-religious concern--despite the fact that the two groups viewed that institution through opposing theological lenses.²⁸

A third issue which indicated the Sabbath to be a genuine moral-religious concern was the cooperation of Upper South Sabbatarians with other moral reformers and the

²⁷ [Henry Ruffner], *Review of the Controversy Between the Methodists and Presbyterians in Central Virginia* (Richmond, Va., 1829), 4. Petition of inhabitants of the city of Richmond, Virginia, February 5, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA); for the roles of Drake and three other Richmond, Virginia, Methodist leaders with respect to Sabbath observance, see Chapter 4 above.

²⁸ For further discussion of the Sabbath controversy in Kentucky, see Chapter 3 above. An article, entitled "MR. CAMPBELL'S CREED," was published in the *Visitor and Telegraph*, December 19, 1829. Recall that in Washington County, Kentucky, Roman Catholics and Presbyterians--an unlikely union, to be sure--joined hands in the Sabbath mails petition campaigns.

participation of Sabbath advocates in other benevolences and reforms. In those respects, the Upper South followed the pattern of reformism nationally. Just as the national societies held their annual meetings in New York City each May during what was termed "Anniversary Week," in order to facilitate attending one another's gatherings, Virginians did likewise. Each year in early April, Virginians held their own "Anniversary Week" in Richmond. In 1836, the gathering included the Virginia Bible Society, the Virginia Sabbath Society, the Virginia Tract Society, as well as the state's temperance, Sunday school, and colonization societies.²⁹

Also, as was true nationally, many Upper South Sabbatarian leaders were involved in other moral reforms. That such was the case was most evident in Virginia, one of only two Southern states known to have a local or state Sabbath society which was active in a meaningful sense during the early Jacksonian era. In early 1831, the *Southern Religious Telegraph* published a response to "MNASON," who had (twice) written in opposition to the recent formation of the Virginia Society. "MNASON" may have been one of those (Calvinist) Southern evangelicals to whom Anne C. Loveland refers as having little or no confidence in man-made social institutions--as opposed to the God-ordained institution of the church. In any case, in the course of refuting the arguments of "MNASON," his respondent noted that "Most of the managers of the Virginia Sabbath Society do either now hold, or have formerly held similar stations in other benevolent associations. . . ."³⁰

²⁹ *Southern Churchman*, April 1, 1836. Although the state lacked a Sabbath society, Kentucky's moral reform societies also held "Anniversary Week" in early April. In 1830, seven such societies met in Lexington, Kentucky; see *Western Luminary*, April 7, 1830.

³⁰ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, January 8 and February 12, 1831; the quote is from the latter issue. Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge, La., and London, 1980), Chapter 6; pages 174-80 deal specifically with the Sabbath. The Savannah (Georgia) Society for Promoting the Better Observance of the Christian Sabbath was the only other Sabbath society I have located in the Upper South

For example, several of the Virginia Society officers--between 1830 and 1834--to whom "MNASON's" respondent alluded also took leadership roles in the Richmond Temperance Society, Virginia Bible Society, or Richmond and Manchester Sabbath School Union. In 1829, William Crane participated in the drawing up of the constitution of the Richmond Temperance Society and Charles Goddard served the Virginia Bible Society by maintaining the funds for books sold by the society. In 1830, James Caskie was elected first vice-president, John H. Eustace the recording secretary, and George L. Sampson the secretary of the Richmond and Manchester Sabbath School Union.³¹

In Kentucky as well, despite lacking a society devoted specifically to promoting the Sabbath, a few identifiable Sabbatarian leaders were involved in other benevolences or moral reforms. For example, the Reverends Gideon Blackburn and James Blythe, and ruling elders Thomas T. Skillman and Michael G. Youce, all served as officers in the Presbyterian Education Society of Kentucky upon its establishment in 1828. Moreover, a year later Blythe was elected president and Skillman one of the managers of the Kentucky Bible Society, to which each "subscribed" the sum of one hundred dollars. Also, the first signer of the Fayette County, Kentucky, Sabbath mails petition in 1830 was Dr. John Todd, who had recently been named the vice-president of the Athens (Kentucky) Anti-Intemperate Society; fellow petitioner Samuel B. Todd served as the society's recording secretary. Though by no means exhaustive, the aforementioned examples are representative of the extent to which, in the late 1820s and early 1830s, Upper South

which was active in a meaningful sense during the early Jacksonian era. See Chapter 5 above.

³¹ *Southern Religious Telegraph*, May 8, 1830, January 10, February 7, 1829. For further discussion of Virginia Society officers, see Chapter 5 above.

Sabbatarians cooperated with other moral reformers and were, in many cases, personally involved in other benevolences and reforms, often in leadership roles. As with the perceived importance of the Sabbath in the conversion of the heathen, and the unanimity regarding the Sabbath in the face of fierce interdenominational conflicts, the cooperation *with* and participation *in* other benevolences and moral reforms by Upper South Sabbatarians were indicators that, first and foremost, the Sabbath was a moral-religious issue.³²

Though not required here, other Sabbath-related issues could be developed to bolster the argument for the primacy of moral-religious concern for the day: the transatlantic links between American and British evangelicals regarding the promotion of Sabbath observance; the probable connection in some locales between revivals in the late 1820s and heightened interest in Sabbath observance; and, the perceived integral relationship on the part of many evangelicals between Sabbath observance and family worship, and the rearing of children possessed of piety and faith. Perhaps most importantly, the relationship of the Sabbath with all six issues may rightly be viewed within the broad context of the Second Awakening and the emergence of middle class values.³³

³² *Western Luminary*, March 12, 1828; May 13, 1829. The Education Society was designed to aid young men in procuring the education needed to enter the Presbyterian ministry. For the roles of Blackburn, Blythe, and Youce in promoting the Sabbath, see Chapter 2 above. Skillman was the editor and proprietor of the *Western Luminary*, the oldest weekly religious periodical west of the Appalachians and, most likely, the leading Sabbatarian organ in the South and West. For a brief biographical sketch of Skillman, see Robert Stuart Sanders, *History of the Second Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Kentucky, of the United Presbyterian Church . . . 1815-1965* (Lexington, Ky., 1965), 89. For John and Samuel B. Todd, see *Western Luminary*, July 8, 1829; petition of inhabitants of Fayette County, Kentucky, January 25--February 1, 1830, Petitions Received, RG233 (NA).

³³ For discussion of measures to promote Sabbath observance in Great Britain between 1827 and 1837, see John Wigley, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday* (Manchester,

In 1973, Lois W. Banner published an important essay in which she refuted many of the arguments of "social control" historians who viewed early nineteenth-century benevolences and moral reforms mainly as attempts to exert evangelical, if not clerical, control over American society. As discussed above in Chapter Two, much of the historiography on Sabbatarianism in the period falls within that, now largely discredited, school of thought. In that light, one passage of Banner's is particularly applicable to early Jacksonian Sabbatarianism. She writes, "Behind all clerical revivals and benevolent endeavor lay several major concerns which historians anxious to expose the failings of their subjects have overlooked. The foremost of these . . . was millennialism. The second . . . can be called 'Christian republicanism.'" Significantly, to many evangelicals or civil magistrates--who, in some cases, such as in James Madison of Prince Edward County, Virginia, and Asher W. Graham of Bowling Green, Kentucky, filled both roles--in the Upper South, if not the nation, the Sabbath was both *integral and preeminent* to

1980), Chapter 2. For discussion of the probable connection between a revival in 1828 in Prince Edward County, Virginia, and the Sabbath, see Chapter 4 above. Also, Shelby County, one of the "strongest" Sabbatarian counties in Kentucky in terms of the number of Sabbath mails petitioners, experienced revival in 1828--although many other counties did so as well--which brought new members into local Presbyterian churches, some of whom later signed petitions; four such "recent member-petitioners" were Joseph Allen, Benjamin F. Dupuy, William C. Hanna, and Samuel Venable, all of the "Mulberry-Shelbyville" Presbyterian Church; see Mulberry Presbyterian Church (Shelby County, Kentucky) session minutes, book II, pages 15-17 (typescript at KHS); *Western Luminary*, August 6, 1828; and, Chapter 3 above. For several of the many examples of the perceived connection between Sabbath observance in families and the rearing of godly children, see *Western Luminary*, March 26, 1828; March 10, 1830; *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 22, 1829; April 30, 1830. For a discussion of the implications of the Sabbath mails issue for the emergence of middle class values, especially involving the role of women, see Richard R. John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously: The Postal System, the Sabbath, and the Transformation of American Political Culture," *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (1990): 546-47.

preparations for the millennium, or for the preserving of a Christian republic, respectively. As this study has shown, in a number of cases in Virginia and Kentucky, those two sets of priorities were interrelated and virtually indistinguishable. In fact, the two sets of concerns--*moral-religious* and *social-economic* or *civil-temporal*--which converged in the issue of the Sabbath may be viewed as basically synonymous with Banner's "millennialism" and "Christian republicanism"; or, more recently, with John G. West's "revelation" and "reason." Indeed, that the Christian Sabbath seems to "fit" so well into the aforementioned scholarship as a prominent issue makes its neglect on the part of all but a few historians all the more surprising.³⁴

The present work has shown that Calvinists in the Upper South took the lead in the Sabbath movement during the early Jacksonian period. Presbyterians were best-represented, but a number of Regular Baptists were local leaders as well. Many were Presbyterian elders or pastors, or Baptist "messengers" or pastors. Of the twelve Sabbatarian locales selected in those two states, Presbyterians accounted for the largest number of Sabbath mails petitioners identifiable according to religious denomination in all but three cases. In two cases, Accomac and Essex counties in Virginia, Regular Baptists took the lead; and in one case, Calloway County, Kentucky, the scarcity of early records made it impossible to identify more than a few petitioners by church affiliation. In a few cases, the study identified local Methodist or Episcopalian leaders, but Methodist records are scarce from the early Jacksonian era, and Episcopalians--scarce in Kentucky--were just beginning to regroup in Virginia. Moreover, the religious press of the four major

³⁴ Lois W. Banner, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation," *Journal of American History* 60 (1973-74): 23-41; the above quotation is from page 35. John G. West, Jr., *The Politics of Revelation and Reason: Religion and Civic Life in the New Nation* (Lawrence, Kan., 1996), 146-48.

Protestant denominations in the two states was firmly behind the traditional, Calvinist Sabbath. However, the two newspapers which devoted the most print to the Sabbath, by far--the *Western Luminary* in Kentucky and the *Southern Religious Telegraph* in Virginia--were both edited by Presbyterian officers and received the patronage of the church in their respective states. Furthermore, Presbyterians, especially members of Richmond's First Presbyterian Church, were the best-represented denomination among the leadership of the Virginia Society. After the last of the Sabbath mails campaigns in 1830, the Virginia Society became the most important vehicle in the Upper South for promoting the Sabbath. Thus, the moral-religious set of concerns regarding the Sabbath was best-represented by Upper South Calvinists, especially Presbyterians.³⁵

On the other hand, civil magistrates--especially justices of the peace, but also town trustees and other, lesser officeholders--and, in certain cases, merchants, bankers, and militia officers, best represented the social-economic or civil-temporal set of concerns regarding the Sabbath. Men in such occupations were well aware of the need for their communities to maintain amicable relations, prosperity, and respect for law and order--to which Sabbath observance was perceived to be a fundamental element. Most significant for this study with regard to the social-economic argument is the fact that so many justices were identified as Sabbath mails petitioners. The justices comprised the county courts and were basically a powerful, self-perpetuating oligarchy in the early Jacksonian era, beyond the reach of the voters. They chose their own replacements and additional justices--which

³⁵ The nine Presbyterian locales were, in Virginia, the counties of Henrico (including Richmond), Prince Edward, Rockbridge, Spotsylvania (including Fredericksburg), and the city of Petersburg; and, in Kentucky, the counties of Fayette (including Lexington), Shelby, Warren (including Bowling Green), and Washington. Note that the town of Maysville, Kentucky, included in the study, was involved in the Sabbath mails issue only on the Anti-sabbatarian side.

were invariably approved by the governor--and they handled a myriad of local affairs including the appointment of executors of estates, guardians of orphaned children, surveyors and overseers of local roads, officers of slave patrols, commissioners of county building projects and of county taxes; and the granting of tavern licenses, in addition to dealing with the criminal and civil court cases of the county. In short, the county court, comprised of gentlemen justices, *was* the local government of the era, which normally was the level of government most important to the overwhelming majority of American citizens.³⁶

In that light, it is noteworthy that over *sixty justices of the peace* signed Sabbath mails petitions from the selected locales in the two states. In Kentucky, of the five Sabbatarian communities studied, Shelby, Warren, and Washington counties contributed a total of thirteen justices' signatures. Of the two remaining locales--Calloway and Fayette (including Lexington) counties--the earliest county court records of Calloway are not extant, while in Fayette the only two justices' signatures appeared on *Anti-sabbath* petitions. But in Shelby County, five (of approximately eleven) justices signed the Sabbath mails memorial. Of those five, four of them comprised the entire county court for one session in January 1829. In Warren County, two justices signed; and in Washington County, six justices signed at least one of two local petitions. Additionally, at least seven town trustees of Bowling Green (Warren County), who served at least once between 1823 and 1834, the clerk of the Warren County Circuit Court (1829), and several lesser officials signed the local Sabbath mails petition.³⁷

³⁶ For discussion of justices and county courts, see Chapter 4 above.

³⁷ The two Fayette County justices were Samuel Shivel and William B. Summers. Also, two (former) Mason County (Maysville) justices signed the Anti-sabbath petition from Maysville, Robert T. Blanchard and Joseph Farrow. Shelby's "justice-petitioners" were

In several Virginia counties, however, "gentlemen justices" were significantly more numerous among local Sabbatarian petitioners. Of six Sabbatarian locales studied in which gentlemen justices functioned, each contributed the signature of at least one justice to the Sabbath mails campaigns, the total number nearly fifty. No less than thirty-seven justices signed Sabbatarian memorials from the three counties of Accomac, Essex, and Prince Edward. In Accomac, sixteen (of approximately twenty-four) justices signed, as did ten (of approximately sixteen) Essex justices. One of two Essex memorials was authored and signed by prominent justice James Mercer Garnett, who served as a delegate to the 1829-30 Virginia constitutional convention. In Prince Edward, eleven (of approximately twenty-two) justices signed. Thus, from three eastern Virginia counties, at least thirty-seven of approximately sixty-two justices of the peace favored stopping the mails and closing post offices on the Sabbath. Of the remaining counties of Henrico, Spotsylvania (including Fredericksburg), and Rockbridge, justices' signatures numbered one, eight, and three, respectively. More so than in Kentucky--and perhaps in a number of other communities nationwide--the signatures of so many justices of the peace, sober-minded and conservative by nature, belied the lurid Anti-sabbatarian images of those who would stop the mails and close post offices on Sunday as being fanatics and "God-crazed vigilantes."³⁸

Charles Baird, George Bergen, Samuel Harbison, Charles Mitchell, and Robert T. Robb (appointed a justice a few months after signing petition); Warren's were John Keel and Thomas Sterrett; and, Washington's were Andrew Cunningham, John Ferguson, Joseph P. Knott, James L. Maham, William McMurray, and John B. Smith. Bowling Green's "trustee-petitioners" (with their years of service) were John Atkinson (1829), Chasteen T. Dunnavan (1825; also sheriff in 1829), Asher W. Graham (1823, 1828), Henry Grider (1828), James A. Neale (1831), Samuel Stubbins (1834), and Jacob Vanmeter (1833). Jonathan Hobson was Warren's Circuit Court clerk in 1829.

³⁸ John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 559-61. The seventh locale in Virginia, the

In addition to those of gentlemen justices, in a few cases the signatures of merchants, bankers, or militia officers on petitions indicated that the social-economic set of priorities was uppermost--or at least part of the concern--for some regarding the Sabbath. Especially in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and, to lesser degree, in Richmond, a number of local merchants or bank directors--in some cases, both--took the Sabbatarian position. In Fredericksburg, they comprised a significant minority of those who petitioned: at least thirty merchants and twelve (of twenty-six) local bank directors were Sabbatarians (some bankers were also merchants). In Richmond, a number of merchants, such as William Crane and Fleming James--many, like James, were members of the First Presbyterian Church, which comprised much of the leadership of the Virginia Society--and at least two bankers signed a Sabbatarian memorial. And on isolated Eastern Shore, no less than eight officers in the 99th Regiment, Virginia Militia, joined the majority of Accomac County justices who took the Sabbatarian position. Certainly, in particular locales, the numbers of petitioning justices, merchants, bankers, or militia officers--some of whom were church members but others who probably were uninvolved in organized religious life--indicated that social-economic or civil-temporal priorities were the primary reason behind the Sabbatarianism of some Virginians.³⁹

Most historians who have addressed Sabbatarianism in the early Jacksonian era have focused on the "radical" or "ungentlemanly" aspects of the movement, especially those centered in the "Burned-over" district of New York. But Upper South Sabbatarians in

city of Petersburg, produced a significant Anti-sabbatarian and a minor Sabbatarian response in terms of the numbers of petitioners; at least two city aldermen (Charles F. Osborne and Francis G. Yancey) and the mayor of Petersburg (Patrick Durkin) signed the former; for further discussion, see Chapter 4 above.

³⁹ For further discussion, see Chapter 4 above.

that period--so many of whom were Presbyterians or Regular Baptists, even Methodists or Episcopalians, justices of the peace, merchants, or bankers--presented another view entirely. Most such men--either grounded in a conservative theological school (Calvinism) or in occupations conservative by nature (law, banking) or dependent upon amicable relations and social stability (business)--probably had not a "radical" bone in their bodies. After all, they were Presbyterians who, in at least one case in Fayette County, Kentucky, could disqualify a visiting pastor from preaching because he confessed to having recently observed a horse-race; and Baptists who, in another case in the same county, could bring charges against a "brother" because he had purportedly justified "Baptists going to barbecues [*sic*]," or at least a *Clay barbecue*! In any case, there were no boycotts of Sabbath-breaking enterprises in the Upper South, as in New York; there was no breakdown in the amicable relations of leading citizens, as in Paul Johnson's Rochester; and there was little, if any, effort to enforce long-standing Sabbath statutes. Of course, whether such potential divisions between whites could have ever been permitted under the "peculiar institution" is another matter, and one beyond the scope of this work. But whether Upper South Sabbatarianism emphasized moral-religious *or* social-economic concerns, it was, quintessentially, a *moderate*--even a conservative--and not a radical, movement.⁴⁰

But *where did* the Sabbatarian emphasis lay--in moral-religious or social-economic concerns? Although the two sets of priorities were sometimes inseparable, the evidence uncovered indicates that the majority of activity on behalf of the Sabbath was moral-

⁴⁰ For a discussion of historiography on the subject, see Chapter 2 above. Robert Stuart Sanders, *Sketch of Mount Horeb Presbyterian Church, 1827-1952* . . . (Lexington, Ky., 1953), 14; *A Copy of the First Minutes of Bryan Station Church, Fayette County, Kentucky, 1786-1895* (Lexington, Ky., 1933), 237.

religious in nature. Although a number of petitioners who signed memorials to stop Sabbath mails probably did so from social-economic concerns--especially in Virginia counties such as Accomac and Essex where few professing Christians, and many gentlemen justices, were identifiable--such Sabbatarians were *not* the ones who wrote letters, preached sermons, published essays, wrote and distributed tracts, introduced resolutions, and organized Sabbath societies. In the Upper South, those were the activities of Calvinists, especially Presbyterians like John Holt Rice, Amasa Converse, and James Caskie in Virginia; and James Blythe and Thomas T. Skillman in Kentucky.⁴¹

Despite the primacy of moral-religious priorities, many a Sabbatarian editorialist pointed out, as did one published in the *Western Luminary*, "The Sabbath presents a two fold aspect. *1st. as a day to be kept holy to the Deity. 2d. as a day of rest*--of the benefits of which not only the christian, but the infidel, and even the beast may partake." Drawn from the Scripture, that simple, two-part explanation showed the validity of *both* moral-religious (worship of "the Deity") and social-economic ("day of rest" for oneself, subordinates, animals) rationales. Thus, the social-economic focus--which the Virginia Society took by 1835 or so--was not a compromise of principle, although it certainly was a practical measure taken because Sabbatarians believed it had a greater chance of success in society at large than did moral-religious arguments. Sabbatarians were not insincere when they proclaimed, as the Rev. Horace Hooker did, "that the Sabbath is, emphatically, the *working man's friend*." Moreover, in their less public moments, many Sabbatarians probably could have identified closely with a young seminary student, James Brainerd Taylor, who recorded his thoughts only months before dying at the home of the Rev. John

⁴¹ For Rice, Converse, and Caskie, see Chapters 4 and 5 above. For Blythe and Skillman, see Chapter 3 above.

Holt Rice. Suffering from blood in the throat and lungs as he travelled in the South for his health, Taylor wrote in May 1828, "... I am in a snug harbor, with the prospect of enjoying the approaching Sabbath, by keeping holy day here. I need the day both for body and mind: to renew my physical strength for the journey, and to put on anew the armor of righteousness." The dying Taylor had not only expressed his heart but also he had validated beautifully the two-fold aspect of the Sabbath day.⁴²

But what results did the movement have in the Upper South, or beyond? Though Sabbath profanations in Southern, and American society at large, may have ebbed and flowed, while continuing to increase in the long run, the movement seems to have been moderately successful in improving the observance of the day, especially among those who were already favorably inclined toward Sabbath observance. Belying the modesty of such a claim is the fact that Jacksonian Americans were undergoing tremendous, if not unprecedented, transformations of relationships in society, economics, and politics, captured by historians in such phrases as the Second Great Awakening, the Market Revolution, and the Second Party System. In the context of a society engaged in the pursuit of wealth--as Edward Pessen argued was the case--even modest improvements in Sabbath observance become significant. For example, the reports of Upper South presbyteries and of the Virginia Society affirmed the value of the failed Sabbath mails campaigns of 1828 to 1830 and of the numerous resolutions, articles and letters, tracts and pamphlets, and sermons in bringing the importance of the Sabbath to the attention of many

⁴² *Western Luminary*, September 30, 1829 [emphasis in original]. Hooker, *Lecture on the Temporal Benefits*, 10. John Holt Rice and Benjamin Holt Rice, *Memoir of James Brainerd Taylor*, 2d ed. (New York, 1833), 393-94. For another example of the view of the Sabbath as especially beneficial to the "working" man, see [Lyman Beecher], *Address of the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (New York, 1828).

professing Christians and others of "respectable" society. Such measures had served to educate many upon a subject that had been, in Sabbatarians' eyes, long-neglected and imperfectly understood. And as religious periodicals proudly proclaimed, some Sabbath-breaking businessmen did decide to close their enterprises on the sacred day. In addition to pointing out a number of Sabbatarian "successes" regarding postal policies in the years following the Sabbath mails campaigns, Richard John argues that "organized Sabbatarianism" contributed to the persistence of the Sabbath, in many locales, as a vital institution until the Civil War, if not well beyond. But a passage from Jack Larkin's *Reshaping of Everyday Life* goes further:

Over the first four decades of the nineteenth century the American people . . . became more and more likely to be found at worship on Sunday. The proportion of families affiliated with a local church or Methodist circuit rose dramatically, particularly after 1820, and there were fewer stretches of wholly pagan, unchurched territory. . . . There were still communities near the edge of settlement where a traveler would 'rarely find either churches or chapels, prayer or preacher,' but increasingly the chief strongholds of 'Sunday dissipation' and 'Sabbath-breaking' were the working-class neighborhoods of America's larger cities.

As John and Larkin indicate, changes regarding the institution of the Sabbath and of organized religious life took place in the first half of the nineteenth century. "Organized Sabbatarianism" will not provide the whole explanation, but even such a moderate, or conservative, movement as existed in the Upper South in the early Jacksonian era--and whose results were perhaps limited--may offer some useful perspectives.⁴³

⁴³ Pessen, *Jacksonian America*, 324-27; John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 562-64. Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790-1840* (New York, 1988), 300-01.

Finally, Lois Banner's conclusion regarding religious benevolence in the early nineteenth century applies equally well to the gentlemen Sabbatarians of the Upper South. She wrote,

Few men in that age were willing to challenge the universal devotion to wealth; few men were able to see that contemporary materialism had in it a ruthlessness which disregarded spiritual and humane qualities. The religious humanitarians of the early nineteenth century called into question the goals of America and forced their generation to examine their values. Not the least of the results of this examination was to direct the thoughts of many Americans toward reform.

Among those few men, a number of Kentuckians and Virginians--Calvinists, gentlemen justices, merchants, and bankers--viewed the institution of the Christian Sabbath as essential to maintaining regard for "spiritual and humane qualities" and to avoiding the "devotion to wealth" of so many of their early Jacksonian contemporaries.⁴⁴

The apparent demise of the Virginia Society by 1837--probably due in part to the Presbyterian schism which began in that year--provides a logical terminus to the early Jacksonian phase of the Sabbath movement in the Upper South, if not the nation (recall that the national Sabbath society, the General Union, had been defunct by 1832). But it would be a mistake to conclude that the Sabbath never again arose as a moral reform issue, even in the Upper South. In the 1840s the formation of the American and Foreign Sabbath Union heralded the resurfacing of organized Sabbatarianism on a scale larger than that of its predecessor, the General Union. Ironically, among Upper South Sabbatarians, not only Calvinists but their old antagonists in Kentucky--the followers of Alexander Campbell, and even Campbell himself--were found to be defending the observance of the Christian Sabbath, or Lord's day. As David Edwin Harrell has noted, "Although Disciples

⁴⁴ Banner, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control," 41.

leaders continued to make a distinction between the Sabbath and the first day of the week, after 1840 they more and more came to support the Sabbatarian movement and by 1850 it was not unheard of for a church leader to defend the observance of Sunday on the grounds of Old Testament authority." For example, in the 1840s "Disciples ministers attended and participated in 'Lord's Day Conventions' in Kentucky, Missouri, and Indiana . . ." and by 1854 even Alexander Campbell backed the decision of a Pennsylvania judge--a Disciples layman and a personal friend of his--who ruled in favor of an old state blue law. Thus, by the 1840s and 50s Calvinists and Campbellites joined hands on the Sabbath issue in Kentucky and elsewhere, at least some of whom undoubtedly were blissfully unaware of the disagreements, indeed, the venom, that had existed between the two groups in days gone by.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866* (Nashville, 1966), 194-96.

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