



A Cautious Enthusiasm: Mystical Piety and Evangelicalism in Colonial South Carolina

Samuel C. Smith

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A Cautious Enthusiasm examines the religious, social, and political interplay between eighteenth-century evangelicalism and the Anglican establishment in the lowcountry South. Samuel C. Smith argues that the subjective spirituality inherent in evangelical religion was a catalyst toward political and social consensus among influential Anglican laymen. Smith finds that a close examination of the writings and actions of religion-minded South Carolinians such as Henry Laurens, Christopher Gadsden, and Anglican clergymen Robert Smith and Richard Clarke reveals the influence of evangelical zeal at the highest levels of society. Taking his study even deeper into the religious life of lowcountry society, Smith identifies radically pietistic elements, some of which originated in the mystical writings and practices of European Roman Catholics, German Pietists, and Huguenot Calvinists. Central to this study is the recognition of Catholic mysticism's impact on the experiential side of early evangelicalism, a subject rarely explored in historical works. A Cautious Enthusiasm provides a rare examination of Great Awakening revivalism among lowcountry Anglicans by tracing the European origins into the lowcountry South. This study demonstrates how elements of mystical religiosity prodded some to associate evangelical revivalists with Catholicism and displays how subjective elements of religion contributed to a unique patriotic consensus among lowcountry Anglicans in the Revolutionary era.

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