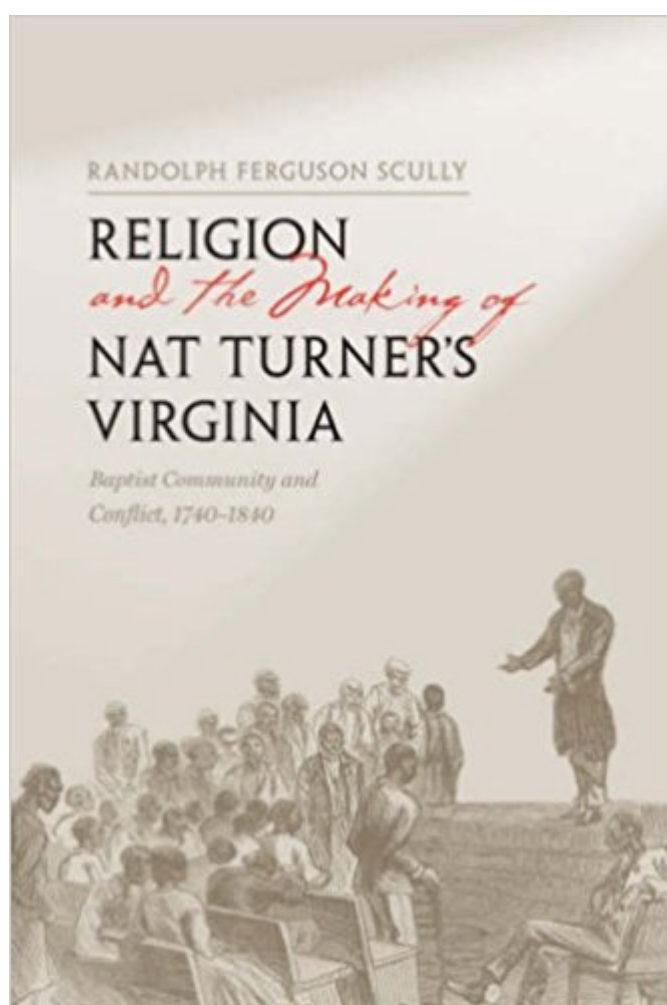


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Religion And The Making Of Nat Turner's Virginia: Baptist Community And Conflict, 1740-1840 (The American South Series)



Synopsis

Religion and the Making of Nat Turner's Virginia provides a new interpretation of the rise of evangelical Christianity in the early American South by reconstructing the complex, biracial history of the Baptist movement in southeastern Virginia. This region and its religious history became a subject of intense national scrutiny in the wake of the 1831 revolt led by the enslaved preacher and prophet Nat Turner. But by the time Turner led his fellow slaves on their deadly march across the fields and swamps of Southampton County, Virginia's religious landscape had already been shaped by more than eighty years of conflict about the implications of evangelical faith for the evolving cluster of interrelated ideas about race, slavery, household, family, and patriarchy that constituted the state's social order. For both black and white Virginians, evangelical discourses of authority, community, and meaning provided the material for a wide variety of interpretations of Christianity's social and spiritual message during the Revolutionary and early national eras. Even as some white church leaders sought to institutionalize a white, paternalist vision of evangelicalism's meanings, rapidly increasing black participation in Baptist congregations in the early nineteenth century provided fertile ground for new, alternative interpretations of Baptist concepts and practices. The Turner rebellion brought these diverse subterranean currents of dissent to the surface in ways that upset the delicate balance between white institutional authority and black spiritual independence that had evolved in the previous decades. Reaction to the uprising intensified the trend toward separation and segregation of black and white religion in the antebellum period and had powerful, lasting effects on race relations and religious culture in America.

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Customer Reviews

This is an original, carefully argued, clearly written book that revises our understanding both of the evolution of the Baptist religion and its adherents, black and white, and the religious context of Virginia in 1831 in which the Nat Turner insurrection occurred and was interpreted. It is a significant contribution to our knowledge of religion, society, and slavery in early Virginia, and should be added to the short shelf that includes Rhys Isaac and Jan Lewis as essential for understanding the religious nature of antebellum Virginia society. (John B. BolesRice University, author of The Great Revival: Beginning of the Bible Belt)"Religious violence is an inescapable presence in our own world, but as Randolph Scully reminds us, Nat Turner saw himself as the avenging angel of his time. Religion and the Making of Nat Turner's Virginia reaffirms the centrality of religion in Turner's revolt and signals an important advance in understanding the spiritual milieu from which this most enigmatic of American slave rebels sprang. (Jon SensbachUniversity of Florida, author of Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World)

Randolph Ferguson Scully is Assistant Professor of History at George Mason University.

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