

**"Get Behind Me, Satan!"
Scottish Folk Healing, Vigilante Justice, and Spiritual Redemption on the Southern
Frontier, 1750-1825**

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This paper explores the way ordinary Scottish settlers used popular religious beliefs and folk medicine to confront epidemic disease and other afflictions on the Southern frontier. Transatlantic in scope, it draws from a variety of extremely unusual and largely untapped manuscript sources from Virginia and the Carolinas, and offers comparisons to materials from Scotland, notably the Cambuslang revival narratives and the "Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft" by Sir Walter Scot. These include a series of incidents, long ignored by historians of the South, involving roving bands of rogue ministers, or "witchmasters," who sought to protect settlers from the ravages of Satan and his allied sorcerers. Most notable was a vigilante trial conducted in the autumn of 1792, attended by 50 witnesses, in which a "bench of wizards" found three people guilty of malevolent witchcraft and tortured them. Unusual for this type of incident, the manuscript narrative is supported by a contemporary newspaper account and external court records; the judge who presided over the latter also happened to be a Presbyterian minister. The paper concludes by illustrating the linkages between these vigilante trials and the ultimate form and function of the "camp meetings" of the Great Revival period. Belief in the reality of Satan and witchcraft, an essential part of orthodox Christianity among dwindling numbers of elites at the beginning of the eighteenth century, remained an essential part of Christian practice among more ordinary folk, a vital compliment to holy work. I will demonstrate that trials by 'benches of wizards' not only anticipated the style and even substance of many revival seasons, but that they serve as a lens through which we can visualize the layered meanings of the revival movement in the popular mind.