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“ALL THE LAND THROWN OPEN:”
SOUTHERN CULTURE AND SOUTHERN BAPTIST
CHAPLAINS: 1861-1865

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“ALL THE LAND THROWN OPEN:”

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Date _____

For those who carried the gospel to a nation in crisis—*iacta alea est*

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PREFACE

The Civil War first drew my attention as a young boy, playing in the green-gray woods of East Tennessee. My Grandfather's grandfather, a sharecropper, had fought for the Confederacy and returned with many tales to tell. My Grandfather, or "Papaw," as we affectionately called him, regaled us with tales he heard as a boy. We learned of men who, for us, were American heroes: Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston, "Stonewall" Jackson, to name a few. My cousin and I would spend our days foraging through the woods, pretending to be two youths defending the Gray in the battle of Chickamauga, or sometimes First Manassas.

When I was older my family moved to Murfreesboro, just a walk away from Stones River National Battlefield. As a young teenager my one-dimensional view of the war grew with me, as I learned with tactile representation of the men and boys who gave their lives for a more perfect union. I climbed the stones in Slaughterpen, hiked across the earthen-work of Fortress Rosecrans, and walked the cannon-lines over erstwhile golden farmland where so many perished those December and January mornings.

Though I now understand the Lost Cause mythology familiar to many from the South I sought in this work to approach these Confederate men as precisely who they were: fallen creatures fashioned in the image of God, intended to flourish, and caught in a difficult time. I desired to show a sympathetic ear to the South, while acknowledging the sinfulness of the slave-holding institution they sought to defend. My Christian heritage taught me that I am no less sinful than the men about whom I wrote. This same ethic taught me that our shared humanity was no less true in the case of African-descended enslaved men and women whom many Southerners held in bondage. It would be an oversimplification to excoriate one without addressing the other.

Therefore, this paper did not seek to disprove (or prove) Southern Baptists' sincerity of faith based upon the defense of a sinful institution. Rather, I attempted to present their words and persons as simply themselves. In this sense, then, this paper is not a demagogic hagiography, but religious history which attempts to present the past as a different land than our own.

I'd like to thank everyone who helped make this work possible; especially the faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I'd like to thank Dr. John Wilsey, my final advisor on this project, who taught me how to think historically, and Dr. Jonathan Arnold, who helped me find my own path. Additionally, to those in the James P. Boyce Centennial Library Archives and Special Collections, whose assistance and conversation spurred on much of my primary source research, thank you. Finally, I'd like to thank Dr. Curtis Woods, who showed me the difference between hagiography and historiography, and Dr. Shawn Wright, who encouraged me to keep writing.

Most importantly, though, I need to thank my family. To my father: thank you for teaching me to love history. Your conversations helped give shape to my conclusions more than any other resource. To my mother: Kayla and I never would have made it without your selfless service. To my daughter, Ellowynn: your joyful verve inspires me every day. Finally, to my wife, Kayla: I cannot put my gratitude for you into words. I've never known anyone as supportive, compassionate, and tender-hearted as you. Whatever I have I owe to your sacrifice. I say with Solomon, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (Song of Solomon 4:7; KJV).

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INTRODUCTION
SOUTHERN CULTURE AND SOUTHERN BAPTIST
CHAPLAINS: 1861-1865

The open carriage, with sheens of saffron and white, creaked its way up the russet hill. Basil Manly, Sr. rode as military escort to the newly elected president of the Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis. They had come to the first capital of the Confederacy, Montgomery, Alabama. It was Davis' momentous inauguration. The day was February 18, 1861. The men rode into an enthusiastic multitude, looking on in jubilation as they witnessed the birth of a revolutionary government. Manly, a traveled and respected Southern Baptist minister, had received an appointment as the first chaplain to the Confederacy; a post which afforded him the opportunity to give the invocation and prayer for the inauguration.¹ The men disembarked their wagon as they reached the top of the hill. Manly was the first to take the stand. The sixty-three-year-old preacher beseeched God, "maker and lord of all things."² By God's will "rulers bear away" and he "teacheth senators wisdom." It was only by God's "kind providence" and "fatherly care" that the Confederate States of America established by "peaceful origin." Manly prayed for Davis, "a man to go in and out before us," that God would give blessing to "this Thy servant." He invoked God's blessing upon the Congress of the Confederate nation, asking that "the administration of this government be the reign of truth and peace." Only

¹ William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front: Montgomery During the Civil War* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 28; A. James Fuller, "Chaplain of the Confederacy: A Biography of Basil Manly, 1798-1868" (Oxford, OH, Miami University, 1995), 297.

² This and the following quotations come from Basil Manly, "Printed Copy of Prayer given by Basil Manly, Sr. at the Inauguration of President Jefferson Davis, Montgomery, Alabama, February 18, 1861" (Text, February 18, 1861), Box 406, Folder 114, The University of Alabama Libraries Special Collections: Manly Family Papers, <http://purl.lib.ua.edu/62091>.

“righteousness” would exalt the nation, “be the stability of our time,” and also “keep us from sin.” Manly concluded with an imprecation. He asked God to “turn the council of our enemies into foolishness.” He asked that the Lord maintain “assured and continued peace in all our borders.” Manly stepped aside amidst cheers to make way for Davis to say his oath of office. The now Confederate president then gave a short speech, swore to uphold his oath of office “so help me God,” and proceeded to kiss a copy of the Scriptures for all to see.³

As will be substantiated, Southern Baptist chaplains informed Confederate culture and religious belief during the American Civil War by contributing to a unique narrative of Southern identity.⁴ This identity, as Southerners understood it, broke down along three concentric relationships: (1) One’s relationship to his nation (nationalism), (2) one’s relationship to those of similar station (honor), and (3) one’s relationship to those of lesser station before God (slaveholder theology). The understanding of one’s role throughout the course of the antebellum, bellum, and post-war period hinged upon a soldier’s place within the social strata of the Southern hierarchy. Of course, not everyone understood their relationships in exactly these terms. Indeed, the social divide between rich and poor whites created its own issues for Southern Baptist chaplains. Nevertheless, Baptist chaplains’ ministerial practices cannot be understood apart from the wider cultural landscape.

At the core of the conflict, Evangelical Christianity permeated both sides and took shape among Confederate soldiers in distinct ways. Like any group of people,

³ Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 30.

⁴ I am partially indebted to Timothy Wesley, *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 122–23. Wesley documented well the circumstances of Southern ministers who both hindered and bolstered the Confederate war effort. Relevant to the present discussion, however, was Wesley’s observation that “Divines in Dixie... played a key role in the important wartime process of Confederate identity formation” (122). He further found that Southern ministers worked to uphold allegiance among Confederate ranks. However, Wesley primarily focused upon ministers’ role in maintaining loyalty to the Confederacy. The present paper will take a deeper look at how a particular group of ministers within this broader context affected specific aspects of Southern wartime identity.

Southerners followed multifarious religious beliefs, held diverse political ideologies, seized upon different opinions of the war and the union, and possessed distinct spiritual needs. So too, chaplains tended their soldiers' souls, while bringing further ideological and cultural diversity within the camps. This diversity manifested principally as mixed ministry between both wealthy and poor whites in Confederate ranks. Even so religion functioned as a glue in Southern Baptist rhetoric to root soldiers in something permanent during seasons of isolation and transience.

While some studies on Civil War chaplaincy have been done, historiographical room exists for denominational studies in the field. Certainly, comprehensive studies would still find a welcome seat at the table.⁵ Unfortunately, Confederate chaplaincy — especially as it informed Southern Baptist life — has become something of a repugnant cultural other, relegated to the outdated annals of bygone scholarship.⁶ The present effort

⁵ The most comprehensive studies to date focus upon wider Civil War religion — see Steven E Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001); Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans's Publishing Co., 2007). Clerical studies have been done on political dissent and situation in the Old South, as well as during the war — see W. Jason Wallace, *Catholics, Slaveholders, and the Dilemma of American Evangelicalism, 1835-1860* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); David B. Chesebrough, *Clergy Dissent in the Old South, 1830-1865* (Carbondale, IL: Board of Trustees, Southern Illinois University, 1996); Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (Yale University Press, 1993). Recently, a wider study on chaplaincy has been published as, Benjamin L. Miller, *In God's Presence: Chaplains, Missionaries, and Religious Space during the American Civil War*, *Modern War Studies* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2019). However, Miller's work, while excellent in its own right, does not focus upon individual denominational or ethnic practices. The significance of *In God's Presence* cannot be overstated, and yet within the historiographic landscape a need remains. Worthy of honorable mention, the work at Mercer University to compile Civil War chaplains' memoirs over a decade ago comprise a substructure for understanding religious and political thought across lines, Benedict R. Maryniak and John Wesley Brinsfield, Jr., eds., *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: The Union* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007); John Wesley Brinsfield, Jr., ed., *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: The Confederacy* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006). Few observe chaplaincy within the context of Southern culture writ large, and none explicitly observe the institution through said cultural lense.

⁶ In the century and a half since the war, many have written biographical studies of significant Southern Baptists who served as confederate chaplains — see John Broadus, *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong And Son, 1893); Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1901); David S. Dockery and Roger D. Duke, eds., *John A. Broadus: A Living Legacy*, *Studies in Baptist Life and Thought* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008); Michael E. Williams, Sr., *Isaac Taylor Tichenor: The Creation of the Baptist New South* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2005); Mikeal C. Parsons, *Crawford Howell Toy: The Man, the Scholar, the Teacher* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2019); Fuller, "Basil Manly." However, many Confederate chaplain studies have since been outdated, with either lack of original source data, or historical inaccuracies, such as Charles F. Pitts, *Chaplains in Gray: The*

will attempt to bridge the historiographical gap by a few millimeters.

The Southern Baptist church brought an indispensable voice to a field of battle through the service of its ministers. Consequently, Baptist chaplains molding Confederate ranks shaped broader cultural concepts within the context of the Southern social and religious culture – namely through Southern nationalism, honor, and slaveholder theology among whites from disparate economic classes. An approach which highlights culture and religion will help bring color to modern scholarship’s understanding of multifaceted wartime life. Therefore, religious analysis brings depth to individuals’ motivations to participate in the war. Southern Baptists reinforced such motivation in the rebel ranks.

The current effort will work in three movements: First, for context, the introduction will give a brief history of Confederate chaplaincy as an institution, followed by a definition and explication of the context of Southern culture. Second, three touchstones of Southern identity – nationalism, honor, and slaveholder theology – will be treated in kind as they were shaped, in some part, by Southern Baptist chaplaincy. Finally, this thesis will place the legacy of the Southern Baptist chaplaincy within the framework of the Southern cultural narrative. Historians have scribbled pages ablaze with the minutiae of wartime politics. For that reason, this effort will focus upon the Christian nationalism of those who ministered in the wartime Baptist South. Rebel Baptist chaplains saw their work as a call to spread religious zeal into their noble Southern cause. Soldiers’ souls demanded their chaplains handle such a call with seriousness.

Confederate Chaplaincy

On March 20, 1863, Dr. J. William Jones, a chaplain in the thirteenth Virginia Infantry, invited John A. Broadus to “take the chaplaincy,” promising comfortable

Confederate Chaplains’ Story (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1957); Herman Norton, *Rebel Religion: The Story of Confederate Chaplains* (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1961); Sidney J Romero, *Religion in the Rebel Ranks* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983).

quarters with mutual acquaintances, or a charge “in a good artillery regiment.”⁷ The Army of Northern Virginia, General Robert E. Lee’s forces, stood encamped at Hamilton’s Crossing in Fredericksburg.⁸ The force held on by a thread, restricted by both the weather and limited resources.⁹ On the heels of a brilliant campaign in 1862, the army had tapped the town’s food and necessities.¹⁰ Winter of 1862-1863 proved a battle in itself. In order to procure more supplies, Lee dispatched two divisions to southern Virginia, under the command of Lt. Gen. James Longstreet.¹¹ The measure was necessary but costly. Lee controlled two infantry corps in Fredericksburg: (1) those of Lt. Gen. Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson’s corps and (2) Longstreet’s remaining forces (two divisions had been ordered to stay in Fredericksburg).¹² Although J. William Jones served the latter, Jackson had been the one to urge Jones to “write to [Broadus] by all means and beg him to come.”¹³ Broadus agreed. Jones recorded Jackson’s response: “I am so glad of that. And when Doctor Broadus comes you must bring him to see me... I wish to help him in his work all I can.”¹⁴ Though Jackson’s untimely death from friendly fire in the battle of Chancellorsville would prevent he and Broadus from meeting, his encouragement of Broadus’ participation reflected the spiritual needs of Confederate camps. Jones concluded his appeal by assuring Broadus his “health would be materially improved” in undertaking the journey, noting that the corps would move on “so soon as

⁷Quoted in: Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 1901, 196–97.

⁸ Robertson, 196.

⁹ James M. McPherson, ed., *The Atlas of the Civil War* (Philadelphia: Running Press Book Publishers, 2005), 95.

¹⁰ Bradford A. Wineman, *The Chancellorsville Campaign: January-May 1863*, The U.S. Army Campaigns of the Civil War (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History; United States Army, 2013), 12–13, https://history.army.mil/html/books/075/75-9/CMH_Pub_75-9.pdf.

¹¹ Wineman, 13.

¹² Wineman, 13.

¹³ Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 1901, 197.

¹⁴ Robertson, 198.

the woods are in condition.”¹⁵ Commanders and Christian co-laborers considered a soldier’s spiritual condition tantamount with those of the material realm.

When the call to muster went out to Southern ministers, the new Confederacy found many ready to answer the cry. On May 3, 1861 the provincial Confederate congress officially sanctioned the office of military chaplain.¹⁶ During the course of the war, around ten percent of America’s ministers received a commission to serve in the chaplaincy.¹⁷ The position would remain a fixture, though its form and function would vary dramatically. Since the Revolutionary Era, the chaplaincy became a mainstay of American military life. J.T. Headley, a contemporary of the Civil War and historian of the American Revolution, testified to the widespread presence of religion among the ranks, asserting, “there was scarcely a military muster at which [clergy] were not present, exhorting the militia to stand up manfully for the cause of God.”¹⁸ The chaplaincy grew from disparate congressional commissions of volunteers without pay. Largely due to the efforts of George Washington in 1775-1776, American chaplaincy eventually stabilized into a mainstay of American military organization.¹⁹

The Baptist church, both in the North and South, set ablaze between 1790 and 1860. During the religious revivals of the 1780s-1830s, Baptists, Methodists, Southern Presbyterians, and Disciples of Christ witnessed a newly democratized evangelical Christianity take root throughout the heretofore sparsely populated South.²⁰ Between 1790 and 1860, the overall number of Baptist churches grew from 858 to 12,150.

¹⁵ Robertson, 197.

¹⁶ Romero, *Religion*, 8.

¹⁷ Holifield, *God’s Ambassadors*, 147.

¹⁸ J.T. Headley, *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner, 124 Grand Street., 1864), 59.

¹⁹ Headley, 60–66.

²⁰ Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 183.

Baptists' rate of growth was only second to the Methodists, with the total number of Baptist churches in 1860 composing more than the next three Protestant denominations combined.²¹ When the Southern Baptists split from their brethren in the North in May of 1845 over the issue of slaveholding missionaries, they drew 293 delegates from nine different states.²² By 1861 a Convention report boasted of over 150,000 members in communion with Baptist churches throughout the Southwestern and Southern states – a total membership which included an ample percentage of blacks.²³ Therefore, by the beginning of the war Baptists had developed into a significant religious force within the South.

Indeed, when the call for Confederate service went forth, Baptist churches were more than capable of responding. Nevertheless, and in spite of widespread reaction (over 1,300 Baptists volunteering as ministers for the South), inconsistent pay rates and physical mistreatment made maintaining any sizeable number of Confederate chaplains difficult.²⁴ Some pastors opted to simply enlist as soldiers; albeit, many seemed to also desire a cut of the action.²⁵ Whatever the thinking, chaplains proved easy to recruit, yet

²¹ See table 9.3 in Noll, 166. The Methodists grew from 20 churches in 1770 to 19,883 in 1860 – an explosive rate. Following Baptists, the next three largest Protestant denominations were Presbyterians with 6,406, Congregationalists with 2,234, and Anglican/Episcopal with 2,145.

²² Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University, 2004), 664; H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1987), 388. McBeth records how the entire delegation comprised around 327, while only represented by 293 persons. Imprecision in reported led estimations of churches represented to range from as few as 300 to as many as 4,000. In point of fact, some delegates represented entire associations (such as Florida in 1846). Others represented individual churches. Of the 293 persons, 273 originated from Georgia, South Carolina, or Virginia (see McBeth, *Baptist Heritage*, 388).

²³ Jesse C. Fletcher, "Effect of the Civil War on Southern Baptist Churches," *Baptist History and Heritage*, Baptists and the Civil War, 32, no. 3 and 4 (October 1997): 38. It should likewise be noted that the outbreak of war saw a significant decline in membership. Fletcher cited one estimate of over 400,000 members lost as a result of the war. Though including both figures he did not explain why such a discrepancy existed in the records. Unfortunately, early Southern Baptist Convention records could be less than detailed in their membership numbers. A postwar South, which had lost West Virginia and all of its African American members, could not maintain its prewar Baptist membership

²⁴ Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On*, 146; Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*, 147.

²⁵ Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On*, 147.

difficult to keep.

According to the Confederacy's chaplaincy statute, the President possessed final authority to appoint and assign chaplains "to such regiments, brigades, or posts as he may deem necessary."²⁶ Even before the government of the Confederacy passed the measure, however, member states outlined stipulations for their own ministers. On April 27th, the Convention of Virginia had sanctioned "one chaplain to each brigade," to be appointed by the governor.²⁷ While the chaplain retained no formal rank, the Convention would assign "the same pay and emoluments as a major of infantry."²⁸ Relegating chaplains to the status of unranked personnel had the added benefit of ensuring adequately qualified officers, while guarding against politically motivated appointments to the office.²⁹ Anyone — be they preacher, lay elder, or simply a Christian soldier — could join as a chaplain. Qualification for the office rested in the opinion of the regimental commander. If the commander produced a recommendation for an individual, it would be passed on to the secretary of war in President Davis' stead.³⁰ The secretary would then appoint with the commander's opinions in mind.

Provision for presidential appointment of chaplains met with mixed support. The measures detractors argued the president could not understand the spiritual needs of every regiment or brigade, let alone every soldier. Critics likewise noted where chaplains

²⁶ Romero, *Religion*, 8.

²⁷ "An Ordinance, On Providing Military Chaplains," *The Religious Herald*, May 2, 1861.

²⁸ The Union paid chaplains \$145 a month (equivalent to a captain of cavalry). The Confederate Congress allotted \$80 every month for the office of chaplain in 1861. Not long after, the amount was dropped to \$50. Most likely, this action was taken to deter those seeking the position for purely financial reasons. Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On*, 145–46; "An Ordinance, On Providing Military Chaplains"; H. C. Clarke, *The Confederate States Almanac, and Repository of Useful Knowledge for 1862*, [14], 80 p. (Vicksburg, Mississippi: H.C. Clarke, 1861), 61, //catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011823709; "Military Pay," American Battlefield Trust, December 8, 2008, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/military-pay>; Pamela Robinson-Durso, "Chaplains in the Confederate Army.," *Journal of Church & State* 33, no. 4 (September 1991): 747.

²⁹ H. Clay Trumbull, *War Memories of an Army Chaplain* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 1–4.

³⁰ Brinsfield, Jr., *The Spirit Divided: The Confederacy*, 10.

were assigned, the soldiers' denominations often did not correlate to that of the minister.³¹ To counteract disparity, and to their credit, the president and secretary of war would often appeal to the recommendation of a commanding officer, who based his decision upon the requests of his men.³² Religious news organizations encouraged pastors or preachers who desired to serve to come and preach a sermon to a regiment. Soldiers then had the opportunity to converse with the minister and might request him as their chaplain.³³ Others noted, however, soldiers and officers frequently preferred a decent companion over a good preacher.³⁴ While the government sought better regulation of chaplains, some denominations opposed state-appointed ministers in any capacity. Baptists were most vocal in their disapproval. Two Baptist newspapers—*The Christian Index* and *Biblical Recorder*—criticized public financial support for military chaplains, citing concerns over the separation of church and state.³⁵ Rhetoric maintaining disconnection between the two was common among Confederate evangelicals, who despised northern evangelicals promoting politics in the pulpit.³⁶ When it came time to call clergy to take up arms, many Southerners viewed Christian ministry as incompatible with warfare.³⁷

As the war broke in full force, thousands of pastors, ministers, and religious leaders took up their bibles to lift soldiers' spirits. Christian support for the Confederacy

³¹ Romero, *Religion*, 8–9; Robinson-Durso, “Chaplains in the Confederate Army.”

³² Romero, *Religion*; Robinson-Durso, “Chaplains in the Confederate Army.”

³³ Romero, *Religion*, 9.

³⁴ Romero, 9.

³⁵ Robinson-Durso, “Chaplains in the Confederate Army.”

³⁶ Wallace, *Dilemma*, 101–3.

³⁷ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University, 2004), 158.

outmanned unionist supporters and abolitionists.³⁸ Clerical support for the war effort permeated early war religious activity. Chaplains on both sides took up more responsibility than the position formally entailed.³⁹ Most understood their role of preaching and spiritually nurturing the soldiers, and still specific expectations during battle had nowhere been fully explained.⁴⁰ Clergy served regiments in different ways and for different lengths of time. H. Clay Trumbull, a Union chaplain with the forces of Connecticut, described the nature of the military and chaplaincy at the dawn of war, “but little was known about regimental chaplains. Our regular army was hardly more than a skeleton organization. A regiment was rarely all in one place.”⁴¹ James P. Boyce, a Southern Baptist Professor, served as chaplain to a volunteer regiment from Greenville over the winter of 1861-1862.⁴² In one of the few records of Boyce’s service, James McCullough, a colonel in the regiment, wrote, “[Boyce] was always found at his post of duty, and was highly esteemed and much loved by the entire regiment.”⁴³ By 1863 the Southern Baptist Convention had resolved that “the providence of God calls loudly on His people to make prompt and vigorous efforts to secure the services of chaplains, and to send forth missionaries and colporteurs into the field.”⁴⁴ Others went as far as active participation in battle, equipped with either guns or words.⁴⁵ Ministers sought to fulfill

³⁸ Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On*, 118.

³⁹ Woodworth, 153–57.

⁴⁰ Woodworth, 157–59; Brinsfield, Jr., *The Spirit Divided: The Confederacy*, 10.

⁴¹ Trumbull, *War Memories*, 1.

⁴² Broadus, *Memoir*, 1893, 188–90. See also, Trumbull, *War Memories*, 14. Trumbull, commenting on Confederate ministers, could admit, “On the Confederate side there might be shown a corresponding record of faithful regimental chaplains.”

⁴³ Broadus, *Memoir*, 1893, 188. Boyce probably resigned the commission due to his father’s business entanglements and financial difficulties upon the family estate (see, Broadus, *Memoir*, 189). To that end, it’s worth noting that chaplain’s pay in the Confederacy amounted to barely a livable wage. More likely than not, Boyce never intended a long-term commission.

⁴⁴ Cited in Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 199.

⁴⁵ Paul Harvey, “‘Yankee Faith’ and Southern Redemption: White Southern Baptist Ministers,

their duty in the most impactful way they could muster.

Officers along with the Gray rank-and-file found chaplains' ministry both worthy of encouragement and a source of uplift. J. William Jones admired the impact of the "quiet Bible-reader and fluent talker upon religious subjects," Stonewall Jackson. Jones even attributed to Jackson a "largely instrumental" role in the early formation of the Chaplain's Association.⁴⁶ He likewise described General Robert E. Lee as having "the deepest interest in the work of his chaplains and the spiritual welfare of his men."⁴⁷ Serving as a private, Carlton McCarthy recalled how "preaching in camp was to many a great pleasure and greatly profitable." Though many were "sick and disheartened," passionate religious fervor would sometimes find purchase amongst the men, such that "thousands of men gladly heard the tidings of salvation."⁴⁸ The chaplains' sermons affected the heart. McCarthy recollected how "many afterwards died triumphant" and those who survived grew into living testimonies of Christian fidelity – testimonies inscribed by the "preaching of the faithful and able men who, as chaplains, shared the dangers, hardships, and pleasures of the campaign."⁴⁹ The chaplain's work accentuated the sermon, but stretched far beyond it in the exercise of his full calling among the soldiers..

Ministry among the Confederacy shifted towards resigned hope in God during the final two years of decline. Increasing defeats challenged the Southern perception of

1850-1890," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 172; Trumbull, *War Memories*, 5; Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On*, 157–59.

⁴⁶ J. William Jones, *Christ in the Camp or Religion in Lee's Army* (Richmond, Virginia: B. F. Johnson & Co., 1887), 93.

⁴⁷ J. William Jones, *Personal Reminiscences of General Robert E. Lee* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, LLC, 2003), 377.

⁴⁸ Carlton McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia: 1861-1865* (Richmond, Virginia: J. W. Randolph & English, 1888), 90–91.

⁴⁹ McCarthy, 91.

their cause. On August 21, 1863, I.T. Tichenor preached a fast-day sermon to the seventeenth Alabama infantry.⁵⁰ Jefferson Davis had issued a proclamation marking the day as a day for fasting and prayer in reaction to the devastating Confederate defeats at Vicksburg and Gettysburg.⁵¹ Tichenor aimed directly at his hearer's hearts, and asked, "When shall we have peace? Two weary years of war have wrung this question from the agonized heart of our bleeding country." Soldiers, widows, statesmen, men and women from all classes and walks of life, all desired the same thing: peace.⁵² Peace would come, but how and when rested in the hands of a sovereign God. The chaplain commanded the men under his care to look to God for lasting peace. Humans make their plans, but, "The continuance of this war does not depend upon the result of battles, upon the skill of our generals, the valor of our soldiers, the wisdom of our statesmen, the resources of our country, or the mad determination of our foes; but *upon the will of our God.*"⁵³ The sermon's weighty tone illustrated the solemnity of the Confederacy's twilight days.

Davis' mandate and Tichenor's rhetoric exemplify a fact of the Confederate nation in which Southern Baptist chaplaincy played a significant role: a religious nationalism unique to the South grown from its roots in Southern culture. Harry Stout and Christopher Grasso noted the significance of pro-South clergy in the Confederacy from its outset.⁵⁴ Many ministers preached "the politics of secession from the pulpit and

⁵⁰ Brinsfield, Jr., *The Spirit Divided: The Confederacy*, 209.

⁵¹ Brinsfield, Jr., 209.

⁵² See Jeff Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins: Slaves and Poor Whites in the Antebellum Southern Countryside* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 223. Therein, Forret highlights disparity in opinion between wealthy and impoverished Southern whites. Non-slaveholding whites made up most of the Confederate army, and most poor whites opposed secession from the beginning of the war. The transient nature of the poor precluded any long-term dedication to a state. Tichenor's comments highlight a core reality shared across socioeconomic lines, and yet highlight the disparity between the Confederate war narrative and reality.

⁵³ Brinsfield, Jr., *The Spirit Divided: The Confederacy*, 209–10.

⁵⁴ Harry S. Stout and Christopher Grasso, "Civil War, Religion, and Communication," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 318–29.

confirm it in print.”⁵⁵ More importantly, these ministers proclaimed the South to be a “chosen nation fighting a righteous crusade.”⁵⁶ Confederate jeremiads spoke of Southerners as a singular community, separate from their northern neighbors, “bound together in a unique Christian nation favored by God.”⁵⁷ Stout and Grasso especially highlight the public fast day — the aim of president Davis’ mandate — as influential to Southern religious nationalism grounded in public Jeremiads in both the antebellum and wartime years.⁵⁸ The vision of a Confederate Christian nation shown through the words of O.S. Barten, Jefferson Davis’ spiritual advisor, who declared God’s “purposes are bound up with us as a nation.”⁵⁹ Southern Baptists were not above the nationalist influence. John A. Broadus wrote a tract entitled, “We Pray for You at Home,” which called forth the grace of God on behalf of Confederate soldiers tempted in their camps. Therein he writes, “We pray for the cause — that just and glorious cause in which you so nobly struggle — that it may please God to make you triumphant, and that we may have independence and peace.”⁶⁰ Amongst many Confederates who served in chaplaincy, the fast day indicated some small part of a wider Christian nationalism within the Confederacy.⁶¹ A chaplain’s work supported the spiritual wellbeing of soldiers in their camps for the betterment of the Southern people. In the words of James Boyce, “The people that rest on Him will not be disappointed.”⁶²

⁵⁵ Stout and Grasso, 318.

⁵⁶ Stout and Grasso, 318.

⁵⁷ Stout and Grasso, 319.

⁵⁸ Stout and Grasso, 319–27.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Stout and Grasso, 322.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 1901, 190.

⁶¹ See also, Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On*, 125–37.

⁶² Thomas J. Nettles, *Stray Recollections, Short Articles and Public Orations of James P. Boyce* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2009), 115. Boyce’s words come from the 1861 annual commencement of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Greenville, SC. He encouraged the students in attendance viewing “the present state of public affairs” in “the fact that God can give the victory with the many or with the few.” It serves as one of the few surviving examples of Boyce’s wartime

Southern Culture

To understand the activity, beliefs, and mission of Southern Baptist Confederate chaplains requires a broader picture of Southern life and culture during the antebellum years. Life in the South varied between individuals of different economic and social classes. Slaves, plantation owners, poor whites, women and wives experienced daily life in drastically different ways. In the Jacksonian Southern upper-classes, European medieval customs held sway over social life. Largely, the European ideal showed itself in the reception of Sir Walter Scott's novel, *Ivanhoe*, published in December of 1819, as well as other European romantic literature.⁶³ "The new generation [1830s and following], under the spell of Walter Scott," wrote Rollin Osterweis, and "saw medieval pageantry in every phase of plantation life."⁶⁴ Looking at the South's intellectual development, one saw the plain stamp of old Europe, as told by the rhetoric of Scott.⁶⁵ Mark Twain would later quip, "The South has not yet recovered from the debilitating influence of his books."⁶⁶

True to form, the phenomenon known subsequently through the historiography as "Southern Honor" held sway over the thought life of wealthy, white, Southern males, shaping the structure of society as a whole.⁶⁷ Bertram Wyatt-Brown identifies three basic

rhetoric. A soldier in a camp that winter would likely have heard similar encouragements.

⁶³ Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South*, Yale Historical Publications: Miscellany 49 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 61–65.

⁶⁴ Osterweis, 61. What's more, speaking in terms of European Romanticism, Osterweis correctly notes, "Sir Walter Scott was clearly the chief purveyor...to the antebellum South" (see Osterweis, 245).

⁶⁵ Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*, vol. I (Chapel Hill and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 4. In O'Brien's assessment, "Only a small proportion of their habits of mind can be said to have been produced indigenously."

⁶⁶ Quoted in Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South*, Yale Historical Publications 49 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 49.

⁶⁷ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 26. Wyatt-Brown identifies two dominant and parallel ethical ideas in the antebellum South, one "pagan" or "Indo-European," and the other, "Stoic-Christian." Southerners who had the convenience would often try to reconcile these two differences.

elements of honor in the Old South: (1) “the inner conviction of self-worth,” (2) “[claiming] that self-assessment before the public,” and finally, (3) “the claim by the public, a judgment based upon the behavior of the claimant. In other words, honor is reputation.”⁶⁸ These three components coalesced into a uniquely Southern republicanism which sought to preserve the past in order to provide stability in society and display one’s honor to said society.⁶⁹

In line with Southern Honor, chivalry took on a life of its own in most of the planter class.⁷⁰ Through the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, farming crops like tobacco contributed to the creation of a new upper-class of society.⁷¹ In Charleston, South Carolina, for example, one observer noted how the wealthy, well-connected, citizens “constituted an aristocracy.”⁷² A disparate economic population brought out continued race and class biases. A wealthy upper-class highlighted the social disparities between poor and wealthy whites as well as poor, enslaved, blacks. Henry Bibb, a runaway, brought out the cultural, moral, and relational disparity exists between lower-class Southerners in his slave narrative.⁷³ For Bibb, poor whites and slaves lived immoral lives.⁷⁴ Unlike plantation owners, many poor whites freely associated with slaves on a social level, even “gambling together on the Sabbath” — an hyperbolic assertion, to say the least.⁷⁵ Bibb distinguished between two classes of poor Southern

⁶⁸ Wyatt-Brown, 14.

⁶⁹ Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, 2002, 216; Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism*, 1949, 215–16.

⁷⁰ Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism*, 1949, 82–102.

⁷¹ Osterweis, 82–83.

⁷² Broadus, *Memoir*, 1893, 12.

⁷³ Henry Bibb, “Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself. With an Introduction by Lucius C. Matlack,” in *Slave Narratives*, The Library of America (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 2000).

⁷⁴ Bibb, 446. Among his descriptions: “[Poor whites] are generally ignorant, intemperate, licentious, and profane.”

⁷⁵ This and the following two categories can be found in Bibb, 446. Also, see Forret, *Race*

white people. First, those who encouraged or manipulated slaves to commit crimes (as punishment was often more severe towards whites). Second, those who disagree with slavery, but generally for self-motivated reasons. Second class of whites disliked the institution of slavery “because it is impoverishing and degrading to them and their children.”⁷⁶ Slave holders — those “rich, aristocratic, and overbearing” — look upon those who engaged in physical labor with “utter contempt.”⁷⁷ Social conditions in the South predicated upon the continuation of slavery as a tool for upper-class enrichment. Poor whites took notice. Bibb concluded, many “non-slaveholders” secretly looked forward to the abolition of slavery, but “they dare not speak it aloud.”⁷⁸

Bibb’s account contradicted Osterweis’ misleading assertion that “The antebellum Southerner, regardless of class, defended the institution [of slavery].”⁷⁹ To his credit, Osterweis accentuated the power of slave revolts to sway poor white opinion towards the institution.⁸⁰ Yet, the full impact of such revolts upon individual consciences cannot be known. Even so, the manpower of the Confederate military, consisting almost entirely of working-class whites, spoke for itself.⁸¹ Trouble maintaining the size of the Southern force arose when white laborers took offense at the evidently unfair situation.

Perhaps the clearest example of inequality came through conscription laws. Beginning in 1862, the Confederate system disproportionately selected working class for

Relations, 20–23. Context is king in settling these two accounts. Living as a slave in rural vs. urban areas, ethics of the local community, and personal biases, significantly altered the degree to which poor whites and slaves associated. However, it’s worth noting that poor whites rarely assisted in slave rebellions (see Forret, 156).

⁷⁶ Bibb, “Narrative,” 446.

⁷⁷ Bibb, 447.

⁷⁸ Bibb, 447.

⁷⁹ Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism*, 1949, 20.

⁸⁰ Osterweis, 20.

⁸¹ Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America* (New York: Viking, 2016), 159.

conscription. On the other side, any wealthy plantation owner with more than twenty slaves under his care received full exemption from service.⁸² Yet (and due in no small part to blowback) by 1864, the Confederate congress made every Southern male between the ages of seventeen and fifty eligible for conscription.⁸³ It has been suggested that many leaders within the Confederacy thought to capitalize on the disparate population of poor whites in the South by repurposing anger away from the upper echelons.⁸⁴ Yet such interpretations assume more than they prove. Rather, the systemic abuse of power and authority, mixed with the sizeable loss of what little property they had, fought any motivation to remain struggling on the losing side of a war. Southern conditions even led some Northerners to suspect that poor whites truly held unionist, and anti-slavery, sentiments.⁸⁵ Though led in large part by her aristocrats, the South's victory during the war rested upon the backs of white laborers on the battlefield.

Working in the South's favor, Southern men held a proclivity for violence commonly across social strata.⁸⁶ Amongst the wealthy, plantation culture differed greatly from evangelical norms.⁸⁷ Whereas evangelicalism would encourage self-control and peace, white Southern males' subscription to honor elevated violence to an expected social good—within its proper context.⁸⁸ Combined factors of the South's frontier character, Celtic tradition, and perhaps even slavery itself, maintaining one's honor was

⁸² Forret, *Race Relations*, 223.

⁸³ Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*, 159.

⁸⁴ Isenberg, 159–69.

⁸⁵ Forret, *Race Relations*, 224.

⁸⁶ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 353–54.

⁸⁷ See Ted Owensby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990). Owensby argued evangelicalism was a feminizing force in the antebellum and postbellum South, challenging masculine norms amongst white Southern men.

⁸⁸ Forret, *Race Relations*, 160–61.

key to Southern social hierarchies.⁸⁹ The way in which one earned honor was by bestowal from the wider community.⁹⁰ Violence was not instigated equally between upper and lower classes, however. Lower class men might be more readily participant in a street brawl, which often left them severely scarred or maimed. Southern gentlemen likewise held a penchant for violence, yet like most things it was to remain within its proper bounds. Gentlemen in disagreement could settle the matter via duel between the two aggrieved parties.⁹¹ A white Southern man's honor stood at the center of his place within the community.

When the Civil War erupted, the Confederacy's revolution intertwined with the tradition of Southern honor culture. More than merely a fight for the Southern way of life, the War of the Union signified a national defense of Southern honor. Even without Sir Walter Scott's influence, the general character of the South gravitated towards Romanticism. As Osterweis eloquently said, "If it hadn't been Scott, it might well have been Malory, Froissart, Byron, Bulwer, Dumas, or someone else."⁹² Honor ingrained itself in the Southern consciousness. And yet, so too did religion. J.D.D. Renfroe could say of the same people, "There is perhaps no word in our language of considerable importance, that occurs more frequently in our conversations, discourses, and literature, than the word religion."⁹³ A carefully cultivated Confederate ethos thereby informed the way chaplains spread Southern nationalism to the soldiers beneath their clarion call. The Southern working class fought for a romanticized ideal of hearth and homeland. Even so,

⁸⁹ Forret, 159–60.

⁹⁰ Forret, 159; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 14–15.

⁹¹ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 352–61; Forret, *Race Relations*, 161–62.

⁹² Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism*, 1949, 52.

⁹³ J.D.D. Renfroe, "A Sermon Preached before the 10th Alabama Regiment Near Fredricksburge Va, in May 1863. Pure and Undeified Religion:" (Notebook, Louisville, KY, 1863), J.D.D. Renfroe Papers, Archives and Special Collections, James P. Boyce Centennial Library.

such archetypes never fell far outside the sphere of Christian influence.

Concluding Analysis

The antebellum and wartime South built itself upon a foundation of romanticism, honor, and religious commitment. Although these three themes varied in their representation among disparate social classes, all shaped the way in which classes understood themselves and interacted with one another. When secession appeared over the horizon all three underpinned Southern nationalism as written in journals, sermonized from pulpits, and preached by the Confederate government. Historians have traced out the roots of the nation. Yet, as has been shown, one could not understand that nation apart from religion; and one cannot understand the social religion apart from those who proclaimed it. These ministers to a nation in crisis did not remain in ivory towers, but journeyed outwards, living in camps and fighting on battlefields. These men sacrificed for a cause they thought noble, both in the Union and in the Confederacy. Baptist chaplains in the South represented a microcosm of an influential class that represented the marriage between religion and nationalism. Chaplains labored to sell the cause of country to those who would be defending it firsthand.

CHAPTER 1

“ALL THE LAND THROWN OPEN:” HALLMARKS OF SOUTHERN IDENTITY

Southern Nationalism

A letter to John A. Broadus from a colleague mourned wickedness in Confederate camps. “Ought we not, especially at this time,” implored the concerned, “to have a tract for profane and wicked professors... who plead the influence of the camp as an apology for their indulgence in wickedness?” The colleague pleaded with Broadus, soliciting, “I write to ask you if you will not write such a one.”¹ Broadus responded with the tract entitled *We Pray for You at Home*. He built up the mettle of soldiers for that “just and glorious cause in which [they] so nobly struggle.” Those at home prayed that the South would have “independence and peace.” Broadus understood that a cause just and righteous did not guarantee victory. In God’s wisdom, he sometimes permitted “those who are in the right to be overwhelmed.” Nevertheless, fervent prayer could never be counted vain, and God might “grant us success in driving our enemies back, till the last footstep of invasion shall have passed from our borders.” It would be God’s will and providence, proclaimed Broadus, which would lead “our now darkened and suffering land” to be “radiant with the sunshine of peace and prosperity.” In the face of many enticing charms, those at home prayed that their soldiers “may be inclined and enabled to commit [their] souls to the divine Saviour.”²

¹ Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 1901, 190.

² John Broadus, “We Pray for You at Home” (n.p., 1862), 3; Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 1901, 191.

Southern Baptist religious language frequently affirmed the concept of a Confederate “land.” As Broadus’ tract exhibited, Southerners fought in order to gain success for their land over the efforts of their enemies. In the valedictory address for the commencement at the end of the second session of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, James Boyce offered an enlivening “parting word” to an already dwindling student body.³ He recognized that “the field of labor... increased” under “[the] threatening circumstances of war.” Boyce implored the students that “all the land” had been “thrown open to the faithful laborer for Christ” in order that they might use the receptiveness and opportunities for service to cultivate their souls “for the future duties of [their] profession.”⁴ Likewise, J. William Jones, recording the South’s rush to “the defence of the border,” spoke of “the call of Virginia [which] now echoes through the land.” For Jones, defined borders heard the reverberating sound: “Alleghany to Chesapeake... Potomac to the North Carolina border, the tramp of her sons is heard.” The volunteers felt the peals of thunder all the way to Texas and the border states of Kentucky, Missouri, and Maryland.⁵

Timothy Wesley, in his book *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War*, perceived the religious role of Southern nationalism both at home and in the war camps. Denominational preachers evangelized unaffiliated Christians. Consequently,

³ Nettles, *Recollections*, 112.

⁴ Nettles, 114. Seeing as Boyce held strong Unionist sentiments at the outset of the war, it could be argued that Boyce’s words were intended to encompass the entirety of the erstwhile United States. Regardless, this assessment seems unlikely. Southern Baptists composed the entirety of the first students of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. One could hardly anticipate a Southern Baptist siding with the Union forces. Furthermore, Boyce frequently references the students’ “period of rest” or “field of labor” in light of the impending crisis. He clearly anticipated that many were leaving to serve the Confederacy, as some students had left prior to the commencement for that purpose. See Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 55. At the very least, Boyce considered that those less experienced would find work in the churches those with greater qualifications had abandoned to take up arms (Nettles, 115). Either outcome would strictly consider the South. Hence, the circumstantial factors strengthen the likelihood that Boyce has the Confederacy in mind in his reference to “land” and “field” during the commencement.

⁵ Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 18.

“denominational preachers,” Wesley observed, “became the South’s chief promoters of Confederate nationalism.”⁶ Nearly every soldier in the fighting ranks came from the working class. Both Union and Confederacy relied heavily upon volunteers and citizen militias. At the start of the war Washington had just over 16,000 troops at its disposal. Only three to four hundred marines had been stationed at capitol.⁷ Most commanding officers, on the other hand, possessed wealth, received an education, and had some tactical experience. The task of educating the masses, both religious and non, fell to the chaplains. Nancy Isenberg went so far as to call the Southern cause “class warfare,” based upon a Southern need to “feel viscerally superior.”⁸ However, sincere nationalistic spirit reverberated through the lower ranks.⁹ So too did the Southern Baptist chaplain I.T. Tichenor write to a friend following the battle of Shiloh, “I feel in my heart a consciousness, that in no other position could I have served the cause of my God or my country so well.”¹⁰ Indeed, for many a Southerner, nation and faith strode hand-in-hand.

The duties of chaplains amongst the soldiers expanded to encompass more than spiritual discipline. Sermons spoke prominently of soldiers’ religious estate. However, discipline, in general, comprised a weak point in the Southern rough-and-tumble ranks. As one historian observed, “poor-white Johnny Reb had one serious fault. He was restive under discipline: he had always done things in his own way, whenever he was ‘a-mind to,’ not when an officer shouted.”¹¹ Of course, loyalty to a supposed nation seemed to

⁶ Wesley, *Politics of Faith*, 128.

⁷ Charles P. Stone, “Washington on the Eve of the War,” in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War: The Opening Battles*, 2nd ed., vol. I, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (Secaucus, NJ: Castle, 1983), n1.

⁸ Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America* (New York: Viking, 2016), 155. See also, ch. 7.

⁹ See McCarthy, *Soldier Life*, 2–3.

¹⁰ Printed in John Wesley Brinsfield, ed., *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: The Confederacy* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 104.

¹¹ Shields McIlwaine, *The Southern Poor-White: From Lubberland to Tobacco Road* (Norman,

wax and wane within the rank-and-file. Unsurprisingly, poor white “Johnny Rebs” constituted most of the Confederate military. With Confederate conscription policy, attendance within the ranks came willingly or no. For all the talk of a man’s loyalty to his country, the country did not appear as loyal to its men. Wealthy planters possessing over twenty slaves (later reduced to fifteen) received a formal exemption from conscription. A right which the underclass was not afforded.¹² The sectional conflict quickly shaped into what many have called, “a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight.” Military policy, inconsistent pay, and conscription mandates exacerbated aggressions between the upper and lower classes.¹³

Moreover, poor white women or wives of the slain often found themselves left to face the world on their own. Among the camp and along military transport railways, refugee women utilized their bodies to gain money and food. The superintendent for Nashville, Tennessee’s Home for Refugees found these poor white women “as dirty as their habits and their morals worse... worse than the Negroes.”¹⁴ With chaplains to convince the fighting men of God’s presence in their cause, the Confederacy bound the heart with a spiritual tie which transcended the everyman’s social and political provocations. Yet James Boyce (somewhat prophetically) saw the outcome of stretched finances in an address to the Georgia Legislature on April 1, 1863, “let [the Confederate government’s] our finances be ruined, let food and clothing continue to advance until our

OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), 76–77.

¹² Peter S. Bearman, “Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U.S. Civil War.,” *Social Forces* 70, no. 2 (December 1991): 322, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9202104140>; Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War & Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 365; Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1924), 70–72; John Sacher, “Twenty Negro or Overseer Law? : Ideas for the Classroom,” August 4, 2017, <https://www.journalofthecivilwarera.org/2017/08/twenty-negro-overseer-law-ideas-classroom/>.

¹³ Bearman, “Desertion,” 322.

¹⁴ Quoted in McIlwaine, *Souther Poor-White*, 80.

soldier find their families are starving and naked, they will return to attend to that first of all duties, – to provide for their own families.”¹⁵ Spiritual authority certainly carried weight, but they seem to have felt their financial insecurity more readily.

The “nation” proved a powerful tool for Southern Baptist chaplains seeking encouragement and purpose to enliven dispirited Southern soldiers. Baptist rhetoric worked to comfort the hearts of soldiers beset by difficulties in the camp, both spiritual and physiological. A post chaplain at Charlottesville in 1863, William F.F. Broaddus penned a pastoral pamphlet entitled “In Camp.” The work sought to answer the question many were asking: “Why am I here?”¹⁶ Therein, Broaddus readily admitted his motivations had little to do with the state of life in the Confederate camp. The justice of the cause made the difference. If the soldier felt convicted in the cause of war, then “present privations” meant little. Justice would “nerve my arm for the deadly conflict, whenever I may be called to meet it.” What was the cause according to Broaddus? The fundamental reason highlighted the Confederate unity proclaimed by many Baptist chaplains. “I am here,” the minister stressed, “because a numerous and powerful enemy has invaded my country, and threatened our subjugation.” There was a battle of rights – the right of self-governance. Chaplains such as Broaddus put forth a narrative to the poor whites in their ranks of defending one’s home. The gun in their hands made for the only thing which stood between the soldiers and “subjugation.” If the Southern nation fell, the rank-and-file would pay with their land, lives, and freedoms. As private McCarthy wrote, “The Confederate soldier fought the cries of distress which came from his home.” The federal government, in Confederate eyes, “persuaded its soldiers that they were the

¹⁵ Broaddus, *Memoir*, 1893, 193.

¹⁶ The quotations in this paragraph are taken from the tract as it appears in Brinsfield, Jr., *The Spirit Divided: The Confederacy*, 45–47.

champions of its constitutional liberty which they were marching to invade, and eventually destroy.”¹⁷

Sermons and tracts fell in lockstep with the general Southern tone of the day – especially as it reflected to the early months of the war. While a sense of “nation” developed in the decades following the Revolution, it was a shared Constitution which bound the states together in a different kind of unity. One such example can be found in the April 25 edition of *The Religious Herald*, a Richmond-based publication, circulated a short editorial entitled “The Crisis.”¹⁸ The nameless author mourned a “once united, prosperous and happy” country which drifted “toward the gulf of relentless civil war.” The writer, however auspicious, took comfort in “one ray of light to relieve the gloom – no fault of Virginia brought the calamity upon us.” Virginia did not seek out war, the article purported, but offered a hand of peace “until it was stricken from her hand with the drawn sword.” Its commentary turned then to Virginia’s departure from the Union barely a week prior. “She would have ceased to be herself,” the article reasoned, “[but] when her SOVEREIGNTY calls, she has no sons who will not answer to the summons.”¹⁹ So too, when John Broadus recalled Southern unionists (such as Boyce), he readily admitted, “the great mass of those who opposed the Secession movement... still decided to go with the State.”²⁰ The sympathy owed its origin to the way the American nation had been understood up until this juncture. Because the country began with the states, then states held the keys to loosen what had been bound. Therefore, when South Carolina seceded

¹⁷ McCarthy, *Soldier Life*, 8.

¹⁸ “The Crisis,” *The Religious Herald*, April 25, 1861, 66. Microfilm.

¹⁹ Author’s emphasis. The same edition would, in another place on the same page, describe North Carolina’s “spontaneous and universal movement” for secession. In doing so the state had “repudiated the usurping power at Washington and resumed her sovereignty.”

²⁰ Broadus, *Memoir*, 1893, 186.

almost all who would have disagreed could not speak of dissention. As Broadus conceded, “we could not do otherwise.”²¹

What caused the rise of secessionism? It could have been that the agrarian nature of Southern society necessarily kept regional nationalism at the fore of many consciences, leaving the Revolutionary debate between central and state authority up for debate.²² Others disagreed with this hypothesis, instead offering that the South, while loyal and proud of the Union which their ancestors worked to conceive, saw Northern action to limit slavery as veiled attempts to divest the South of national political equality.²³ Using just such rhetoric, Jefferson Davis proclaimed in his inaugural address that the uniting of states in 1789 “undeniably [recognized] in the people the power to resume the authority delegated for the purposes of government.”²⁴ For Davis, secession sentiments arose not from an elite class, but by sovereign states. Still other historians (such as James McPherson) highlighted disparate supporter turnout during secession votes in Alabama and Georgia, as well as the concept of conditional unionism, as evidence of (albeit, in a weak form) ascent to separation.²⁵ McPherson’s thesis found like support in the swiftly wrought Southern fighting force. As one account recollected, the

²¹ Broadus, 186.

²² J.V. Ridgely seems to suggest this in *Nineteenth-Century Southern Literature* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 19. Undoubtedly, it could be regarded as a contributing element. Similarly, Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 49–51, documented the role of slavery in slowing the gradual march to industrialization in the South. See also Ralph T. Eubanks, “The Rhetoric of the Nullifiers,” in *Oratory in the Old South: 1828-1860* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 20–21; Brian Schoen, “Southern Wealth, Global Profits: Cotton, Economic Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War,” in *The Transnational Significance of the American Civil War*, ed. Jörg Nagler, Don H. Doyle, and Marcus Gräser, Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 69–90.

²³ Avery Craven, *The Growth of Southern Nationalism: 1848-1861*, vol. VI, A History of the South (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press and the Littlefield Fund for Southern History of the University of Texas, 1953), 399–401.

²⁴ Jefferson Davis, “Inaugural Address: February 18, 1861,” in *The American Nation: Primary Sources* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2009), 33.

²⁵ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 238–39.

Southern soldiery were made up of “raw troops thrown hastily together, a citizen soldiery that had never marched to battle except through the pages of books.”²⁶ Indeed, Southern lay support owed itself to an intersection of the second and third hypotheses.

Whatever the case, the Southern narrative placed itself as the calculated victim of cold Northern aggression. Belief in the cause began with belief in the land. “Dixie” relied upon the dedication of its men in arms (a fact which the Confederate government found daunting as it would struggle to pay its men). The narrative pervaded political and pastoral discourse. When William Howard Russell, a correspondent of the *London Times*, came to America in 1861, he visited Montgomery, Alabama on the sixth of May to see the Provisional Confederate Congress. While there he wrote of “a white-headed clergyman” who had been called upon to pray before the body. The reverend prayed for God to “inflict on the arms of the United States such a defeat that it might be the example of signal punishment forever.” He then prayed for God to bless the president and his officers. Russell thought the prayer “long and sulphureous.”²⁷ J.D.D. Renfroe criticized the South, as for all their religious talk, the spirit of true Christian religion was all but forgotten. He observed, in scathing terms, how “the scribes of the age, whether saint or sinner, talk as profusely of religion as would an apostle or pharisee.” Renfroe urged the men towards moral uprightness in the camp, putting before them the example of “a brave soldier and sainted minister” who fell at Fort Donalson. “I never could look at that man’s face,” Renfroe said, “without thinking of our savior.”²⁸

²⁶ Thomas Duncan, *Recollections of Thomas D. Duncan: A Confederate Soldier* (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1922), 63.

²⁷ William Howard Russell, “A Visit to the Capitol in Montgomery,” in *The Civil War Reader*, ed. Richard B. Harwell (New York: Mallard Press, 1958), 34.

²⁸ Renfroe, “Pure Religion.” For ease of reading, I’ve opted to make two minor editorial changes to the quotation. Renfroe inadvertently doubled his first “the” in the quotation, as well as spelled “pharisee” as “pharasee.”

Examples such as these demonstrate the reality of a religious war. Therein, competing visions of American nationalism fought in pulpits as well as cornfields. Southern Baptist chaplains used impermanent podiums to propagate the Confederate narrative, thus tying the chords of nationalism around a fledgling Southern country.²⁹

Southern Honor

Alexis de Tocqueville, considering what constituted American “honor,” stumbled upon a surprisingly profound idea: humanity’s best interest was served if men did not try to kill each other.³⁰ Yet, in certain cases, “homicide” could be excused or even esteemed. “Honor is nothing other than this particular rule,” noted to observer, “based on a particular condition, with the aid of which a people or a class distributes blame or praise.”³¹ He seemed dissatisfied with his own answer, however. He scribbled a note commenting on the passage nearly ten years after the fact: “To act by *honor*, that is to act not with absolute good or evil in view, but in consideration of what our fellows think of it and of the shame or the glory that will result from it.”³² As another historian explained, “honor referred to a value system or set of cultural beliefs that emphasized one’s manliness, reputation, and standing in the community.”³³ While most Southerners tried not to kill one another, Baptist chaplains worked to shape the strength and effort of those many thought to have a penchant for violence into a productive code of honor, civility, and moral duty for the Confederate nation.

Tocqueville observed America in the midst of its European romantic era; the

²⁹ Bearman, “Desertion,” 322.

³⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Eduardo Nolla, vol. II (Carmel, IN: Liberty Fund, 2012), 1095.

³¹ de Tocqueville, II:1096.

³² Quoted in de Tocqueville, II:1096, fn. “e.”

³³ Forret, *Race Relations*, 159.

same which Rollin Osterweis called, “a surging, self-conscious movement” occurring between 1760 and 1860. Osterweis defined it as “a literary and artistic effort to create a new set of values.”³⁴ Ann Douglas proposed two definitional characteristics, which proved quite helpful. She, in reality, spoke of three. First (1), the nineteenth-century romantics sought “defiance of sentimentalism.” Second (2), they rejected the “incipient mass culture.”³⁵ An additional feature should also be added as (3) the exaltation of the self. The last of the three searched inwards for the tools to overcome an increasingly modernizing society.³⁶ When considered in this light, romanticism and the antebellum South seem star-crossed. An economically necessary slave-based agrarian society left behind in the wake of an increasingly industrial Northern counterpart had pinned the upper-class South’s way of life against a wall. Therefore, the attraction of looking to the past to find new conceptions of virtue in a developing age became much more plausible.

History provided the wealthy white Southerner with an unusual “honor” complex. One which, though all white men ascribed to it, fell far short of equal in its dispersal.³⁷ Poor and working-class whites were hardly viewed as possessing any honor akin to that of the upper echelons of society. From the perspective of the upper classes, whites who worked with their hands fell subject to archaic biases against the “honorless.”³⁸ It could not properly have been said that poor whites lacked any sort of honor, for all whites held a kind of honor by virtue of their superiority to blacks, yet to the slaveholder their poorer kin fell far outside their circle.³⁹ Wealthy whites (and in

³⁴ Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism*, 1949, 8.

³⁵ Douglas, *Feminization*, 236.

³⁶ Douglas, 255.

³⁷ Forret, *Race Relations*, 160.

³⁸ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 46.

³⁹ Forret, *Race Relations*, 20–21, notes how poor whites had long been portrayed as among the most disdainful towards slaves. Be that as it may, the narrative probably contains less-than-truthful elements given the similarities in daily life between poor whites and black slaves. Still, slave patrols were

particular, slaveholders) of the upper class saw themselves possessing a proportionately higher amount of honor, by virtue of their rank, than those less fortunate.⁴⁰ One could argue that a special sense of superiority may have been felt by some poor whites toward slaves due to the former's freedom and lighter skin. Nevertheless, the complexity of honor distribution and interracial relationships could not be reduced to a monolith. Honor was held, and primarily embraced, by those of the slaveholding class.

A spectrum of class struggles certainly resulted from social conditions; even so, the concept of the wealthy's sense of paternalism toward the proletariat and slave classes has been overplayed. Indeed, how slaveholding whites viewed their poorer kin enlivened much debate over the last few decades. After all, most masters supplied slaves with all the necessities of life; a privilege which the working-class could not be afforded. Wyatt-Brown recognized the developing popularity of the "paternalist" explanation in his work on Southern honor.⁴¹ Jeff Forret seemed to hold onto the paternalist view in regard to slaveholders, claiming that "paternalist impulses and concerns with their own economic well-being prevented [slaveholders] from despising slaves as poor whites allegedly did."⁴² Even Mark Noll in *America's God* characterized Southern republican virtue as "organic dependence in communities protected by benevolent patriarchs."⁴³ In contrast, Wyatt-Brown highlighted the rise of Methodist and Baptist faith as transformative to bourgeoisie attitudes.⁴⁴ The spread of Evangelical religion among the masses saw moral transformation among all classes along religious lines.⁴⁵ As *Southern*

often composed of poor whites, resulting in even the most empathetic to slave-directed violence (123).

⁴⁰ Forret, 160.

⁴¹ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 68.

⁴² Forret, *Race Relations*, 21.

⁴³ Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, 2002, 368.

⁴⁴ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 68.

⁴⁵ Wyatt-Brown, 66–68.

Honor asserted, patriarchalism toward whites “was replaced by a more democratic outlook, one that still stressed hierarchy, but the old, rigid styles of an earlier day were generally blurred.”⁴⁶ Likewise, Nathan Hatch argued persuasively that the upsurge of “evangelical Christianity in the early republic is, in some measure, a story of the success of common people in shaping the culture after their own priorities rather than the priorities outlined by gentlemen...”⁴⁷ While Hatch’s assessment pertained to the earlier revolutionary era, the influence of individualistic Baptist faith upon the South’s frontier developed into a much more egalitarian religion than previously assumed.

Among Baptist chaplains one would be hard pressed to find concern of the rank of a man over his behavior. Pastoral experience within the long-democratized Baptist religion brought rare equality in spiritual matters where social demarcations would have pressed many outside the camp. The general honor of a Southern soldier demanded his faithfulness to the cause. William F. Broaddus recognized the bonds of duty, determining, “I am impressed in some degree (may I be more and more so) with the obligations that rest upon me as a soldier.” The soldier was to tend to his health, protect his morals from “the seductive power of evil examples,” and discharge his responsibilities faithfully. Broaddus saw the soldier’s duty as concentric, owed “to myself, to my friends, my country, and my God.” The faithful soldier bore the weight of his position with cheerfulness, as the pamphlet urged, “with honor to myself.” The sword of war, being now drawn from its scabbard, could not be overthrown until “the nations of the earth (including the proud, boasting *North*)” had wrested it from their rebel fingers. Every soldier had a place in “a nation of freemen.”⁴⁸ I.T. Tichenor, far from a bourgeoisie member of the planter class, nevertheless saw eschatological importance in the moral

⁴⁶ Wyatt-Brown, 68.

⁴⁷ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 9.

⁴⁸ Brinsfield, Jr., *The Spirit Divided: The Confederacy*, 46–47.

excellence of every Southerner, and the world of “social order and peace” which the institution of slavery would bring to the world. “I confidently believe God is preparing us,” Tichenor boasted in a fast-day sermon during August of 1863, “[These] preparations requires purity among our people; a proper understanding and regard for the rights of both master and servant, confidence in Him as our God, and above all a desire not so much for national glory as for the honor of God and the good of our race.” Yet, Tichenor had little confidence in his people’s readiness when he concluded, “Not yet I fear are we prepared for so great a distinction. God grant that we soon may be.”⁴⁹ Rather than see the paradox of bondage within “a nation of freemen,” the enslaved population would constitute the means of social illumination in the Southern eschaton to come. Even so the expectation of moral exemplariness pervaded every class of free fighting man.

Whether or not the equal call to honorableness had its affect remains a matter of heavy debate. As the war progressed many soldiers deserted due to lack of pay, poor living conditions, or detachment from the cause. A wartime Confederate poem of the era chided the way commanding officers saw their contingency as merely “the men:”

**Here no collar has bar or star,
No rich lacing adorns a sleeve;
Further on our officers are,
Let them your report receive.
Higher up, on the hill up there,
Overlooking this shady glen,
There are their quarters—don’t stop here,
We are only some of ‘the men.’**

The ballad ended with the somber refrain: “Know, if your freedom is ever won by human agents—these are the men!”⁵⁰ One can hardly imagine such words written by

⁴⁹ Brinsfield, Jr., 219.

⁵⁰ Maurice Bell, “The Men,” in *War Songs and Poem of the Southern Confederacy 1861-1865: A Collection of the Most Popular and Impressive Songs and Poems of War Times, Dear to Every Southern Heart Collected and Retold with Personal Reminiscences of the War*, ed. H.M. Wharton (W.E. Scull, 1904), 208.

anything less than seasoned regulars. Nancy Isenberg pointed to a lack of connection with the Confederate cause among proletariat whites as cause of weak enthusiasm in the ranks. In her work the Confederate leaders “dragooned at least 120,000 conscripts. There were between 70,000-150,000 substitutes... only 10 percent ever reported to camp.” Of those who did report “as many as 180,000 men were at best ‘reluctant rebels,’ those who resisted joining until later in the war.” For her case, these discrepancies indicated “among average soldiers there was little evidence of a deep attachment to the Confederacy.”⁵¹

On the other hand, the North likewise a great deal of desertion in its own time. H. Clay Trumbull, a chaplain in the tenth regiment of Connecticut volunteers, recounted in his memoirs the lethargy of the army to punishment its deserters. “The war had been fully a year and a half in progress,” he lamented, “before the death penalty was executed on a deserter, according to the records of the War Department.” Before the first execution had taken place “thousands had deserted from the army with small danger of harm to themselves.”⁵² In the month following the battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862 (which left 12,000 Union dead against 5,000 Confederates), laxing discipline, and rampaging sickness saw desertion in the Army of the Potomac reach a rate of over a hundred soldiers per day.⁵³ Rather than characterizing the dedication of the soldiery to one cause or another, desertion indicated the general unhappiness of troops with any number of their unfortunate conditions. Perhaps it was in comparison with the North which inspired the words of one soldier who praised his Confederate comrades: “The courage and devotion of the men rose equal to every hardship and privation, and the very intensity of their sufferings became a source of merriment. Instead of growling and

⁵¹ Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*, 165.

⁵² Trumbull, *War Memories*, 178.

⁵³ William L. Barney, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 136; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 584.

deserting, they laughed at their own bare feet, ragged clothes and pinched faces.”⁵⁴

Southern Baptist chaplains tried to combat a flighty spirit through their rhetoric and general appeals to honor. J. William Jones looked to the physical struggles experienced by every footman, asking while in a moment of rhetorical flourish, “Do my sufferings make my country’s cause less dear to me? Shall I desert a cause, for which I have already suffered so many privations? No! no! no! Perish the unworthy thought! Come, comrades, here’s *in for the war!*”⁵⁵ McCarthy recalled the blows taken among the soldiers by “disease, wounds, desertions, and death.” Confederate soldiers, he reasoned, had their own peculiarities which, no doubt, altered the charge of the chaplaincy. The Southern man “was ever ready to fight, but never ready to submit to the routine duty and discipline of the camp or the march.” Each soldier “determined to be soldiers after their own notions, and do their duty, for the love of it, as they thought best.”⁵⁶ In the face of desertion chaplains felt the weight of responsibility to spiritually nourish and heartily uplift those under their sacred charge.

Few sermons illustrate Baptist rhetoric better than the fast day sermon of J.J.D. Renfroe, a Baptist chaplain in the tenth Alabama regiment. In an almost challenging cadence Renfroe proclaimed, “Is there a single man here who would retrace the honored steps he has taken for the defence [sic] of his native land? No, there are none of that class here.” Their “proud record” saw their courage on full display before the world. Those “who would sell his country or desert his country’s flag” comprised “those faint-hearted whiners, who cry peace, peace, when there is no peace.” Renfroe defied, “We have to fight on!” The sermon referenced an essay by Sir William Temple entitled *Heroic Virtue*, which reinforced the Biblical principle that “Large armies and great powers do not

⁵⁴ McCarthy, *Soldier Life*, 28.

⁵⁵ Brinsfield, *The Spirit Divided: The Confederacy*, 47.

⁵⁶ McCarthy, *Soldier Life*, 38–39.

always conquer the smaller and weaker.” Renfroe then pursues a grand historical overview through “historic battles” that vindicated his principle. He cited Cyrus’ Persians who proved victorious against the Assyrians but were then conquered by the lesser Macedonians. He saw his principle in the Lacedemonians, the Romans under Caesar, and even the Turks and Tartars. He looked to English history in victories such as Cressy and Agincourt. He named monarchs of Italy, France, and Germany. All of history demonstrated that “The battle is the Lord’s everywhere, and by whomsoever fought... He will defend the right!”⁵⁷ One might have wondered as to the ability of those enslaved blacks and poor whites who heard to follow along the grand procession.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, honor and history demanded nothing less than the full strength of every soldier in the Southern armies.

In their public oratory Baptist chaplains developed an idea of honor which upheld the cause of the Southern nation with a dedicated blood. Honor, they hoped, would keep the soldiers trudging through the maddening mud-fields of war. Soldiers heard of honor in juxtaposition to desertion as a crime against their community and country. They also the harsh punishments doled out to those who were caught. For many, no doubt, the worse outcome from desertion could be the social degradation of those who gave into their fear. Indeed, chaplains wanted no “faint-hearted whiners,” but full-throated men ready to shout the rebel cry from blood-soaked arenas of battle. The South sought her sons who would march until their boots broke apart, and then press forward on

⁵⁷ John Jefferson Deyampert Renfroe, “*The Battle Is God’s: A Sermon Preached Before Wilcox’s Brigade on Fast Day, the 21st of August, 1863, Near Orange Court-House, Va.* (Richmond, Virginia: MacFarlane & Fergusson, 1863), 7–8, <https://cdm.bostonathenaeum.org/digital/collection/p16057coll14/id/90303/>.

⁵⁸ Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1998), 117, recounted a letter from Renfroe to his ministerial replacement at the Talladega Baptist Church, one J.B. Mays, which asked the latter to assist in preaching some revivals among the camp. Therein, Mays bemoaned his inability to preach in simple enough language for “Negroes and poor whites.” Renfroe retorted that his brigade “included some of the smartest men in Alabama.” Himself a self-educated man, Renfroe certainly did not seem to find the intellectual ability of the soldiers too lacking to follow his sermon.

bloody bare feet. Southern chaplains saw honor as the glue which would keep their force together and give the Confederacy a fighting chance to the bitter end.

Slaveholder Theology

In a letter to John A. Broadus, James Boyce looked sorrowfully at the trials of war. For Boyce, the conflict would cost much more than lives. The war cost souls. Gambling lives in combat risked the eternal destiny of those in a chaplain's care. "You cannot know how tenderly my heart yearns over them," Boyce said of the soldiers, "How many, after all, must go unprepared into the presence of God." He thought well of preaching as often as he could to whomever would listen, reasoning, "[I] would do it if I thought I could accomplish more that way." Nevertheless, as a strong Calvinist, Boyce knew men were not willing to believe, regardless of anything he could do. The chaplain, seminary professor, and slaveholder, wrote with conviction, "Oh, that God might only aid me and help me in what I can do! It would be enough to bring multitudes to him."⁵⁹ Baptist Chaplains, in lock-step with cultural milieu, thought of "Providence" as God's guiding force behind human events to bring about his will for ultimate good.⁶⁰ A week following the Southern victory at First Manassas, Broadus preached to the South Carolina Baptist Convention out of Psalm 44:6-8. He urged ministers in attendance to hold onto providence with ferocity, "not taking everything for granted from a single success." As Broadus' biographer records the incident, some in attendance "felt that [Broadus] was not quite up to the requirements of the occasion." In their opinion, "Our Southern cause was right. The right must succeed."⁶¹ The doctrine of Providence differed slightly among

⁵⁹ Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 1901, 188–89.

⁶⁰ Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 75. Noll offers a robust definition of the nineteenth-century concept of Providence as God's control over human events coupled with tremendous confidence in human reason. Therefore, a unique historical and conceptual situation informs the use of the word "Providence" in this segment. For these reasons, terms such as "Providence" and "Providential" have been capitalized to distinguish them from modern notions of the same concept. The historic idea has been explained further on the following page.

⁶¹ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus* (Philadelphia:

Baptists, some urging caution while others favored confident advancement, yet nearly all bore a vested interest in its interpretation. Their Confederate chaplains reckoned from God's Providential hand through foundational teleology to form a unique theological system both defensible and biblically reasoned as American slaveholder theology. While these two principles did not encompass all of slaveholder theology, Providence and hierarchy functioned as necessary qualities fundamental to the entire structure.

Providence

Mark Noll offered perhaps the most cogent contextualization of nineteenth century Providence. In general, "Americans thought they could see clearly what the world was like, what God was like, what factors drove the world, who was responsible for events," and most importantly, "how the moral balance sheet should be read." In a profound marriage true to their inheritance from the Revolution, "They were children of the Enlightenment as well as children of God." The American Civil War resulted in a disquieting "conflict in understanding providence." When "God appeared to be acting... at odds with himself" it resulted in "a profound theological crisis."⁶² Where some have asserted economic factors as the most serious destabilizing force of the mid-1800s, America experienced profound theological dissention which chaplains verbally weaponized to discredit the cause of their enemies.⁶³ Noll's focus stood closer to what David M. Potter, described as "a conflict of values, rather than a conflict of interests or a conflict of cultures" as the core of the War Between the States.⁶⁴ Noll's *The Civil War as*

American Baptist Publication Society, 1901), 187–88.

⁶² Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 75.

⁶³ See Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 12. To his credit, Guelzo acknowledged "a common religion" as an influential factor. However, he saw religion as a state-level unification tool. Noll's work functioned as a counter-harmony to Guelzo on this point.

⁶⁴ David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: America Before the Civil War, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1976), 41. Potter himself did not advocate such a solitary causal view, opting instead for diverse causation across economic, cultural, and value-centered contributors.

a *Theological Crisis* gave doctrinal bones to the clash between both actors. Indeed, the way in which Baptists spoke of God's hand in human affairs of their time revealed the complex importance of theology in nationalistic sermons and rhetoric. In the words of Isenberg, "Wars are battles of words, not just bullets."⁶⁵

Providence conceptually engulfed the rapidly fragmenting union. Just months before the war's commencement, Boyce wrote a letter to his brother-in-law H.A. Tupper, a resident of Georgia, explaining his opinion on the formation of the Southern Confederacy. Boyce supported resistance, though he valued maintaining the Union. In the midst of radical change, he saw himself as "old foggy enough to love the past, with all its glorious associations."⁶⁶ Indeed, Southern slavery had an historic character to many educated Confederates. The historian Allen Guelzo highlighted the assumed continuity of slavery in the old South "from the Bible or from Caesar, Livy, or Suetonius."⁶⁷ Boyce, quite the Latinist, would certainly have seen in the slave system a hallowed tradition dating back to the Greeks and Romans.⁶⁸ However, his compunction for Biblical fidelity carried a theological spirit to his understanding of slavery as ultimately an institution guided by Providence. Prophetically Boyce saw in the war "the end of slavery." He wrote to Tupper, "I believe we are cutting its throat, curtailing its domain. And I have been, and am, an ultra pro-slavery man. Yet I bow to what God will do." As Providence moved in secession, Boyce feared "that our sins as to this institution have cursed us." More specifically, marital and spiritual care had been ignored among the slaves.⁶⁹ He

⁶⁵ Isenberg, *White Trash*, 155.

⁶⁶ Broadus, *Memoir*, 1893, 185.

⁶⁷ Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 29.

⁶⁸ Broadus recorded Boyce's constant desire to improve his skill with the language, describing him as "an eager and diligent student." Within the seminary, Boyce zealously encouraged students to study "Latin text-books" and made a habit to engage in "a regular series of recitations in the language to one of his friends, who was known to have made Latin a specialty." While this friend was never named, one can speculate from the context that Boyce studied with Broadus himself. John Broadus, *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong And Son, 1893), 182.

⁶⁹ See Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: The Penguin Group,

concluded, “I fear God is going to sweep it away, after having left it thus long to show us how great we might be, were we to act as we ought in this matter.” Though reluctant at the outset, the doctrine of Providence could reveal either the blessing or cursing that would come upon the Southern nation.

The specific, event-driven, view of Providence would take greater shape through the course of the war. This was especially true leading up to the fast-day sermons in late August of 1863. An unsuccessful campaign in Gettysburg in late June through early July followed by the surrender of Vicksburg and retreat of Robert E. Lee saw the Confederacy questioning Providence. What sin remained to draw God’s ire? Jefferson Davis implored the Confederacy “to unite in prayer and humble submission under his chastening hand.” The nation had nowhere else to turn. Turning to God, chaplains reiterated Davis’ assessment that “from [God], in His paternal providence, comes the anguish of defeat,” and for every son and soldier alike “to unite in supplication for the favor and protection of that God who has hitherto conducted us safely through all the dangers that environed us.”⁷⁰ That Sunday I.T. Tichenor asked if the South had prepared spiritually for peace, for “God has in view... permitting the calamities of war to scourge this people.”⁷¹ Confederate soldiers could only look to God with repentance and spiritual transformation. Masters had a duty to their slaves, which slave-masters had failed to meet. The separation of husband from wife, and child from parent, constituted “an evil of no minor magnitude, and one which demands an immediate reply.” Moreover, their “moral and religious” condition had been overlooked as plantation “fields have been made white with abundant harvests.” Slaves gave their masters great wealth, yet it “has

2007), 306–7; Sowande’ M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 112–13. Both texts describe in vivid color the pain and struggle endured by African slaves through familial Separation. As Mustakeem observed, “The fundamental core of slavery disjoined African families” (113).

⁷⁰ Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 46–47.

⁷¹ Brinsfield, *The Spirit Divided: The Confederacy*, 214.

been spent with lavish hands, while scarcely a pittance has been given to furnish them with the Bread of Life.”⁷² Of the many national sins which could be considered, Baptist chaplains saw Southerners’ guilt as partially caused by the breakdown of black families and their Christian spirituality. Nations received success as granted by God’s Providence, yet the same Providence worked simultaneously as judge, jury, and executioner against the unrepentant and wicked.

Providence could work in both negative and positive ways. In the former case, J.J.D. Renfroe exposed pride leading to disobedience as the chief cause of God’s indignation. “We have boasted of the justness of our cause,” he preached with disdain, “and while defending that cause we have sinned against God in a thousand ways, forgetting that the Lord says, ‘I will be with *you* while ye be with *me*.’” They sought out aid in the “powers that be” rather than bend knee to Christ and “[lift] our supplications to the Sovereign of the universe.” Renfroe cried out in woe, “O! sirs, how shall our country’s cause tunnel its way through this huge mountain of iniquity?” The remedy could only come through nationwide fasting and prayer.⁷³ The latter way of Providence came through trust. In his fast-day sermon on Proverbs 3:17, John A. Broadus urged the soldiers to “Trust in providence” instead of luck. Even “the uniformity of the laws of nature.” Instead, the Christian places “trust in a personal God who governs all things by his powerful Word.” He concluded the point with an uplifting proclamation. The work of the Father takes the happiness of his children into account.⁷⁴

Summarily, unlike modern-day understandings of divine providence as an unknowable moving force in the background of life, Providence in the South constituted

⁷² Brinsfield, 217.

⁷³ Renfroe, *Fast Day Sermon*, 20–21.

⁷⁴ John A. Broadus, “The Pleasures of Piety: A Sermon by John A. Broadus,” Baptist History Homepage, accessed September 27, 2020, <http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/broadus.sermon.plea.piety.html>.

a knowable, observable, and nationally connected phenomenon that rested, in part, on the obedience or rebellion of God's people. The Confederacy – grounded upon its identity as a nation composed of Christians who were in covenant with God – would experience blessing or cursing on the battlefield in response to their covenant faithfulness. This understanding, though not uncommon at the time, made up a presuppositional tenet of Southern slaveowner theology.

Hierarchy

The order of the universe existed as the natural state of affairs as God had (Providentially) designed. Every class of person had a role to fill in the presence of a natural aristocracy and natural slave. This position found advocates among both rich and poor, officer and soldier, and minister and footman. Hierarchy arose from biblical analysis. Tichenor decried nations who stood as “a unit in their opposition to our social system,” held captive “in the madness of their fanaticism,” totally devoid of reason. Who could doubt that the Bible sanctioned slavery? Tichenor, quoting Genesis 9:25, called slavery “[f]ounded on the divine decree that ‘Canaan should be a servant of servants unto his brethren’... [slavery] stands as an institution of God.”⁷⁵ Historian James M. McPherson has argued persuasively that the South's republican vision remained consistent from the time of America's founding. Rather, the North abandoned the past and rushed headlong into industrialism. The South, like most societies at the time, held a somewhat enslaved force. McPherson designated the region as “bound by traditional values and networks of family, kinship, hierarchy, and patriarchy.”⁷⁶ For chaplains aiding the cause, theirs was a counterrevolution against a religious and culturally radical foe.

⁷⁵ Brinsfield, *The Spirit Divided: The Confederacy*, 218.

⁷⁶ McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 860; Likewise, Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 216, agreed that, “Southern forms of republicanism remained closer to the deferential, class-stratified, and socially organic civic humanism of the early Revolutionary period.”

Hence, the God-ordained hierarchy of society displayed order to an increasingly radicalizing social order.

Black Africans, by virtue of what Guelzo deemed “Romantic racism,” and negro slaves were seen as irrevocably broken; even subhuman.⁷⁷ In occupying the lowest social strata, black slaves granted poor whites a level of superiority which otherwise would have been impossible for them to occupy. Nearly two decades before, in his famous debate with Francis Wayland, the Baptist minister Richard Fuller warned that “immediate and unconditional abolition would be a revolution involving the entire South in ruin; breaking up all social order and peace.”⁷⁸ Likewise, in the months following the end of the war, a writer with the pseudonym “Caucasian” wrote into *The Daily Phoenix*, a newspaper based out of Columbia, S.C., decrying the practicality of any legal equality between the races. “Pride of race alone,” the writer speculated, “will keep us from subjecting ourselves to their penalties and thus leave them for whom they are really designed.” Even if “the negro is equal or superior to the white man,” the legislation would allow the acknowledgement of such a position. In their observation, both history and experience proved “[the negro] is inferior.”⁷⁹ Racial superiority, as expressed by its advocates, barred any attempt at true equality with the white man. Blacks were simply seen as biologically inferior.

Socially trusted individuals would attempt to manipulate poor whites by threatening them with displacement within the natural, hierarchical, order. Perhaps more

⁷⁷ Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 30.

⁷⁸ Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence Between the Rev. Richard Fuller, of Beaufort, S.C., and the Rev. Francis Wayland, of Providence, R.I. Revised and Corrected by the Authors*. (New York: Lewis Colby, 1845), 136, <https://archive.org/details/domesticslaveryc00full/page/n5/mode/2up?q=%22social+order%22>.

⁷⁹ N.A., “Letter to the Editor of the Phoenix,” *The Daily Phoenix*, September 5, 1865, University of South Carolina, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84027008/1865-09-05/ed-1/seq-2/#date1=1861&index=0&rows=20&words=equal+equality+negro&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=South+Carolina&date2=1865&proxtext=negro+equal&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>.

than any other, J.J.D. Renfroe's preserved, in clearest form, the plight of the proletariat ideologue vying for this Southern cause. According to his own admission Renfroe was "a poor man." He declared, somewhat in jest, "if I ever had a wealthy relative I never heard of him." Nevertheless, he argued, "the poor of our country have more reason to desire Southern independence than the rich."⁸⁰ Renfroe contended that were the South to witness the abolition of institutional slavery, "your children and my children must take the place of that institution." He warned of carriage drivers, body-servants, waiting maids, and tenants of the rich, now occupied by "the poor of the land" rather than slaves. Necessity would force the working class into perpetual "tenantey [sic] and employment of the rich." Renfroe, in truth, railed against the industrialism of the North, preferring the South's agrarianism. Those who had capital invested in slaves could lose money or property, but "the freedom of my children, and children's children is involved." Equal rights for the negro did not mean the elevation of blacks to citizenship, but the demotion of the working class to "cruel bondage." Rather than negotiate for his wages, the poor "must work at the prices established for him by the rich." The only negotiating tool left to the working-classes would be "an occasional bread riot."⁸¹ In the eyes of at least one Baptist chaplain, loss of African slavery meant the absolute rule of capitalism and landowners. In other words, abolition would lead to the degradation of Southern social fabric.

While sermons divulged a great deal, the off-hand comments in letters or recorded conversations told of the pervasive assumption of a slave-based hierarchy within the chaplains' day-to-day life. Case in point, in a letter dated November 30, 1864, Boyce responded to a message from Broadus concerning finding a place for a large number of slaves. Boyce determined that he had no room for them all but would hire on "the

⁸⁰ Renfroe, *Fast Day Sermon*, 17.

⁸¹ Renfroe, 17-19.

carpenter and blacksmith separately.” In his estimation, Broadus could sell the more than sixteen negroes (including six children) in order to “get all expenses and taxes paid.” Boyce quipped in passing, “I hardly think you can do better.”⁸² The social fabric wove around the institution of slavery to such a degree that two ministers could discuss selling enslaved children with impunity.

Hierarchy in the South did not need any additional evidence. Nature and history were taken as proof of the developmental differences between blacks and whites. Southern Baptist chaplains (aligned with the cultural zeitgeist) upheld those very differences as a *sine qua non* of civil society. When this social order became threatened, Baptists sought to enlist poor whites for the Southern cause by threatening them with a slave-like status. Few would desire to lead their posterity to such a merciless fate.

Conclusion

It has been shown that Southern Baptist chaplains used their platform to contribute to a unique narrative of Southern identity and Confederate nationalism during the American Civil War. While their influence began before the first shots were fired and continued after the last echoes had died out, their service as wartime chaplains and colporteurs propagated a story of history and national cohesion. Through nationalist rhetoric, the promulgation of Southern honor, and the zeitgeist of slaveholder theology, these ministers got their hands dirty to keep their land together. Theirs was the rabble, the rank-and-file, those “in the camp,” often far away from God and disinterested in religion. Nevertheless, many answered the call to share the Gospel and uplift those who would die for a new nation.

⁸² Sean Michael Lucas and Jason Fowler, eds., “*Our Life Work*”: *The Correspondence of James P. Boyce and John A. Broadus, Founders of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1857-1888* (unpublished manuscript, 2004), 57, Archives and Special Collections, James P. Boyce Centennial Library, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

Working from land, to families, and to God, Southern nationalism attempted to root the white fighting class to a specific land, to specific kin, and tied to specific values. Southern honor held sway as perhaps the most critical bond tying the soldier to his cause. Retreat meant debasement, a rejection of the manly fighting spirit, and ultimate dishonor to yourself and your people. Chaplains fought this impulse through language of honorableness and a higher sense of duty. Though many rejected their message and defected, many more did not, remaining in service for rest of the war.

At the intersection of tradition and faith Baptist chaplains sought to raise the theological justification for their cause. Providence charged soldiers to see God's hand, and later in the war, God's wrath in the victories and defeats of the Confederate forces. Social hierarchy, working from Providence as such, set the bounds of mankind along certain ethnic, developmental, and religious lines. Blacks bore a curse which made them forever the slaves of the people of God. White America, as a Christian nation, had failed to operate with integrity toward those who had been resigned to servitude. Hence, just as abolitionists had sought to destroy God's social order, slaveowners had usurped the place of God and destroyed the familial bonds of their slaves at a whim. At the very least a simple passivity toward the familial situation of slaves can be seen in the way chaplains preached and wrote about the institution as such. Furthermore, slaveholders (of which class some chaplains occupied) neglected the spiritual care mandated to their hierarchical position. Therefore, Baptist chaplains saw in the slow defeats of the Confederacy and the overturning of God's social order in the Civil War's twilight years national punishment for the severity of their sin. Slaveholder theology dictated no response save for repentance and petition to God. Baptist chaplains preached such reactions.

Summarily, Baptist chaplains filled a specific need in the Confederate ranks and ministers, encouragers, and sources of social uplift. Their social understanding colored their work, and their time determined much of their proclaimed belief. However, at their root chaplains sought the wellbeing and ministry of the troops in their care. They sought

the salvation of souls who marched, oftentimes, headlong into their death. In short, their duty was to bring the gospel to a nation in crisis. Though shaded by their presuppositions, these Baptist men fulfilled their duty to the best of their ability for the duration of their respective part in the war. Their faithfulness, it was believed, could move the people to action and, as they hoped, a national blessing from God. Whatever the outcome, soldiers expressed gratitude for their fidelity to the Gospel *ex animo*.

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ABSTRACT

“ALL THE LAND THROWN OPEN:” SOUTHERN CULTURE AND SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHAPLAINS: 1861-1865

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Southern Baptist chaplains informed Confederate culture and religious belief during the American Civil War by contributing to a unique narrative of Southern identity. One sees the narrative through the letters and sermons of these chaplains to the working-class soldiery. Encompassed in Southern culture were nationalism, honor, and slaveholder theology, which validated slaveholding whites in the deep South. Southern nationalism saw the Confederacy as a new nation, blessed by God, and continuing the providential spirit of the Revolution. Likewise, their nation could only survive by God's aid. Southern honor, largely shaped by Sir Walter Scott, spirited chivalrous attitudes towards women, pugilism, and one's rank in his community. Slaveholder theology saw their position as one mandated by the Scripture for the betterment of both whites and blacks. Through the propagation of these three tenets, Southern Baptist chaplains sought, in part, to perpetuate dedication to the Confederacy in the hearts of fighting men.

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