

2018

# Deepening Divisions: The Influence of Protestant Faith in Civil War Reconciliation

Jeremy Solomon  
*Minnesota State University, Mankato*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds>

 Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Military History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Solomon, Jeremy, "Deepening Divisions: The Influence of Protestant Faith in Civil War Reconciliation" (2018). *All Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects*. 790.  
<https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds/790>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects at Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Deepening Divisions: The Influence of Protestant Faith in Civil War Reconciliation

By

Jeremy Ryan Solomon

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in History

In

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Minnesota State University Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2018

March 22, 2018

Deepening Divisions: The Influence of Protestant Faith in Civil War Reconciliation

Jeremy Ryan Solomon

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

---

Dr. Kathleen Gorman - Advisor

---

Dr. Angela Cooley – Committee Member

---

Dr. Lori Lahlum – Committee Member

## Deepening Divisions: The Influence of Protestant Faith in Civil War Reconciliation

Jeremy Ryan Solomon

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences – Master of Arts in History

Minnesota State University Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

2018

This thesis considers the influence of mainstream Protestantism on Civil War reconciliation. Through reconciliation, Northern and Southern residents came to forgiveness and comradery, moving beyond animosity. This has been a focus of historical research in the past two decades, but with particular attention to the resentment of veterans. With this, many scholars have overlooked the impact of other institutions of American society. This thesis addresses the issue by analyzing the effects of religious opinions on the perceptions that veterans and civilians held of their former enemies. Protestantism was the dominant faith of the nation, rivaling any organization of influence in America. With such preeminence, religion deserves recognition as an agent that reinforced negative feelings both during and after the war.

The goal of this thesis is also to expand on the limited historical research that has occurred on the subject to date. Few historians have researched the significance of religion in the process of Civil War reconciliation. With few researchers, the static conclusion has been that religion helped reconciliation as Northern and Southern whites found racial unity through religious events in the late nineteenth century. By contrast, this thesis shows how religion came to enflame the negative perceptions of white citizens. This thesis therefore offers a more exhaustive view on the subject as religion affected the psyche of citizens when remembering the war and their reunited neighbors.

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1. Interpretations: The Rhetoric of Religion	16
CHAPTER 2. Trespasses: The Influence of War	40
CHAPTER 3. Exodus: The Post-War Reorganization of Denominations	62
CONCLUSION	81
BIBLIOGRAPHY	92

## INTRODUCTION

The thesis examines the impact of mainstream religion in the process of reconciliation between Union and Confederate citizens after the Civil War. In historical discussions on the subject, scholars have neglected the extent to which religious views influenced the inclinations of the public. Organized denominations became a significant influence through the nineteenth century. This increased the formal practice of religion in America, but it also provided opportunities for religious opinions to sway former enemies to either have forgiveness or resentment. Sermons, national publications, and political speeches all show the potential for Christianity to have been a source of influence. Indeed, the sum of evidence from this thesis shows religion as reinforcing the hostilities already between the sides. The power of religious rhetoric, the religious perceptions of Civil War events, and the post-war reorganization of denominations fostered lingering resentments for Civil War citizens.

Historians have begun to distinguish between the process of reconciliation and the concept of reunion after the Civil War. In reunion, the North and South formalized their continuing existence through the events of Reconstruction. This included government decisions of voting rights, the reestablishment of commerce, and punishments for former Confederates. Reconciliation, on the other hand, considers the development of mutual goodwill and comradery between the former adversaries. The states moved forward as one nation, but reconciliation examines the discord remaining

in private and public discourse. Historian Nina Silber, in a comprehensive historiography of this subject, notes a recent conclusion of historians: "Reunion... may have been celebrated on a superficial level, but conflict and dissonance ruled just below the surface."<sup>1</sup> The research of this thesis further considers this conclusion with the influence of religious perceptions.

The subject of Civil War reconciliation is important for an honest assessment of the ill-will between citizens in later years. Otherwise, history may imply there was a natural, seamless transition to peace and comradery. Perhaps the most famous example of this impression comes from the final scene of the miniseries *The Civil War* by Ken Burns. Video footage from 1938 shows white veterans at the seventy-fifth anniversary of Gettysburg shaking hands with former enemies across a stone wall of the battlefield. The news coverage begins with a caption ending with the statement "Blue and Gray together. The wound has healed."<sup>2</sup> With this quote, the viewers of both the 1938 newsreel and the Ken Burns film of 1990 have a vivid image of peaceful reconciliation. The impression is analogous to reading a best-selling novel with a conclusion of the characters living happily ever after. Such imagery, however, is incomplete at best. The footage masks decades of animosity in the hearts of veterans. Historians have shown Southern veterans still remembered the North as invaders while the Union perceived treason and vice in slavery, with each side claiming to be the more virtuous of the two.

---

<sup>1</sup> Nina Silber, "Reunion and Reconciliation, Reviewed and Reconsidered," *The Journal of American History* 103, no. 1 (2016): 65-66.

<sup>2</sup> *The Civil War*, episode 9, "The Better Angels of Our Nature – 1865," directed by Ken Burns, aired September 28, 1990, on PBS.

Viewers cannot see the hardened emotions of veterans in a one-minute newsreel of Gettysburg in 1938. The study of reconciliation is necessary for a more comprehensive assessment of the journey citizens took in the course of their lives, whether toward harmony or acrimony.

Historical research on Civil War reconciliation in the past two decades has indeed focused on the perspective of veterans. M. Keith Harris, in *Across the Bloody Chasm: The Culture of Commemoration Among Civil War Veterans*, provides insight into private club meetings held by both sides over many years. Harris highlights the animosity that festered through their lives. While promoting community, the gatherings also recounted the memories of death, prisons, and enemy brutalities, raising resentful perceptions of the other side. The Society of the Immortal 600 was a striking example. The Southern prisoners of war claimed the Union used them as human shields in battles while alleging to be under the harsh guard of African American soldiers. Publications about the society reached into the early twentieth century with the accounts continuing to inspire bitterness.<sup>3</sup> Caroline E. Janney, in *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*, also explains the resentment of veterans, but she also reveals the significant role of women in continuing the animosities. Over decades, thousands of women of the North and South came to form their own organizations to commemorate their side of the war. The most ardent groups, like the United Daughters of the

---

<sup>3</sup> M. Keith Harris, *Across the Bloody Chasm: The Culture of Commemoration Among Civil War Veterans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 28-30.



Confederacy, did perhaps even more than veterans to engender arguments, promoting righteousness of the Southern cause. Notable activities of controversy included the rise of Southern culture in Washington D.C., attempts to fund a memorial of Jefferson Davis in the capital, and the usage of school textbooks portraying the Union as brutal aggressors.<sup>4</sup>

With historians like Harris and Janney in mind, Nina Silber has noted a lack of historical attention to non-veteran organizations.<sup>5</sup> To some extent, this does a disservice to the significance of veterans as they were a substantial portion of the general public. Studies have shown seventy-five to eight-five percent of white men in Southern states fought in the war while Northern veterans were just under the majority.<sup>6</sup> However, Silber makes the important point that other institutions held significant influence on Americans as well. In the case of organized religion, Protestant denominations loomed over the public by the last decades of the century. Religious views taught citizens how to perceive themselves, the world, and each other. This thesis highlights the ways in which these views served to increase the intensity of disagreements from the war. The influence of religious perspectives is worthy of historical attention for a better understanding of Civil War reconciliation.

When considering the impact of religion in the reconciliation of Civil War citizens, historian Edward J. Blum is the one author of note. In *Reforging the White*

---

<sup>4</sup> Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 242-265, 275.

<sup>5</sup> Silber, "Reunion and Reconciliation," 77.

<sup>6</sup> Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 237-238.

*Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism 1865-1898*, Blum argues that Northern whites came to develop comradery with Southern whites by embracing their commonality of race through religious events of the late nineteenth century. This included Northern charity to Southern states in the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1878, unity in the creation of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and global missions to convert other ethnicities to Christianity. According to Blum, with the desire for racial unity, Northern whites came to abandon their considerable first efforts to improve the lives of former slaves. White citizens therefore achieved reconciliation through religious activities, but at a substantial cost to equality.<sup>7</sup>

It is important for the purposes of this thesis to highlight the arguments Blum makes of reconciliation between white Protestants after the war. John Stauffer, professor of African Americans studies at Harvard, in a foreword of the second edition of *Reforging the White Republic*, criticizes reviews for fixating on Blum's claims that church events created racial reconciliation. Stauffer asks academia to instead focus on the catastrophe of Northern whites abandoning freedmen in post-war years.<sup>8</sup> While it is crucial to recognize the lost opportunity for African Americans, the attention toward the religious events of white reconciliation is understandable. A significant portion of *Reforging the White Republic* explains these events. Also, Blum has argued elsewhere that religious rhetoric was a powerful influence on white reconciliation, referring to the

---

<sup>7</sup> Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism 1865-1898*, 2nd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 3-8, 52-76, 146-243.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

post-war evangelical crusades of Dwight L. Moody. According to Blum, Moody pleaded for Christians to pursue an inner morality rather than obsess over social disputes, with national media becoming a sounding board for his messages of unity.<sup>9</sup> While Blum exposes the hardships of African Americans in these events, a significant portion of his studies review the activities that brought Northern and Southern whites into unity. For studies of the relationship between religion and reconciliation, this is a conclusion which new research must acknowledge.

With a focus on reconciliation among white Protestants, Blum's research on the influence of religion is the only significant scholarship on the subject. Because of this, readers have the impression that religion only served as a force for building reconciliation through white supremacy. The relationship between religion and reconciliation requires further research in the same way that Harris and Janney have countered the image of veteran comradeship portrayed by Ken Burns. This thesis continues the analysis of reconciliation by demonstrating the negative impact of religious thoughts on the unity of white citizens. Despite the commonality of race, interpretations of religion had the ability to enflame the divisions lingering from the war.

Research on the influence of faith in reconciliation can be difficult as historians may be hesitant to examine the role of religion in topics of American history. Kevin M.

---

<sup>9</sup> Edward J. Blum, "God of Wrath, God of Peace: Popular Religion, Popular Press, and the Meaning of the Civil War during Reconstruction," in *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism*, ed. David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr. (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 366-371.

Schultz and Paul Harvey argue there has been a general failure by historians to include religious institutions as a factor in larger narratives. At best, many historians will acknowledge the practice of religious activities but dismiss them as unimportant. Researchers instead focus on the secular factors in people's lives, leaving religion for those who identify themselves exclusively as religious historians.<sup>10</sup> In the case of Civil War reconciliation, the dismissal of religious beliefs creates a disingenuous view of America in the late-nineteenth century. While there is always the danger of swinging the pendulum to portray Christianity as the sole influence of the era, the prominence of faith justifies further reviews. Regardless of the reasons for individual historians to exclude religion from academic discourse, to ignore its influence is to ignore a significant force on public opinions of the time.

For a true understanding of the prominence Protestant denominations held in America by the Civil War, it is important to first realize that faith was not a simple inheritance of traditions from Europe. It is tempting to assume America was a seamless continuation of the European Reformation with church leaders directing the thoughts of congregations. Rather, with the meticulous efforts of Methodists, Baptists and other thriving denominations, republicanism became the wind in the sails of new theological thinking. The experience of religion in America was replete with new perspectives of faith as well as new converts. To label the United States as Protestant in both 1776 and

---

<sup>10</sup> Kevin M. Schultz and Paul Harvey, "Everywhere and Nowhere: Recent Trends in American Religious History and Historiography," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 1 (2010): 131-132.

1865 is to not recognize the ripples of novelty between citizens. The influence of European denominations became a faded memory as individual viewpoints of faith had a substantial impact on national discourse.

Theological historian Mark Noll makes a striking statement to stress the importance of this development: "It is not an exaggeration to claim that this nineteenth-century Protestant evangelicalism differed from the religion of the Protestant Reformation as much as sixteenth-century Reformation Protestantism differed from the Roman Catholic theology from which it emerged."<sup>11</sup> According to Noll, the era of the American Revolution began a religious movement to embrace individualism. Rather than citizens defaulting to the ecclesiastical teachings of ancient European churches, republicanism taught people to value their personal practices. With this, individuality created conceptions of God as someone close at hand in one's life. He now appeared as an affectionate, caring figure, rather than a distant and ineffectual one. Also, in perhaps the greatest repercussion of American religious thinking on the Civil War era, individuals began to embrace the notion of having their own ability to understand the Bible. Americans were accepting the notion of a person being able to take legitimate meaning from their own readings. This gave a unique identity to American Christianity with independence from ecclesiastical authorities and individual interpretations of the Bible abundant in national discourse.<sup>12</sup> This became significant to reconciliation as people

---

<sup>11</sup> Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 11-13.

were now following their own perceptions of Christianity to promote or hinder forgiveness. This thesis will review the utilization of the Bible to justify one's perceptions of others with an impressive ability to strengthen feelings of animosity.

Historian Nathan Hatch elaborates on the individualism of faith by noting the inability of church authorities to contain zealous preachers in the nineteenth century. There was no center of religious doctrine or leadership in the new nation, just as the federal government lacked authority in its infancy. Therefore, evangelists such as Lorenzo Dow were able to ignore denominational sanctions in order to promote their own messages of faith. In the case of Dow, leaders of British Methodism banished him in 1800. Without the influence of a state or denomination to dictate his messages, Dow and others were now able to host massive gatherings in the United States. Even for established American denominations like Episcopalians and Presbyterians, there was no feasible way for bishops to stop the preaching.<sup>13</sup> With the passion of evangelists reaching every corner of the American public, religiosity was dominating the thoughts of Americans by the time of the Civil War.

Perhaps the most revered historical work showing the swelling of organized religion comes from the research of Roger Finke and Rodney Stark. For much of the twentieth century, historians had believed faith was on the decline in America from 1776 to 1850, but the conclusion relied on unreliable testimonies from preachers like

---

<sup>13</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 6-9, 59-62.

Presbyterian Lyman Beecher. Presbyterians were, in general, on the losing side of gaining congregants. Also, Beecher showed contempt for Methodists and Baptists, describing them as illiterate and unlearned, refusing to recognize their organizations as legitimate.<sup>14</sup> To counter the notion of religious decline in America, Finke and Stark analyzed denominational conference minutes for numbers of congregants over time. Between 1776 and 1806, Methodism alone increased in memberships from 4,291 to 130,570, far outpacing population growth. These religious faithful, in proportion to the population, rose from 2.5 percent to 34.2 percent from 1776 to 1850. In fact, all denominations grew in attendants, but Baptists were the only other to increase relative to the American population, from 16.9 per cent to 20.5 per cent.<sup>15</sup> The active practice of individual faith was becoming a powerful factor in the thoughts of the public.

With the South having the label of the Bible Belt, it is ironic the evangelical movements of the era had their most difficult time in this region. Christine Leigh Heyrman, in *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, categorizes the pre-evangelical population into three groups: Deists such as Thomas Jefferson, Episcopalians, and those unaffiliated with church congregations. The last group represented most residents. Northern evangelicals described them as isolated immigrants on the frontier with love for dance and drink but not organized

---

<sup>14</sup> Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 57-59.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 56, 59-60.

congregations.<sup>16</sup> The hurdles for evangelicals also included public contentment with Anglicanism and the absence of leisure leading to isolation from their neighbors.<sup>17</sup> Still, in time, evangelicalism overcame the lives of pagans and churchgoers alike. Historian Charles Irons confirms the eventual success of conversions in an intensive study of Virginia. With notes of distinctions between full church members and occasional attendants, Irons summarizes census reviews to show a majority of white Virginians attended churches by 1850. African Americans had similar numbers while historians have credited Virginia as the launching point for Baptists and Methodism throughout the South. By the 1830s, migration data shows over 100,000 of 450,000 Virginia slaves leaving the state.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond the sheer numbers of religious prominence by the Civil War, historians have also demonstrated how faith shaped public opinions, especially regarding slavery. Edward Crowther describes the relationship between planters and preachers in the promotion of new perspectives of faith. With organized Christianity so dominant by the mid-nineteenth century, Southern planters altered their justifications for slavery to be on moral and theological grounds. Planters came to embrace the view of slaves being God's children with slavery being a necessary institution for their obedience. Meanwhile, preachers assisted in defending slavery as God's will for a societal system of

---

<sup>16</sup> Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1997), 7-8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-27.

<sup>18</sup> Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 3-6, 10-11.



paternalism. In return for the adoption of religion as a defense of slavery, preachers, often without a network of support, gained prestige from having new connections with Southern elites.<sup>19</sup> With such relationships in the works over decades of time, Christianity came to influence people not only through conversion, but in the validation of opinions. This will be a consistent theme of the thesis as religious thoughts solidified the perception of others in the process of reconciliation.

Such a development of proslavery arguments reflected a national tide of religiosity formulating people's opinions in national debates. For example, Kevin Pelletier writes of Protestant authors and ministers changing tactics to persuade others to favor abolitionism. At first, the writers argued the end of slavery served the virtue of love, but Pelletier shows there was an intentional shift to persuade the public of God's wrath coming to America. With literary critiques of authors like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Pelletier examines "a crucial but neglected dimension of nineteenth-century culture of sentiment: Its passionate investment in fear as an indispensable engine of cultural and political transformation."<sup>20</sup> With divine punishment already developing in the psyche of the public, national authors resolved to utilize the idea to further promote their beliefs in national debates.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Edward R. Crowther, "Holy Honor: Sacred and Secular in the Old South," *The Journal of Southern History* 58, no. 4 (1992): 629-631.

<sup>20</sup> Kevin Pelletier, *Apocalyptic Sentimentalism: Love and Fear in U.S. Antebellum Literature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-6.

As another example of theology becoming a justification for political arguments, sociologist Michael Young writes of national discourse being under transformation in the nineteenth century. Religious denominations and individual leaders came to inspire the first social protest movements of America by the integration of two religious schemas: special categories of sins, such as slavery and temperance, and acts of public confession from Christian groups. According to Young, "As they combined in the consciences of many evangelicals, they triggered confessional protests aimed at transforming individuals and national institutions."<sup>22</sup> Young further charts the development of religious organizations like The American Home Missionary Society of New England Congregationalists and the conservative, evangelical American Tract Society. Young shows the integration of the two schemas producing an explosion of protests from women and the middle class by the 1830s.<sup>23</sup>

As Young and historians of American Christianity have demonstrated, religious perspectives became powerful within the realm of public opinion. Over time, the public succumbed to the influences of traveling ministers and national organizations of faith. Protestant denominations expanded while at the same time teaching individuals to take responsibility for their own religious understanding. This created an environment for different citizens to weave different Biblical interpretations into public opinions. Authors like Harriet Beecher Stowe were able to use religious fears to sway the public away from

---

<sup>22</sup> Michael P. Young, "Confessional Protest: The Religious Birth of U.S. National Social Movements," *American Sociological Review* 67, no. 5 (2002): 666.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 671-684.

slavery while Southern planters used their own perceptions to argue the same institution was the will of God. Different views of religion were now becoming a significant detriment to the sides of the Civil War finding accord and empathy with each other.

The stage was now set for religion to become a factor in attempts to reconcile in the wake of the Civil War. Historians such as M. Keith Harris and Caroline Janney have rightly examined the negative impact of veteran experiences on the ability to reach reconciliation. At the same time, other elements of American life, such as religion, deserve the same depth of consideration. This is the intention of this thesis: To demonstrate the significant influence of religion on the perceptions citizens held of each other. The force was too powerful for scholars to disregard as a personal hobby of the American public. Religion offered considerable justification to divisive opinions, warranting further research of its role in reconciliation.

The following chapters assess different religious activities which contributed to the difficulties of reconciliation. Chapter One considers the power of religious rhetoric for inspiring resentment. Public and private discourse was abundant with Bible interpretations to justify negative views of others. Citizens used the arguments to accuse the other side of immorality, oppression, and being enemies of God. Chapter Two reviews the influence of Civil War events on religious perceptions. The destruction of war and requirements of post-war loyalty oaths further jeopardized the prospects of reconciliation. Chapter Three then brings attention to the repercussions of African

Americans forming their own denominations after the war. For Southern whites, this meant the end of religious paternalism, and the defeat of the South also triggered Northern missionary attempts to expand their denominations to Southern states. This created a symbolic invasion with each side seeing the other as aggressive and immoral. In all of these ways, religion made empathy more difficult, revealing faith as a significant influence on the inability of veterans and civilians to forgive and forget.

CHAPTER ONE  
Interpretations: The Rhetoric of Religion

In April 1863, Reverend Moses D. Hoge travelled to Liverpool, England to solicit thousands of Bibles and prayer books for the demands of the Confederate army. In front of a large crowd, the Richmond preacher spoke of the spiritual benefits for the troops. He claimed the armies had embraced Christianity and were eager to receive in-depth teachings. He also referred to a general wickedness in the activities of the army camps, but he reassured the crowd of the soldiers' sincere Christian beliefs. According to Hoge, thousands of Confederate men were hungry for spirituality, and few had any inclination to reject the literature.<sup>24</sup>

With certainty in the faith of Southern soldiers, Reverend Hoge allowed himself to digress to the political notion of God favoring the birth of the Confederacy. Claiming divine inspiration to be on his side, Hoge gave the British an image of God wanting the defeat of the Union.

Christianity, indeed, prefers the bloodless victories of peace, but she makes man acquainted with their rights, and teaches them how to defend them; and when war, that last resort of the magnanimous and brave, becomes inevitable, and when the sword must be drawn for the protection of all that is dearest to man, then Christianity fires the heart and nerves the arm of the patriot who wields it.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> "The Bible is the Southern Confederacy," *Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser* (Liverpool, England), April 18, 1863.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

Hoge's solicitations illustrate both the popularity of Protestant Christianity by the 1860s and the legitimacy of interpreting God as siding with one's cause.

Denominations had achieved prominence in the American public while ministers like Hoge went so far as to travel overseas to meet the demands of religious resources. By framing their cause in terms of fighting for independence, Confederates were now able to envision their armies as the protective arm of the Lord. Hoge claimed the point was a digression from his speech, but such powerful imagery makes clear the eagerness of chaplains like himself to share this vision of the world. Faith drew a deeper line in the sand with righteousness professed to be on one side and against the other.

With this speech, Hoge showed how words could act as a spiritual thorn in the side of Civil War reconciliation. Religious rhetoric was abundant in publications, deepening antagonism that was conspicuous even to foreign audiences. Religion did not cause the disagreements of the war, but it enflamed the divisions as interpretations entrenched citizens in their own beliefs. With clashing opinions on the will of God for America, religion became an element to further personal hostilities. Neighbors used a variety of scriptural texts to accuse, mock, and condemn others in public discourse. Such arguments hindered the ability of residents to embrace any commonality with each other moving forward. The use of religious rhetoric by the North and South served to justify their own arguments, which damaged the prospects of reconciliation between the former enemies.

When considering the impact of religion on post-war reconciliation, there must first be an acknowledgement of faith being able to inspire peace within individuals. Stephen Elliott, for instance, took an earnest public position of humility, and used faith as a way to advocate for reconciliation. Elliott was bishop of the Episcopal Church of the Confederate states until his death in 1866. On one hand, he was a stalwart patriot of the South with belief in God's approval of slavery to convert Africans to Christianity. He also saw the Confederacy as deserving its own sovereignty as a nation. However, while Elliott perceived God as favoring the South, he resolved to be content with the victory of the Union.<sup>26</sup> "We believed we were Christians," Elliott wrote, "while we labored for our cause; shall we not be Christians when called upon to acquiesce in God's decision upon that cause?"<sup>27</sup> For Elliott, the win by the Union showed God giving the Southern faithful a new direction. With this concession, Elliott advocated for Christians to embrace reconciliation by accepting the reality of life after the war. In this case, a spiritual leader found inspiration from his faith to advocate for reconciliation's success.

Despite the peace Elliott urged Southern congregants to find in 1866, differing views of Scripture meant the continuation of divisions. Reverend V. D. Reed proved this in a sermon in New Jersey on April 30, 1865. Reed represented Northern religious views against the claims of God siding with the Confederacy. Reed first reconciled the

---

<sup>26</sup> William A. Clebsch, "Stephen Elliott's View of the Civil War," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 31, no. 1 (1962): 11-20.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Christian virtues of peace with the strong language of Matthew 10: "Think not that I am come to send Peace on Earth; I came not to send Peace, but a Sword." Reed claimed this aggression must include action against Christians using faith to support their own wickedness.<sup>28</sup> He continued, "Men are partial to their own opinions and often substitute these for the teachings of God's word, so that while ostensibly defending the truth, they are really defending their own creeds and dogmas."<sup>29</sup> Reed further accused the South of similar wickedness in the defense of slavery. According to Reed, the leaders of the rebellion "induced the South to attempt the dangerous experiment, of destroying the nation that on its ruin they might establish one, that in the face of Christian civilization, dared to flaunt the absurd and wicked solecism, that national freedom is to be based upon the bondage of a class."<sup>30</sup> For preachers like Reed, slavery was not only a moral tragedy, but a national sin against God and justification to think of Southern whites with contempt. Religious inspiration therefore served as a detriment to remembering others with empathy.

Historians have found accusatory preaching from ministers like Reed in regular practice. Preachers of both sides used their own views of faith to accuse the other of misalignment with God. Mark Noll, in *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, provides an in-depth analysis of Biblical rhetoric used to argue either for or against slavery. For slavery advocates, Bible verses supported the institution as an acceptable system of

---

<sup>28</sup> V. D. Reed, *A Sermon Preached in the First Presbyterian Church* (Camden, NJ: West Jersey Press, 1865), 5-6.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.



labor under God's law. The arguments included Colossians 3:22: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God," and I Timothy 6:1-2: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit."<sup>31</sup> Such verses directed servants to obey their masters with no hint of slavery being immoral. With this, defenders of slavery had ready-to-order arguments for claiming God's approval. Abolitionists, on the other hand, lacked verses directly condemning slavery. Therefore, their arguments used principles of love in light of the horrid treatment of American slaves to prove God's call to end the practice.<sup>32</sup> With each side in regular use of the Bible to enhance their arguments, the journey to reconciliation proved more difficult as citizens accused each other of disobedience to God.

Beyond the verbal attacks of slavery, Noll highlights other contradictory interpretations of religion to further show the power of faith to raise disagreements. Even with bad news from the war, residents were able to interpret God as supporting their side. The death of Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson is an intriguing example for illustration. Jackson was known for his devout trust in God and his belief that God

---

<sup>31</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 37.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-50.

directed current events. With his untimely death in the spring of 1863, the Union took it as a sign of blessing while Southerners turned its meaning the other way. Some ministers claimed God removed Jackson to show the ultimate victory of the Confederacy was to come from God and not talented individuals. Others took his death as a personal lesson for the public: To submit to God as he is willing to strike down anyone. To others still, his death was no more than a test of faith from God to push forward in the Southern cause.<sup>33</sup> Noll's research shows religion did not lead to universal agreement of an event. On the contrary, the public was capable of multiple perspectives, regardless of the news. Such divergences solidified the difficulty of finding reconciliation. Despite any plea for peace from those like Stephen Elliott, religion worked to deepen divisive opinions no matter what event occurred.

Historian Elizabeth L. Jemison further elaborates on how the Bible served to fortify proslavery opinions even after the war. According to Jemison, these advocates, rather than succumbing to emancipation in 1863, redoubled their efforts with religious rhetoric as the backbone for their attacks. In the eyes of these believers, slavery was akin to family: A social structure of God's command to be used as a tool for public order. The argument received strong support as ministers embraced Ephesians chapters five and six. Saint Paul, the author, gave instruction for slaves and masters to respect each other with similar directions immediately following for spouses and children. These relationships are together in one small section of the Bible, receiving

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

ordination from God, or so the argument went. At the same time, proslavery advocates further antagonized others with the portrayal of abolitionists being under the influence of the devil. Many stressed this point in publications with the claim of abolitionists dividing churches while also allowing former slaves to raise social chaos. With emancipation, many whites claimed freedmen were to descend into poverty and crime, and only the demonic would want such a society.<sup>34</sup>

While this research introduces readers to contradictory interpretations of the Bible, it also shows how the arguments heightened negative perceptions of others. Northern abolitionists appeared to the South as demonic and not in alignment with God's commands for societal order. At the same time, the North condemned the South for the wickedness of slavery. Moses Hoge made no mention of the Union in England, but the claim of God inspiring the South insinuated God was against the North. Both sides held the Bible in high esteem, but preachers and laymen alike came to think of the other side as immoral and even satanic. Such accusations show the handicap religion gave to the prospects of citizens finding comradery with each other after the war. Religious interpretations had spread to the point where the public was eager to harness faith to the aspersions of others. Despite the familiar virtues of Christian teaching, such as forgiveness and charity, Americans used their personal perspectives of faith to deepen resentments.

---

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth L. Jemison, "Proslavery Christianity After the Emancipation," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (2013): 255-259.

With a Union victory at the end of the war, history appeared to rebuke claims of God favoring the South, which inspired fierce religious attacks from Northerners. John Jay, attorney and grandson of Chief Justice John Jay, represented such allegations at the inaugural of the American Freedman's Aid Union in May 1865. While encouraging the new organization to not settle for military victory, this prominent citizen claimed the federal government had approval from God to achieve social reforms.<sup>35</sup> As for the former Confederates, Jay left little doubt of the evil in Southern sympathies for slavery.

I do not, indeed, forget that we have had a party in every branch of the American Church in its range from Rome to Oxford, and from Geneva to Boston, who have thus far been the bitterest enemies of this much wronged people. I refer to that satanic school of theology, which without regard to creed or ritual, has worshipped at the shrine of slavery, and blessed it in the name of Christ; whose priests have stolen the livery of heaven for the service of the devil, sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer, mocking at the higher law, and giving a tremendous impulse to infidelity and atheism by gloating over the heathenish barbarisms of slavery with the sanctimoniousness of pretended saints and the malignity of real fiends.<sup>36</sup>

In a political message of triumph, Jay used interpretations of faith to condemn the inspirations of Confederates. According to Jay, their "satanic school of theology" set the course for their wickedness through the Civil War, justifying all manner of accusation against their beliefs. Just as slavery advocates were claiming abolitionists to be under the influence of demons, Jay used a political platform to make similar accusations of the other side.

---

<sup>35</sup> John Jay, *Our Duty to the Freedmen: Mr. Jay's Remarks at the Inaugural Meeting of the American Freedman's Aid Union* (New York: Cooper Institute, 1865), 2-5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

With such speeches, religion played a negative role in public discourse. From the grandson of a founding father, religious rhetoric had the power to resonate in donors and volunteers coming to assist former slaves. For a prominent citizen to accuse the religious worship of the South as satanic was detrimental to reconciliation. Such allegations were poised to strike a nerve in devout believers, just as Americans of today take offense from watching a cable news channel speaking against their political views. In this case, a new post-war bureaucracy intended to reform the culture of the South with religion legitimizing their intentions. Animosity was ripe to continue with conflicting perceptions of faith.

Adding to the arguments of God favoring the North was the use of Bible verses to demand Southern compliance to post-war reform efforts. Reverend Silas Hawley, in an interdenominational service of Thanksgiving in Ohio, raised the issue in December 1865. Calling for the North to be the righteous rulers of America, Hawley advocated for policies of Reconstruction, “No matter as to the time; no matter if it shall take as long to rear up the prostrate institutions of the South as it did the Chinese wall, if so there be thoroughness!”<sup>37</sup> Hawley then attacked the character of Southerners with the assistance of Romans 13:3-5 to justify the federal government correcting the former Confederacy.

Surely men of profaneness, of looseness of life, men of corruption, men of the cup and of lust, men without the fear of God, and without, too, the fear of a Righteous people, are not such Rulers! The great Apostle, in

---

<sup>37</sup> Silas Hawley, *National Reconstruction. The Glory and the Shame of a Nation. A Thanksgiving Sermon* (Cincinnati: Western Tract and Book Society, 1866), 19.

striking keeping with this, says: 'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou, then, not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shall have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good, But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.' ...He is the minister of God, and the minister of men. You have, too, his work: to reward the good, and punish the evil.<sup>38</sup>

Saint Paul was writing about governments being instruments of God for upholding the righteous while bringing justice on those in society who do evil. In a call for the North to be righteous in its execution of Reconstruction, Hawley made a vivid distinction between the Northern faithful and their conquered enemies. The federal government was now the minister of God with the evil South to receive righteous punishments going forward.

Hawley then turned to the practical matters of what to do with Southern leaders like Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee. With an optimism for Andrew Johnson to be the man to lead in the prosecution of rebels, Hawley turned his attention to Jefferson Davis.

If we... consider the Rebellion he instigated and led... its terrible destruction of life and of property... the horrors and atrocities of Andersonville, Salisbury, Belle Isle, and Libby prison... the imprisonment and execution of loyal men in East Tennessee... the woe and lamentation carried to the homes of the American people by the loss of hundreds of thousands of loved ones... I say, if we consider these things, and others scarcely less atrocious and horrible, we shall, we must set that man down as the guiltiest of men! And, as such, I would, if a Ruler, hang him!<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 19-21.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

Many of the points Hawley raised against Davis and the South are reminiscent of the arguments historians have made of the difficulties in achieving reconciliation. The destruction of the war and the indecency of prisons resonated in the public for decades. Chapter Two further addresses the intermingling of religion with these tragedies, but it is noteworthy here to show Hawley using an interpretation of Romans to further deepen the antagonism. In the eyes of Northern preachers like Hawley, God wanted the federal government to reform the South through Reconstruction, and this included the punishment of its former leaders for treason. With the atrocities of the war, religion had the ability to further inspire anger.

The speeches of John Jay and Silas Hawley show the extent to which Northern religious perspectives permeated in the immediate aftermath of the war. Both orators harnessed Biblical rhetoric to argue not only who God was for, but who he was against. Rather than divine favor appearing to be on the side of Southern independence, as Hoge claimed in 1863, Northerners made their own verbal assaults with Union victory. Such words set the course for generations to think of others as not only being wrong, but wicked, out of touch with God, and sadistic in motive. Reconciliation faced a greater uphill battle with the utilization of faith in these arguments. Religion had the potential to teach peace and forgiveness, but instead it entrenched citizens into further contempt of their former enemies.

In the discussion of religious sparring, historian Mark Wahlgren Summers makes the point of Republicans having a greater tendency to use Bible passages in political

arguments. In part, the practice was a beneficial political strategy as the rhetoric appealed to African American preachers to garner votes. However, the frequency of references also spoke to a theological belief developed from the outcome of the war. According to Summers, Northerners were encouraged by the Union victory, which led to a boldness in religious claims. God had decided who won the war, and therefore God favored Northern initiatives to reform America. With this, clergy and laymen were more apt to proclaim divine favor for policies of Reconstruction. Democrats, on the other hand, cultivated a natural discouragement from the war results. They did not abandon scriptural references, but the outcome favored the fortitude of Republicans. According to Summers, "Only those faiths believing it possible to make the world anew were likely to attempt it; only those convinced that a heaven could be created on earth would feel the pressing duty to lay the foundations."<sup>40</sup> Republicans perceived a new divine world within grasp while Democrats suffered a loss of enthusiasm. The stage was set for the North to press forward in accusations and characterizations.

Republicans may have felt vindicated by the war, but one cannot underestimate Southern efforts to use the Bible in post-war arguments. In the same collection of essays that includes Summers, W. Scott Poole and Edward J. Blum introduce the book with an 1874 Congressional debate abounding in Christian rhetoric. In consideration of a civil rights bill, Robert B. Elliott, African American and representative of South

---

<sup>40</sup> Mark Wahlgren Summers, "With a Sublime Faith in God, and in Republican Liberty," in *Vale of Tears: New Essays on Religion and Reconstruction*, ed. Edward J. Blum and W. Scott Poole (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 122-123.



Carolina, sparred with former Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens. Each man used his own Bible interpretations to press their arguments for the bill. Elliott argued for white citizens to embrace freedmen as a command parallel to the book of Ruth. In its first chapter, Naomi embraced her daughter-in-law Ruth in mutual faith of God. Elliot used this to argue for tolerance by the dominant race. Stephens, on the other hand, attempted to invoke the Sermon on the Mount: "As ye would that men should do to you: do ye even so to them." Stephens, however, reinterpreted the golden rule to mean citizens have charity for those in one's own class. Therefore, the legal practice of segregation was appropriate for the races going forward.<sup>41</sup> With this exchange, the conviction of the former Confederate leader to segregate the races overcame any pessimism from the war. Just as Mark Noll found an unwavering ability of citizens to reinterpret events like the death of Stonewall Jackson, Southerners still spun religious rhetoric with reconciliation having continuing obstacles.

Biblical references of especial use by both sides were from the stories of Israel in the Old Testament. With the history of Israel in much of the Bible, the Israelites were the people of God set to fulfill the plan of salvation for the world through Jesus Christ. Scripture has many stories of dichotomy between the chosen people of Israel and their surrounding enemies. This included the Egyptians and Babylonians, who conquered Israel in different eras. Despite the failures of the Israelites to follow God in certain times, it is clear which group God ordained and which he did not. It is this contrast

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

between the groups that perhaps made the stories so applicable for Americans by 1865. One's own side of the Civil War had to be the virtuous pursuers of a worthy cause while the other was out of line with God. With this assumption, Americans made regular accusations about which side was the contemporary equivalent of Israel and which was a pagan empire. With such conflicting religious perceptions in nineteenth-century America, it is easy to see difficulty in a person reconciling with those he perceived as the wicked enemy of God's people.

One example of a Northern citizen using the story of Israel to accuse the South of blasphemy came from the memories of veterans from the conquest of Richmond. In 1891, the published history of a Michigan regiment made reference to Israel and Babylon to claim which group the Confederacy represented. Its author, O. B. Curtis, described a church service on April 2, 1865. Jefferson Davis had received a note of Southern defeat in Petersburg, and he called for an early end to the service to evacuate the city. In concise religious fashion, Curtis made his opinion of Southern society plain: "The services were prematurely closed and pandemonium reigned in that Southern Babylon, as when Cyrus marched his army by night, into that amazed city, by the bed of the diverted Euphrates."<sup>42</sup> Cyrus referred to Cyrus of Persia, who in the book of Ezra conquered Babylon, the empire which had oppressed the Hebrews for decades. Cyrus then granted freedom and resources for Jewish captives to return to their homeland,

---

<sup>42</sup> O. B. Curtis, *History of The Twenty-Fourth Michigan Of the Iron Brigade, Known as The Detroit And Wayne County Regiment* (Detroit: Winn & Hammond, 1891), 302.

making Cyrus a friend to Israel and a benevolent servant of God. With the claim of the North being Cyrus and the South being Babylon, the claim of contrasting societies was clear to readers. In one sentence, without a sermon or political message, Curtis described Richmond as being in alignment with the heathens of ancient Babylon. Representing the religious thoughts of many veterans, Curtis remembered the Confederacy as the opponents of God. The North, like Cyrus, held the favor of God in this interpretation.

By contrast, the comparison of the South to Babylon was in complete opposition to the thoughts of the Southern faithful. In June 1868, the North Carolina Baptist newspaper *Biblical Recorder* took stern umbrage with such accusations from the Boston paper *Christian Era*. While offering praise for the potential reunion of activities between Northern and Southern Baptists, the *Christian Era* had warned readers to be patient with Southern brethren in confessing the sins of the war. In response, the *Biblical Recorder* turned the argument of morality against the North. Among other comparisons, the author likened the Union to Nebuchadnezzar, the original conqueror of the Israelites from the same story. O. B. Curtis referenced three decades later. According to the North Carolina newspaper, "Nebuchadnezzar was used to punish the sinful Israelites, but it did not follow that he was [right], for afterwards his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. Perhaps he resembled the American eagle, now

universally admitted to a bird of prey."<sup>43</sup> With this metaphor, Southern Baptists were claiming God may have used the North to punish the South, but the North was the predator of the war with no right to claim itself as righteous. Israel, in this interpretation, turned out to be the white citizens of the South eager to see a divine response against the North for the alleged oppressions of Reconstruction.<sup>44</sup>

The memoir of the Michigan infantry and the publication of the *Biblical Recorder* were three decades apart, but they show themselves in direct opposition. Each writer used the story of Israel to cast the other side as villains out of favor with God. For the *Biblical Recorder*, God did not favor the North even in their victory, and the newspaper claimed Biblical support from the story of Israel and Babylon. By contrast, Michigan soldiers made the final invasion of the Confederacy with the perception of divine favor on the fall of Richmond. Curtis perceived the North as being like Cyrus the Great while a Southern religious newspaper likened the North to Nebuchadnezzar. Each side was prone to take offense to the other as the accusations failed to serve as a force for reconciliation. On the contrary, religious interpretations separated the parties even further.

Other references to Israel further showcased the contrast of Biblical interpretations in America. Reverend Zenas Feemster, in a commentary of Southern activities up to 1862, claimed moral individuals were few and far between in the

---

<sup>43</sup> "Never! No, Never!," *Biblical Recorder* (Raleigh, NC), June 10, 1868.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

region. Writing in vague generalities of societal sins in the South, Feemster compares the few innocents to 1 Kings 19:18. In this story, Israel betrayed God to follow the false god Baal, but 7,000 stayed loyal to worship the Lord. According to Feemster, this paralleled the American South. "There was then seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed their knees to nor kissed Baal, so perhaps there were that many who were exceptions to the general state of things in those latter days."<sup>45</sup> Author Robert Ferguson also referenced Babylon in the destruction of Petersburg, Virginia in 1865. At the beginning of rebuilding the city, Ferguson referenced a group of African Americans singing "one of the favorite songs of the war," with the simple words "For Babylon has fallen – has fallen."<sup>46</sup> Ferguson also notes a particular satisfaction the freedmen took from singing those particular words.<sup>47</sup> The South, in this case, appeared as Babylon with freedmen now perceiving themselves as a chosen people. Chapter Three expounds on the separation of African American churches, but it serves here to further show the subjective nature of theological perspectives.

Religious struggles to reconcile with the other side also came into private interactions through the war. The diary of a Southern nurse offers two points in the continuing arguments of whether Southern whites were the modern chosen people of God. Judith McGuire, commenting on the interest soldiers took to hearing the Bible in

---

<sup>45</sup> Zenas E. Feemster, *The Travelling Refugee, or The Cause and Cure of the Rebellion in The United States* (Springfield, IL: Steam Press of Baker & Phillips, 1865), 25-29.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Ferguson, *America During and After the War* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1866), 196.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

her hospital, describes a lengthy discussion with a 50-year old patient. Reading of the Israelites and Philistines, both considered whether the Yankees were like the Philistines. The patient said, “The Philistines didn’t pray, and the Yankees do; and though I can’t bear the Yankees, I believe some of them are Christians, and pray as hard as we do.” Facing the conundrum of how to understand the North, the two concluded if their cause was righteous, which they believed, then Confederate prayers were the ones God answered.<sup>48</sup> In a later chapter, McGuire referred to former slaves as “modern Israelites.” In a description of decimated plantation lands, she noted many freedmen had evacuated the area by ships to “Canaan, by way of York River, Chesapeake Bay, and the Potomac.” She does not say which territory represented Canaan, the land God promised to Israelites in the Old Testament. However, with the water pathways just south of the Union, one can surmise Canaan to have been the North. McGuire also noted there were exuberant public teachings by “abolition preachers” proclaiming Lincoln as Moses to inspire the departing freedmen.<sup>49</sup>

The variety of references to Israel shows not only the weight of Biblical allegory in nineteenth-century America, but also the ways citizens used religion to justify their accusations. Perceptions of the South were either to be the virtuous, ordained people of God, or the oppressors of modern times, just as Babylon had conquered the Israelites centuries earlier. People justified their perspectives of the era by bringing the

---

<sup>48</sup> Judith White McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee, During the War* (Richmond, VA: J. W. Randolph & English, Publishers, 1889), 98.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-279.

ancient stories to life in common discourse. With this regular practice, the potential for lingering resentment among millions of faithful citizens is apparent. Just as arguments of God's favor created discord, comparisons of the North and South to the societies of the Bible raised the likelihood of hardened divisions. Religion became a servant to polarizing talking points, waging wars of words and working against the prospects of immediate reconciliation between the states.

One other Biblical reference of division was the question of whether a church ought to involve itself in political affairs. A verse of particular note comes from 1 Corinthians 2:2: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."<sup>50</sup> Saint Paul, the author, was describing the first time he visited Corinth to create the first converts of the Greek city to Christianity. He did not have any skills in wealth, education, or oratory, but he nevertheless raised a group of faithful believers. Paul claimed his approach in weakness was intentional as Corinthians were to now credit God and not Paul for the success of Christianity. With this verse, Southern ministers developed a conviction for churches to not have worldly knowledge, such as politics and business. Instead, the sole responsibility of churches was to proclaim Christ and the crucifixion, following the example of Paul. Therefore, for a church to take a position in public issues was outside the command of God. Only spiritual matters were to be the subjects of organized teachings. One may note the contradiction of churches

---

<sup>50</sup> 1 Cor. 2:2 (English Standard Version).

shunning politics while defending slavery and Confederate independence, but this conviction nonetheless showed itself in Southern religious discourse.

The principle of churches ignoring politics stood in contrast to a host of Northern activities. With the Northern practice of preaching politics, e.g., abolitionism and Radical Republicanism in Reconstruction, Northern and Southern ministries clashed in the course of the Civil War era. For many Southerners, even speaking of politics from the pulpit was sinful and an affront to the mission of Christians on Earth. By contrast, the North saw God as commanding them to speak out against the injustices of slavery and poverty. With this difference in religious views, resentment grew more abundant as the South faced continual Northern speeches bringing politics into faith. The religious advocacies of those like John Jay and Robert E. Elliott came to be an offense to the Southern purposes of the church, creating further division and discord.

A letter to the editors of the Presbyterian newspaper *New York Observer* confirmed the desire of Southern clergy to stay out of politics. In 1867, a delegation of Southern Presbyterians in Mississippi had taken offense to allegations in the *Observer* of Southern Christians still being hostile to the United States government. The *Observer* claimed to base this on personal observations and sources, which the Mississippians also rebuked for its vagueness. The Southern delegation recognized the popularity of the newspaper and requested a publication of their church resolution swearing loyalty to the Union. They claimed to represent a considerable number of clergy from Southern



denominations. In their arguments of why the *Observer* falsely perceived continuing rebellion in the South, the Mississippians raised the issue of politics in sermons: “We protest against the construing of the silence of a ministry who hold it to be their vocation to know in their public preaching nothing but Christ and Him crucified, touching the policy of the Government, into an expression of opinion adverse to the Government or its policy in any particular.”<sup>51</sup> The silence of politics from the pulpit became a source of conflict as the *Observer* assumed there was treachery while the Mississippi Presbyterians claimed to be following Biblical teachings.

Methodist Reverend James D. Anthony of Sandersville, Georgia offered another example of this Southern conviction in a discussion with General William Sherman in 1864. As one of the few white males left in the city after recent battles, Anthony represented Sandersville in a plea for the Union military to not burn the town. Sherman had received the impression of residents firing on his men, but Anthony was able to convince him the town was too destitute for this to happen. Sherman agreed, but he then began to argue with Anthony of the tactics of his generals. Sherman claimed the discipline of Union generals had prevented excessive destruction in the war, and he made the remark, “You preachers ought to be out preaching peace and submission to the best government in the world.” Anthony replied, “My dear sir, we preachers down South let politics alone. We preach Christ Jesus and the Gospel of peace, and leave to

---

<sup>51</sup> “A Loyal Southern Presbytery: A Cheering Indication in the Southern Sky,” *New York Observer*, October 24, 1867.

Caesar the things of state.”<sup>52</sup> With this simple counterpoint, Anthony did not quote 1 Corinthians, but he used the same principle of a duty to exclude himself from politics. With this, Southern religious practice stood in stark contrast from the North as the former held a conviction to distance itself from political pulpits.

The doctrine of church neutrality in politics also managed to move beyond the confines of the South. In a detailed description of all church denominations in 1893, Philip Schaff wrote of the Christian Union Churches under the leadership of Elder J. V. B. Flack. First organized in Ohio, the churches had split from the Methodist Episcopal Church over preaching the politics of the Civil War. Flack described the fervent determination of the new denomination to stay away from the practice.

We refused to vote in the conference for resolutions of war. We refused to pray for the success of the war. We refused to bring politics into our pulpit. We refused to join in the ranks that marched on the streets at war meetings. We refused to make certain war speeches. We refused to prefer charges against members of the church whom the fanatics accuse of being disloyal. We refused to preside at forced trials of good men who were tried for political opinions.<sup>53</sup>

The question of whether Christians ought to involve themselves in politics was one more difference of perspective between the regions, further endangering the

---

<sup>52</sup> James D. Anthony, “Have You Burned All Our Towns?,” in *The Spirit Divided: Memories of Civil War Chaplains, The Confederacy*, ed. John Wesley Brinsfield (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 237-238.

<sup>53</sup> Philip Schaff, *The American Church History Series: Consisting of a Series of Denominational Histories Published Under the Auspices of the American Society of Church History* (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1893), 99.

prospects of national reconciliation. Flack also noted actions of persecution against both himself and others for maintaining this discipline. Schaff offered no details of what occurred in the harassment of Flack, but it is reasonable to suspect the causes of the war inspired churchgoers to take offense to their impartiality. To be silent meant to either raise private suspicions or open accusations of being traitors. The decision to exclude oneself or his church from national discourse raised another barrier to public unity.

In summary, the widespread practice of Christianity showed the power of words to entrench the faithful against each other. Political speeches, sermons, and personal memoirs all show the ability of different religious interpretations to vindicate one's positions and give offense. Republicanism had taught America the legitimacy of having personal understandings of the Bible. With this activity now in regular practice, accusations were abundant as citizens were at continual odds with each other. Any citizen had the power to use faith to accuse others of being on the wrong side of God. The discourse did not serve the hope of citizens remembering their former enemies with compassion and forgiveness. With this, reconciliation faced a tenacious obstacle in moving the public beyond religious offenses. The complexity of how religion shaped public attitudes becomes evident in light of the obstacles raised from the accusations and condemnations inspired by faith.

This chapter has been dedicated to examining the ways in which religion inspired pious rhetoric to deepen the divisions of the Civil War. Chapter Two will look

at how the actual events of the war brought religion to further serve as an agent against reconciliation. The devastations of the war, the destruction of churches, and the pursuit of loyalty oaths from the South all helped to further strained relationships. Reconciliation continued to find more trouble than help from the religious perspectives of the era.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Trespasses: The Influence of War

Richard Fuller, a Baptist pastor in Baltimore, gave no hint of malice in a sermon advocating for national reconciliation on June 1, 1865. On a day Andrew Johnson reserved for the public to grieve for Abraham Lincoln, Fuller promoted harmony between North and South on the basis of religious virtue. As thousands of soldiers ended their experiences of war, Fuller pleaded for faith to inspire a renewed societal comradery. He spoke of the “unhallowed passions which have so long been marring the kindly charities of our social and domestic intercourse.”<sup>54</sup> To achieve this hope, Fuller referenced 1 Corinthians 13:6, where Saint Paul wrote of the characteristics of love. Fuller continued, “We as Christians... especially in times like these which are now passing over us, we must feel the obligation resting upon us all to cultivate kindness, forbearance, mutual candor in the interpretation of each other’s conduct and motives, a charity which ‘beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.’”<sup>55</sup>

This message represented the ideal of Christianity bringing reconciliation to America, but the nation not only clashed in religious rhetoric, but from interpretations of the war itself. The burning of churches, the violence of the war, and the demand of

---

<sup>54</sup> Richard Fuller, “Let All Who Truly Love the Union Now Bury Past Dissensions,” in *The Routledge Sourcebook of Religion and the American Civil War: A History of Documents*, ed. Robert R. Mathison (New York: Routledge, 2015), 464-465.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 465.

loyalty oaths affected the religious perspectives of veterans and civilians alike. As the Introduction noted, historians have of late examined the ways the devastation of the war steered veterans away from reconciliation. At the same time, faith was also at work in the perceptions of these events. The hope of Richard Fuller in 1865 proved in practice to be far from reality as the difficulties of war brought the same faith to raise misgivings of former enemies. While Chapter One reviewed the power of religious rhetoric to agitate citizens, the events of the Civil War, seen through the lens of religion, also had a negative impact on reconciliation.

An activity having an immediate impact on religious discord was the frequent destruction of church property throughout the war. The demolition of any property was an affront to civilians with the loss of homes and substantial harm to their livelihoods. However, the targeting of churches added even more difficulty to reconciliation as the destruction created the imagery of blasphemy against God and mockery of communities. The results included the disorder of congregations and arrest of church leaders as Union troops marched through Southern cities and farmlands. Despite any claims of forgiveness, writers of Christian media memorialized the disasters with accusations of contempt. The hope of reconciliation from Richard Fuller appeared fictional as neighbors remembered the acts of desecration by invading armies. Just as Civil War historians have accounted for the bitterness of veterans from the atrocities of the war, pious citizens held similar struggles to reach reconciliation.

Historians have already provided a comprehensive review of church destruction in the Civil War. In a study of how the war impacted Southern Protestantism, W. Harrison Daniel describes a significant number of incidents in which Union armies targeted churches. Often, rather than targeting military installations or government offices, Union troops directed their attention to buildings of worship. Perhaps the most well-known case of property damage came from the infamous march to Atlanta by General William Sherman. However, church buildings were not safe anywhere in the South. In Virginia alone, residents reported twenty-six Baptist churches destroyed. Also, almost all churches in the cities of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, Franklin, Tennessee, and Fredericksburg, Virginia were in ruins or damaged. Daniel further notes the extent to which the Union desecrated the structures. If regiments did not burn churches to the ground, they resolved to damage them with axes. Officers also ordered the use of the buildings for military functions such as stables and slaughterhouses. Soldiers utilized the debris as materials for bridges and other military projects, often while playing lewd songs on the organs. The looting of equipment for communion services also became a practice, bringing further desecration to communities.<sup>56</sup>

In a collection of memoirs from Confederate chaplains, historian John Brinsfield Jr. also offers insight into the suffering of churches. Brinsfield notes the Union government, as of 1864, permitted destruction of any property deemed fruitful for the

---

<sup>56</sup> W. Harrison Daniel, "The Effects of the Civil War on Southern Protestantism," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 69, no. 2 (1974): 47-49.

disruption of Southern society. Along with other devastations, this policy led to eleven of fifteen Presbyterian churches closing in Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>57</sup> Also, there were many reports of clergy arrests and resident evictions for not pledging loyalty to the Union via organized prayers for the president. The invasions brought the arrest of religious leaders, chaos for congregations, and financial cost in efforts to rebuild.<sup>58</sup> This chapter later addresses public responses to loyalty oaths, but it serves here to show the full impact of church burnings with the damage not limited to buildings. The physical assaults of the war boded poorly for religious leaders and laymen finding accord with their former enemies.

The chaplain accounts Brinsfield provides also show the public disarray resulting from violence against property. Recall from Chapter One the account of Reverend James D. Anthony of Sandersville, Georgia. Anthony had challenged General Sherman for his want of Southern preachers to praise the Union and include favorable political speeches in sermons. Anthony had convinced Sherman to not destroy Sandersville, proving the town too weak to endanger Union soldiers. Sherman changed his orders to destroy only the courthouse and jail by fire. However, despite his better intentions, the flames shot from the two buildings and almost destroyed the entire area, were it not for rescue by the community and one Union officer.<sup>59</sup> This episode demonstrates the circumstances in which a church was as much in danger of accidental destruction. Intentional or not, the

---

<sup>57</sup> John Wesley Brinsfield, ed., *The Spirit Divided: Memories of Civil War Chaplains, The Confederacy* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 223-226.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 237-239.



fires of war were able to reach the heart of Southern communities through the destruction of churches.

The practical cost of church destruction was in-and-of itself cause for increasing resentment from communities. As one example, congregants of Floyd County, Georgia filed claims of compensation from the federal government as late as the 1920s. Giving testimony to the House of Representatives of ten churches still lacking reparations for the Sherman campaign, a man named Tarver testified to the destruction of a particular church. Union soldiers had done this “deliberately.” “At the time the soldiers were setting fire to all of the buildings in that vicinity,” Tarver continued, “and one witness after seeing them set fire to his father’s barn watched them go down to the church and set fire to it.”<sup>60</sup> Tarver went on to note the cost of repair was \$1,500 to \$2,000. His discussion with the committee also included the question of whether a given church was loyal to the Union.<sup>61</sup> The hearing shows that even after half a century, the conversations of compensation considered the disloyalty of a congregation as a factor to awarding damages.

Even for congregations still possessing their church buildings, the destruction of the war made religious practices more difficult and costly. The *Southern Christian Advocate*, the official Methodist newspaper of several Southern states, printed letters to the editor with stories of destitution from the perspective of congregants. On April 27,

---

<sup>60</sup> *Claim Against U.S. for Burning of Georgia Church During Civil War*, H.R. Rep. No. 70-14783, at 15-16 (1929).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

1866, the periodical published a letter from Thomaston, Georgia of the devastation. The fires of Union armies had burned thirty-seven houses. The local church, while still standing, was in “a very dilapidated condition,” with money scarce for any thought of repairs.<sup>62</sup> The house of worship was still useful as a hospital, but it became a building of sorrow as soldiers, “breathed their last within its sacred walls, cheered, in their hours of anguish by the lovely ladies of this place, and soothed by their kind sympathies in their last moments.”<sup>63</sup> The letter also noted a man named Parker, a “yankee missionary, has not presented himself among us as yet. *We think we can do without him here.* We have had enough of Yankee instruction, too much for the good of either race.”<sup>64</sup> The author went on to write of the dangers Northern missionaries brought to the South by giving religious instructions to African Americans.<sup>65</sup> Chapter Three elaborates on church incursions from the North, but it is noteworthy here to see the extent of Southern resentment for the North. The violence from the Union military had devastated religious facilities, and the Southern faithful were not about to forget the invaders who caused it.

In the previous month, the *Southern Christian Advocate* had already highlighted the lives of a poor congregation made worse by the destruction of war. The letter to the editor praised God for providing the funds to build what was already a shanty house of worship. The armies had not done additional damage to the church, but they destroyed the surrounding economy instead. A significant lack of cotton, equipment, and general

---

<sup>62</sup> “Correspondence: From Thomaston, GA,” *Southern Christian Advocate* (Macon, GA), April 27, 1866.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

supplies made the lives of the congregation much harder while still seeing fit to renovate the church. Despite the praise to God for the provision of church funds, the author revealed his animosity. He vowed of the new building, "May its sacred desk never become a political forum, or the source of a *hybrid* theology, tainted with the *corruptisms* of the North."<sup>66</sup> In this letter, the author was not able to hold back in expressing his remembrance of which side brought destruction to his community. Even leaving aside the bitter disagreements of politics, congregants remembered who caused the heartache, with reconciliation to suffer in future years.

These cases show the harm inflicted on the financial and communal well-being of Southern communities with the destruction of churches. Studies of Union marches through the South often do not consider the significance of these ruins. With Protestantism being the lens through which many Americans perceived the world and each other, the ruin of their sanctuaries was a notable factor in how residents perceived their former opponents. Reconciliation faced continuing perceptions of apathy and maliciousness from the North, lingering in memory as civil cases reached the first decades of the twentieth century. The financial and personal hardships came to communities with no ambiguity of who was to blame. Anyone under the Union flag became an object of spiritual resentment.

---

<sup>66</sup> "Dedication of Prospect M. E. Church, Hamilton Circuit, GA," *Southern Christian Advocate* (Macon, GA) March 23, 1866.

While religion and war intertwined in civilian life through the burning of churches, the blend also occurred in the hardships of battles. The spread and maintenance of Protestantism continued from the first decades of the century to the activities of soldiers in the 1860s. The difficulties the soldiers faced in war intensified the experiences of evangelism and pastoral teachings. The burdens of prisons and continual threats of death in battle created dire circumstances which added depth to the practices of one's faith. The experiences culminated into a prolonged animosity, sustained by the future ministerial careers of veterans. The catastrophic events of the Civil War enhanced devotion to religion, and therefore increased the vigor in which the faithful inspired divisions in the course of reconciliation.

For an understanding of the power of war on the psyche of soldiers, the army of Tennessee offered a vivid picture. Ann Snyder, in 1890, published the experiences of a wide variety of Southern ministers in *The Civil War from a Southern Standpoint*. In the chapter "Religion in the Southern Army," Snyder showed there were a substantial number of conversions in Southern armies. The stresses from the dangers of war had a significant emotional impact on soldiers, drawing them to seek hope in Christianity.

Even under the fire of Federal batteries the work went on. Rev. Mr. Browning, from Chattanooga, says: "Yesterday evening about five o'clock the enemy began to throw shells across the river again, firing slowly for almost an hour. Notwithstanding this, at the usual hour (twilight) we had a very large crowd of anxious listeners at the rude arbor the men had erected for the worship of God. A short discourse was delivered, when the penitents were invited to the altar. Fifty or sixty came forward, earnestly inquiring the way of salvation. ... During a ministry of a fourth of a century I have never witnessed a work so deep, so general, and so

successful. It pervades all classes of the army (in this brigade), and elicits the co-operation of all denominations.”<sup>67</sup>

Snyder published other testimonies in which ministers claimed they had “never before seen so great a movement. ...It hardly makes a difference who the preacher is – and crowds will attend to hear.”<sup>68</sup> Dr. Wilson, another Tennessee minister, had “thought it doubtful whether there had been any thing since the days of Pentecost equal to this wonderful work of the Holy Spirit of God in our army.”<sup>69</sup> By referencing Pentecost, Wilson was considering the Bible story in the second chapter of Acts, when 3,000 visitors to Jerusalem came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. In this case, the heartache and desperation of war raised the intensity of soldier experiences in faith.

With conversions and public repentance under cannon fire, the depth of devotion to religion was considerable. The accounts speak to the potential for intense religious experiences when under dire circumstances. Whether a soldier faced surrounding artillery or the death of friends in battle, fear and chaos created an environment allowing belief to give hope for the present and future. The testimonies from Snyder came from a wide number of witnesses, and the imminent dangers gave reason for soldiers to favor religious messages. Under these conditions, religion became a greater influence on the thoughts of thousands, serving further as a lens through which soldiers perceived reality in post-war years.

---

<sup>67</sup> Ann E. Snyder, ed., *The Civil War from a Southern Standpoint* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1893), 289-290.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

The harsh experiences of military prisons also contributed to a rise in religious activities. The North and South held bitterness against each other for alleged cruelties against prisoners of war, and historians of reconciliation have discussed the effects of soldiers carrying the memories throughout their lives. However, the studies have not noted the devotions of religion increasing in these environments. With the hardships of being a Civil War prisoner, the intensity of religious experiences came to reign in jail cells as much as on battlefields. In both situations, agony became a stimulant for seeking religious hope.

As a notable example, Confederate chaplain Atticus G. Haygood revealed in his memoir the extent to which future church leaders had been prisoners under Union flags. The Georgia chaplain described streams of prisoners returning to their homes over time, claiming hundreds to have been born-again Christians while in prison. While in prison, captives also learned to read, write, and prepare for a future life as ministers. When considering their struggles, Haygood praised their fortitude, proclaiming, "God bless these brave fighters, these long-enduring sufferers! Let the people receive them as such heroic sons of the South deserve to be received."<sup>70</sup> Haygood also spoke of the grudges the faithful soldiers were to hold in future years. Of the hundreds of prisoners returning home, Haygood claimed there were, "No reconstructionists among them. And there will be no such monstrous growths among them so long as they remember Rock

---

<sup>70</sup> Atticus G. Haygood, "We Are Building Shanties," in *The Spirit Divided: Memories of Civil War Chaplains, The Confederacy*, ed. John Wesley Brinsfield (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 230-231.

Island, Point Lookout, Elmira, and those other places of torture, and hunger, and oppression.”<sup>71</sup> With this passionate prediction, Haygood showed how the negative experiences of future church leaders were impediments to dialogues of reconciliation. When considering the loss of life, the punishments of prison, and the destruction of churches occurring throughout the region, bitterness was substantial. Despite the potential for positive behaviors from faith in Christianity, veterans came to remember Rock Island, Point Lookout, and other prisons of torment and despair from the Union.

Just as Haygood understood the repercussions of prison for devout believers, Ann Snyder also provided testimony of religious experiences for these soldiers. One officer wrote to the newspaper *Southern Presbyterian* of regular church activities in prison for comfort in faith.

This is the last quarter of a long, long twelve-months’ confinement. I try to pass the time as profitably as I can. We have preaching regularly every Sabbath, prayer-meeting two or three times a week, and worship in my room every night. We also have a Young Men’s Christian Association, Masonic meetings, etc. ... We have had some precious religious times. There have been about one hundred conversions – colonels, majors, captains, and lieutenants being among the number.<sup>72</sup>

The intensity of these experiences is revealing. The harshness of a prison environment was influential in the practice of communal activities. Such exercises of faith also had effects on their dispositions. Another officer, a lieutenant, commented of his prison experiences, “There are about two thousand officers here, and I never have

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Snyder, *Southern Standpoint*, 295.

seen so great a change in the morals of any set of men as has been here in the last four months."<sup>73</sup> The trajectory of soldiers practicing faith in the midst of battles and prisons was in motion for thousands. The link between the experiences was prominent for the mindset of soldiers when leaving the war behind them.

As much as the hardships influenced soldiers during the war, their full significance came to fruition in the creation of a well-known movement in American thought: The Lost Cause. This was a mythology the South constructed of its history after the war. With its influence reaching all the way to present-day discourse, its claims have included the unique bravery of Confederate soldiers, the moral superiority of fighting for state independence, and Southern goals being in true alignment to the Founding Fathers. Debates with these talking points have disturbed national reconciliation for 150 years, and religion played a significant role in establishing their foundations. The harsh experiences of the war energized Southern devotions to faith, and by extension, faith became a powerful inspiration for the arguments of the Lost Cause. Future generations embraced this obstacle to reconciliation from the influence of ministers grieved by miseries at the hands of the Union.

Charles Reagan Wilson has been the prominent historian for showing the connection between religion and the Lost Cause. In *Baptized by Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*, Wilson notes the conclusion of social sciences that a society in disarray and uncertainty will rally around positive perceptions of its own history. This

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



creates stability as citizens bring their focus away from negative self-perceptions. In this case, Southern states, facing defeat in war and economic devastation, were prone to doubt their future. According to Wilson, the role of ministers was profound in rallying the public to have pride and patriotism in Southern culture. Religious leaders were perhaps the most loyal of all Confederates, promoting Southern honor and virtue for more than fifty years after the war. The mythology from their sermons included the likening of Southern citizens to ancient Israelites and Confederate leaders as Biblical figures.<sup>74</sup> The ministers also portrayed Southern culture as doing no wrong while depicting the North as the moral opposite. “The marauding Yankee” was a typical portrayal of Northern soldiers from their memories of the war. Wilson also quotes Methodist Bishop James O. Andrews equating the North to “the deeds of dark and damning atrocity” with the military ventures of Sherman.<sup>75</sup> With these messages, religious leaders offered a renewed identify to Confederate states: A nation of virtue and piety, above reproach and in stark moral contrast to their former enemy.

With the connection between the atrocities of the Civil War and the inspirations of religion, the grim events led ministers to promote the Lost Cause from its first days of conception. Much religious rhetoric, such as those from Chapter One, found their motivation in the violent memories of the war. As Haygood noted of Georgia in 1864, Southerners not only came to faith in these circumstances, but they were now learned

---

<sup>74</sup> Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 37-57.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

in communication skills.<sup>76</sup> From here, they became future ministers of a society carrying the weight of experiences from the invasions of the North. The Lost Cause, perhaps the greatest hindrance to generations finding peace and accord with each other, received some of its first conceptions from religious inspiration. Those interpretations of life came from the influence of faith in the midst of severe hardships, laying foundations of blame and resentment for years to come.

Expressions of the Lost Cause were forthright from laymen as well as ministry leaders. In a publication describing twenty-two months as a prisoner of war in the Confederacy, Stephen Schwartz chronicled a conversation with a Southern mother in Texas. She and her two adult daughters were sewing Confederate uniforms when they invited Schwartz in for water. He explained his current position as a prisoner of war on parole, expressing a want for revenge against the Confederacy for his experiences. By contrast, the Texas mother had lost her oldest son to the war, and her husband still served in the army. With the hardships of both individuals in mind, the mother made a lengthy argument for the Confederate cause, invoking the notion of God siding with the Confederacy. "My young man, by your intelligent appearance, I should judge that you must comprehend the fact that the South was inspired by the voice of God from heaven, which makes our cause holy and sacred, and with God on our side, at the latter end the South will come out victorious."<sup>77</sup> Later, the mother showed her devotion to faith and

---

<sup>76</sup> Haygood, "We Are Building Shanties," 231.

<sup>77</sup> Stephen Schwartz, *Twenty-Two Months a Prisoner of War: A Narrative of Twenty-Two Months' Imprisonment by the Confederates, in Texas, Through General Twigg's Treachery, Dating from April, 1861, to February, 1863* (St. Louis: A. F. Nelson Pub. Co., 1892), 170.

anger for the Union all in one prayer. "Raising her arms at the same time to their full length above her head, the two hands clenched, the whites of her eyes heavenwards, and praying to God and all the angels to listen to the prayers of the southern people. 'Free us from our oppressors, invaders and mutilators. Oh God, you are just, help us, save the good and the innocent, and punish the bad and the guilty.'"<sup>78</sup> With the traumas of the war, Southern whites such as herself turned to faith to justify their beliefs and anger, which hindered reconciliation further.

Elements of the Lost Cause also appeared in another article from the Baptist newspaper *Biblical Recorder*. North Carolina readers enjoyed a series of editorial responses to Dr. Colver, a Northern Baptist, with his questions recently published as a summary of accusations against Southern whites. In large part, the allegations were of sins for the treatment of ex-slaves. The *Recorder* responded to most by denying the abuses and portraying racial harmony in the South while turning questions of morality against the North. For example, when Dr. Colver questioned whether Southern churches disciplined members for slave abuse, the *Recorder* compared their slave owners to esteemed Biblical characters like Philemon, who also owned slaves. The article also responded to an accusation of Southern ungratefulness for Northern donations to Baptist conventions. Claiming no rights in the taxation of their farmlands, the periodical then raised resentful memories from the years of war.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>79</sup> "Dr. Colver's Questions," *Biblical Recorder* (Raleigh, NC), April 8, 1868.

We are grateful for “the millions” received. But we feel that our peculiar crops are taxed to the ruin of those that cultivate them, and we have no voice among those who impose the taxes. Besides we find it hard to forget that Northern fingers have played our pianos, that Northern tongues have licked our spoons, that Northern soldiers have robbed our widows, and have worn the clothes and danced in the boots of our pastors. These and numberless other injuries we have heartily forgiven, and are trying to forget.”<sup>80</sup>

In this dialogue, the violent memories which stimulated the Lost Cause created obstructions between the former foes. Southern whites, led by religious leaders previously entangled in the events of the war, upheld themselves as brave martyrs with contempt for the sins of the North. The *Biblical Recorder* put its best foot forward to deny any wrongdoing while the North became the immoral adversary with the destruction and mockery of Southern churches. The final paragraph of the article claimed, “If Dr. Colver will come to see us, we may be able to show him some things to mitigate the severity of his judgment, and he may also point out some of our errors and lead us to repentance.”<sup>81</sup> However, despite this olive branch, the tone of the article and hostility from the memories of Union troops made the division apparent. For ministers and laymen alike, the virtues of the South were impenetrable while perceptions of malice from the North were clear. Empathy was lacking with sermons and religious media becoming the means through which believers amplified their antagonism for reconciliation.

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

One other area in which the events of the war raised religious disagreement was the Union requirement of loyalty oaths from Southern whites. Having already lost the hope of creating a new nation, Confederates faced demands of oaths from both the Union government and Northern denominations. With the threat of penalties and arrests, the pressure to acquiesce was another offensive activity that hindered comradery. Southern objections to oaths also stalled reconciliation by intensifying the suspicions of Northern churches. If the Southern faithful were unwilling take a new oath of loyalty, they appeared to the North as continuing disloyalty with perhaps even having thoughts of starting another rebellion. Northern Protestants resented the rejection of these oaths, leading to one more way in which citizens held grudges against each other.

Braxton Craven, President of Duke University, was prophetic in his attempts to warn Northern Methodism of the hostility to come for the demands of oaths. Craven wrote to Bishop Edward R. Ames in July 1865 about the potential danger of Northern Methodists requiring Union oaths from Southerners. A recent editorial "How Shall We Go South?" had claimed to represent the views of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The article had given stipulations for the reintegration of Southern churches. This included a requirement for Southern ministers to give public assurances of loyalty to the Union at denominational conferences. In a plea to Ames to relieve Southern Christians of these humiliations, Craven spoke of their absurdity in light of church history.

As to conditions of reconstruction, most that have been proposed are neither Methodistic nor desirable. Such accusations and tests as many have proposed are unknown to Church History. No church, hitherto, has made political questions, articles of faith or tests of membership, and the

general doctrine of the Protestant world is, or at least has been, that no ecclesiastical body has the right to consider political questions, or make inquisition of their members in regard to them.<sup>82</sup>

Whether or not Methodist bishops were behind the demands of the editorial, Craven was adamant that time was of the essence to make peace. The president claimed if the Northern denomination did not soon change its resolutions to be agreeable to Southern Christians, "it would be difficult to conceive of a more objectionable scheme for the country as it now is; and if that is the only action had, and shall be the course pursued, till 1868, it will effectually prevent reconstruction, and will inaugurate an evil that will last for many generations."<sup>83</sup> Craven advocated for the North to have resolutions doing away with the mandates, accepting Southern ministers in good faith while making efforts for peaceful relations. Craven was a patriot to the South and an ardent defender of its integrity. However, his ultimate hope was still for reconciliation as reunited churches would be a stronger force to evangelize the world.<sup>84</sup> The demand of oaths from ministers on public display was a severe affront to this vision, heightening divisions in post-war years.

In the cases of the Union government requiring oaths from Confederates, ministers perhaps made the best martyrs for inspiring public defiance. In Tennessee, Andrew Johnson, then the Union military governor in 1862, ordered the capture of R. B. C. Howell, senior Baptist minister of Nashville, for refusing to take an oath of loyalty to

---

<sup>82</sup> Nora C. Chaffin, "A Southern Advocate of Methodist Unification in 1865," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 18, no. 1 (1941): 44.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-47.

the Union. The congregation of Central Baptist Church in Nashville had already fled their Sunday service in panic, responding to news of the fall of nearby Fort Donaldson. Howell came to receive a great amount of respect in the region for staying in jail for two months, still refusing to give the oath.<sup>85</sup> The resolve of Howell represented the sentiments of hundreds of ministers Craven spoke of in his plea to Northern Methodists. Whether in the midst of war or in the years afterward, the requirement of oaths spoke against the pride and beliefs of Southern white ministers. A political oath of loyalty appeared as heresy and intimidation to submit to an unworthy authority.

While this chapter has concentrated on the views of Southern white men, the subject of oaths was also disturbing for Northerners in reconciliation. From the perspective of the Northern faithful, oaths were necessary as suspicions of Southern disloyalty became abundant in short time. Recall from Chapter One the 1867 publication by the Presbyterian newspaper *New York Observer*. A delegation of Mississippi Presbyterians attempted persuade the editors of their loyalty to the Union, arguing their neutrality in politics did not equate to betrayal. The editors later responded to the claim by defending their observations of Southern disloyalty. They were ready to accept the Mississippi congregation as an exception, being willing to see them as “first fruits of a good work going on we trust to perfection, and indicating the dawn of a blessed day.”<sup>86</sup> Still, they retained the perception of fierce animosity from the large majority of

---

<sup>85</sup> Paul Harvey, “Yankee Faith’ and Southern Redemption: White Southern Baptist Ministers, 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), 173.

<sup>86</sup> “A Loyal Southern Presbytery,” *New York Observer*, October 24, 1867.

Southern ministries. From the devastation of the war and Southern defiance to Reconstruction, trust, a natural component to reconciliation, was out of reach from Northern views.

Suspicious of disloyalty from the *Observer* were not isolated to this one congregation. Two months earlier, in August of 1867, the newspaper reprinted an article from the Richmond newspaper *Central Presbyterian*. The governor of Virginia, F. H. Pierpoint, had made accusations of Southern churches still being disloyal with continuing hopes of separation from the Union. An assembly of Virginia pastors sent signed a statement to the *Observer* vehemently denying these claims: "To each and all of these allegations we offer a unanimous and an unequivocal denial. Further, we affirm that scores of unimpeachable witnesses are ready to testify that they are totally without foundation in fact."<sup>87</sup> Despite the seeming sincerity of the ministers, before readers were able to see the petition, the *Observer* quipped, "Every reader will at once notice that the denial has reference only to the official acts of those implicated in the charge of Gov. Pierpoint." In other words, the editors attempted to put immediate doubt of Southern loyalty in the minds of its readers. The newspaper does not explain what unofficial activities the Virginia churches were allegedly doing, but the response represented continuing suspicions from the North. With cynicism from the North and contempt from the South, oaths extended the religious controversies in reconciliation.

---

<sup>87</sup> "A Denial," *New York Observer*, August, 15, 1867.



There is a great deal of irony in the accusations of the *New York Observer* in 1867. Only two years earlier, the newspaper advocated for Northern sympathy for the Confederate states. An article from May 1865 called for empathy in light of the poverty and destruction which reigned in the South. The *Observer* stated, "The union of feeling must be restored. The expressions of vengeance which now and then are heard from Christian lips ought to give place to words of kindness and charity. Vengeance belongs to God only."<sup>88</sup> Claiming the South had already received justice by the wrath of God in the war, the *Observer* was advocating for gracious government policies with immediate aid to rebuild the states. For the masses who followed Confederate leaders into the war, the article commented, "What is our duty toward them? Plainly to cultivate as rapidly as possible the most kindly relations of business and friendship, to bind them to the Union by the double ties of interest and affection."<sup>89</sup> Only two years later, with suspicions of Southerners rising again to defy the Union, sentiments of benevolence fell hard in Northern demands for statements of loyalty.

The push for loyalty oaths corresponded with the memories of the war to heighten religious animosities between the North and South. The destruction of churches, the miseries of the war, and the suspicion of future sedition all came into the thoughts of the Christian faithful. Not only did the events inspire devotion to faith, but they offered powerful deterrents to reconciliation. The negative sentiments carried into

---

<sup>88</sup> "Rebuilding the Ruins," *New York Observer*, May 25, 1865.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

the future leadership of ministers, inspiring the rhetoric and discord America has known from the arguments of the Lost Cause. The entanglement of Civil War events with religion hindered reconciliation, overruling any perception of commonality between white Protestants.

The first two chapters have demonstrated the power of words and Civil War events in religious influences against reconciliation. Chapter One showed the use of interpretations in offensive rhetoric, and Chapter Two has examined the intertwine of war events and religious practices with a focus on Southern white perspectives. Chapter Three will focus on the separation of African Americans from white congregants and the reorganization of denominations in the South after the war. This was a significant issue to reconciliation for white Protestants of the North and South. White Southerners received a culture shock from losing their religious hold on former slaves while the North initiated missionary incursions into the South. This enflamed disagreements on both sides with a new triangle of organizations, i.e., Northern whites, Southern whites, and African Americans. These relationships became another layer in the difficulties of reconciliation.

CHAPTER THREE  
Exodus: The Post-War Reorganization of Denominations

More than fifty years before freedmen experienced the jubilation of emancipation in America, a precursory event – the end of the slave trade – also gave cause for many to celebrate. Congress had forbidden the importation of slaves in 1808, only one year after the its banishment in Great Britain. Reverend Absalom Jones of Philadelphia’s American Methodist Church praised the act as divine intervention in the modern age. He claimed, “The history of the world shows us that the deliverance of the children of Israel from their bondage is not the only instance in which it has pleased God to appear in behalf of oppressed and distressed nations, as the deliverance of the innocent, and of those who call upon his name.”<sup>90</sup> Jones then offered a lengthy list of torture practices in the slave trade, from the anguish of separated families to the use of “the whip, the screw, the pincers, and the red-hot iron, which has been exercised upon their bodies by inhuman overseers.”<sup>91</sup> Then speaking against slave masters with a message of God’s perspective on current events, Jones continued:

Inhuman wretches! Though You have been deaf to their cries and shrieks, they have been heard in Heaven. The ears of Jehovah have been constantly open to them: He has heard the prayers that have ascended from the hearts of his people; and he has, as in the case of his ancient and chosen people the Jews, come down to deliver our suffering countrymen from the hands of the oppressors. ... He came down into the British Parliament, when they passed a law to put an end to the same

---

<sup>90</sup> Absalom Jones, “Thanksgiving Sermon,” in *The African American Experience: Black History and Culture Through Speeches, Letters, Editorials, Poems, Songs and Stories*, ed. Kai Wright (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2001), 125.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

iniquitous trade in May 1807. He came down into the United States, the last winter, when they passed a similar law, the operation of which commences on this happy day.<sup>92</sup>

With the image of the descent of the Lord on the nations of Britain and the United States, the joy from the congregants was evident. Though slavery still existed, a global practice of inhumanity had been barred from existence with a call for exuberant thankfulness. An anthem written for the same service encapsulated the thrill of the audience:

The nations heard His stern commands!  
 Britannia kindly set us free;  
 Columbia tears the galling bands,  
 and gives the sweets of Liberty.

Then strike the lyre! Your voices raise!  
 Let gratitude inspire your song!  
 Pursue religion's holy ways,  
 Shun sinful Pleasure's giddy throng!"<sup>93</sup>

Meetings of such joy served as forerunners to the litany of jubilations African Americans later experienced with emancipation. However, as this thesis has shown, the joy of one group meant anger and resentment from others. In the case of the slave trade five decades earlier, the joy of slaves and abolitionist allies meant the end of a prosperous enterprise. An entire wing of the global economy had ended, bringing disruptions of life, commerce, and culture. A similar shakeup occurred in 1865 as freedmen began to leave the homes and churches of their former masters. The large

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> "The Sweets of Liberty: African Methodist Episcopal Church Hymn," in *The African American Experience: Black History and Culture Through Speeches, Letters, Editorials, Poems, Songs and Stories*, ed. Kai Wright (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2001), 127.

majority of freedmen formed their own denominations with an enthusiasm as joyous as the experience of their ancestors in 1808.

The events inspiring the jubilation of African Americans led to additional hurdles for white Americans to achieve reconciliation. The results of the war forced white Southern denominations to come to terms with a new reality: African Americans were now able to fully pursue their own spiritual direction. Religious paternalism had been in place for decades with the efforts of white evangelists, but this came to an end with emancipation. Freedmen showed a substantial enthusiasm to start new lives on their own religious terms. With this, the social order of the South faced a fundamental change to communal practices of Christianity. The physical and spiritual exodus of African Americans, with the encouragement of Northern supporters, created further animosity in post-war years. With a new world of independence and the post-war infiltrations of Northern ministries, reconciliation found an additional obstacle from the consequences of new religious organizations in the South.

The enthusiasm of freedmen for their new lives, spiritual and otherwise, was apparent in Southern church gatherings. Captain George Whitfield Pepper, in a publication of the military conquests of General Sherman, described a church service in South Carolina having an intense celebration for the freedom of African Americans. Pepper described an exuberant Baptist meeting of two hundred congregants after a Confederate defeat in Beaufort. According to Pepper, "The building was packed to its utmost capacity, and hundreds stood during the whole evening, while hundreds of

others came. ...The whole congregation here gave vent to their joyous emotions, in bursts of 'Glory to God! Hallelujah! Praise his name!'"<sup>94</sup> Reverend Mansfield French, a white minister of Ohio, was the principal speaker of the service. Along with stern instructions for freedmen to maintain moral discipline in their new lives, French found an ecstatic enthusiasm from the crowd with every word.

The effect of this stirring poetry on the assembly was thrilling. The elder, who read the hymn, when he came to the words: *The year of jubilee has come!* ... The audience caught the magical influence and then a scene ensued which baffles description. All classes, black and white, old slave owners, and the soldiers of the army were alike affected. ...At the mention of the Union and Liberty, and the names of Lincoln and Sherman, the walls almost trembled beneath the thunder which followed. When the orator declared the re-election of Mr. Lincoln as the guarantee of freedom for all time, the vast gathering rose to their feet, and with shouts and tears, returned thanks to God Almighty.<sup>95</sup>

The imagery of such meetings is important for understanding the extent of the differences in perspectives between freedmen and white Southern Protestants. Freedmen held an insurmountable joy in the same way as the end of the slave trade, with a Northern pastor leading the crowd in awe of the news. French had "electrified the multitude," receiving "cheer upon cheer," with Pepper having the expectation of similar church meetings everywhere.<sup>96</sup> The exuberance demonstrated an enthusiastic rejection of the old order. One can therefore expect the opposite response from those antagonistic to this new world. White Southerners expressed their own thoughts on the

---

<sup>94</sup> George Whitfield Pepper, *Personal Recollections of Sherman's Campaigns in Georgia and the Carolinas* (Zanesville, Ohio: Hugh Dunne, 1866), 290.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 290-291.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

spiritual consequences of what they perceived as a new social anarchy in America. The different outlooks revealed a post-war religious life of resentment from Southern whites. At the same time, African Americans were content to separate from white churches while the North attempted to make its own spiritual incursions into the South. These disagreements made reconciliation to have an even longer road in American history as the groups inspired further discord.

To understand the context of these divisions, Eric Foner, in his renowned overview of Reconstruction, offers a background on the new trifecta of religious organizations. In *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*, Foner demonstrates the speed and enthusiasm of former slaves to separate themselves from white religious practices. In terms of overall numbers, Foner notes the example of African American Methodists dropping in white South Carolina churches from 42,000 to 600 by the 1870s. According to Foner, the motivations for them to leave were continuing discrimination from whites and the zeal of leaving the presence of their former masters. At the same time, Foner shows Northern missionaries had a negligible impact in luring African Americans to their own church plants in the South. The central reason for this was the simple preference of freedmen being able to have ministers of the same race. Before the war, white religious leaders had at times overseen black gatherings of worship, whether the races sat apart or held their own services. From the late 1860s, the churches proved to be pivotal in the organization of community events and political gatherings. The new churches also supported the perception of freedmen

being the modern American equivalent of the ancient Israelites with the hand of God guiding their freedom.<sup>97</sup>

Personal observations of the religious separations add depth to the discussion by showing the full extent of the differences between the races. Lucius Holsey, a founding bishop of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (M.E.C.) in Georgia, noted the substantial differences between former slaves and white congregations. He first explained the formal separation of African American Methodists with an official conference vote in Jackson, Tennessee in 1870. After forming the new organization, Holsey claimed only 40,000 of 200,000 stayed in white Methodist churches while the rest formed their own denominations. While Holsey spoke of some wanting harmony with white congregants, he stressed the utter lack of common ground between the races. The ambitions of each group were too far apart for reconciliation to occur.

The war had changed the ancient relation of master and servant. The former, though divested of his slaves, yet carried with him all the notions, feelings and elements in his religious and social life that characterized his former years. On the other hand, the emancipated slave had but little in common with the former master. In fact, he had nothing but his religion, poverty and ignorance. With social elements so distinct and dissimilar, the best results of a common church relation could not be expected.<sup>98</sup>

Holsey provides an analysis of the basic motivation for African Americans to immediately separate from white churches. On one hand, Southern whites were holding fast to discriminations, keeping to as many traditions of bias as possible. At the same

---

<sup>97</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 89-94.

<sup>98</sup> Lucius H. Holsey, "The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church," in *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, 2nd ed., ed. Milton C. Sernett (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 252-253.



time, perhaps an equally powerful motivation for freedmen was finding themselves having miniscule commonality with whites. Christianity became something in common between the races through the nineteenth century, but the experiences inherent in slavery left nothing else in common ground. This adds a new dimension to Foner's analysis. He describes the motivation for blacks to leave whites as "the black quest for self-determination."<sup>99</sup> It is true the organization of black churches showed a personal drive for self-reliance. However, readers may miss the full significance of why most African Americans walked away from religious unity. According to Holsey, the chasm separating the races not only included the suffering of slavery, but the identity blacks had attained as servants to white masters. Freedmen sought to escape not only the institution of slavery, but anything resembling their former lives. From the onset of emancipation, the prospect of reconciliation between the races showed itself as slim.

Historian Matthew Harper also offers insight into the religious motivations for freedmen to leave the ministries of Southern whites. In *The End of Days: African American Religion and Politics in the Age of Emancipation*, Harper explains the strong influence of eschatology on African Americans. Eschatology is the belief in a future divine plan for both individuals and the human race. Its development was substantial in light of the destruction of the Civil War, leading to several strands of eschatology for freedmen. Some saw a command from God for blacks to become peacemakers with whites while others perceived a destiny for the race to evangelize in Africa and other

---

<sup>99</sup> Foner, *Unfinished Revolution*, 89.

non-white regions.<sup>100</sup> Emancipation therefore played a profound role in creating powerful perceptions of the future. To many, a “divinely orchestrated history” was at work in the present time, which encouraged interpretations of the future for freedmen.<sup>101</sup> The explanation of eschatology from Harper is synonymous with an overarching theme of this thesis: The influence of Christianity on the thoughts and actions of Americans in this time. With such a study on the psyche of Americans, *The End of Days* represents the difference between historians acknowledging religion and demonstrating its strong effects on people. In this case, eschatology continued to inspire many blacks to stay away from any notion of reunification with whites.

Having examined the reasons for the exodus of freedmen, the reactions of Northern and Southern whites created additional difficulties for reconciliation. Although Northern church plants in the South had little success in drawing African Americans, their attempts to influence the religiosity of former slaves added to the resentments of Southern whites. Also, Northern church expansions into the South enflamed antagonism with each passing year. As historian Paul Harvey has noted of Baptists, “White Baptists viewed political and religious reconstruction as the same process in different institutional settings. Just as carpetbaggers had ‘stolen’ the reigns of [Southern] government, so northern missionary organizations would seize control of the institutions and customs of southern religious life.”<sup>102</sup> Common knowledge of history

---

<sup>100</sup> Matthew Harper, *The End of Days: African American Religion and Politics in the Age of Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 4-8.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-27.

<sup>102</sup> Paul Harvey, “Yankee Faith,” 176.

shows carpetbaggers as alleged intruders stirring political conflict in Southern states, but their religious motivations are also worthy of attention in the difficulties of reconciliation.

Illustrating these conflicts, Reverend L. M. Hagood wrote of Northern church plants in Southern states in a history of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1890. Hagood described the Northern initiatives in a fashion similar to portraying military incursions. He first described the M.E.C. as “practically excluded for twenty years” from deep Southern states while “a generation had grown up under the immediate care, as it were, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.”<sup>103</sup> He then used specific language to portray church plants in the South as follow-up invasions from the Union in the aftermath of the war. He described the M.E.C. as having “held on” to the city of Baltimore as its “strongest fort” in the region, with a “foothold” in most border states, including Virginia.<sup>104</sup> After providing statistics showing sizable increases in new ministers, congregates, and church buildings in those states, Hagood invoked the Great Commission as the motivation for their success. From Mark 16: 15-16, the verses are foundational to Methodism as a direct command from Christ to share their faith with outsiders. According to Hagood, there was “no mistake made on the part of our Church when it heard and obeyed the commission in this case, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’”<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> L. M. Hagood, *The Colored Man in the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1890), 153.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

The observations of Hagood show a post-war spiritual aggressiveness Southerners perceived from the North. With the M.E.C., South separating in 1844, Southern citizens found themselves isolated within their own culture. Then, after twenty years followed by the death and destruction of the Civil War, the aftermath came to include infiltrations by Northern Methodists. With Northern ministers seeing their own churches as forts and strongholds moving southward, the animosity from the South becomes clear. Hagood also showed a level of combativeness by using Mark 16 to claim divine blessing on the incursions of Northern branches. Again, God appeared to be on one side and against the other, and in this case, citizens received the insinuation of the North being the legitimate faith in need of reforming the South. This prevented Southern whites from seeing their commonality with the North. Religion therefore shows itself again as having a negative effect on the ability of whites to embrace each other in faith and race.

The historical research of Reginald F. Hildebrand also adds to observations of Southern irritation toward Northern ministers working in their territories. From his research of Methodism, Hildebrand claims, "From the southern perspective, the M.E. Church gave every indication that it was 'hell-bent' on destroying the principle of black deference to whites and all of the boundaries of a well-ordered society."<sup>106</sup> With Radical Republican preachers like Gilbert Haven and John Emory Bryant settling in the South to

---

<sup>106</sup> Reginald F. Hildebrand, *The Times Were Strange and Stirring: Methodist Preachers and the Crisis of Emancipation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 105.

further liberal ideals, religious carpetbaggers created disorder as well. In a striking quote confirming the militarism of the North in pursuit of this goal, Hildebrand continued, “Methodist Episcopal missionaries saw themselves as the rear guard of the Union Army and the vanguard of Republican Reconstruction.”<sup>107</sup> The theological dispute of whether churches ought to involve themselves in politics also came into play with this conviction. Hildebrand offers a quotation from the newspaper *Raleigh Christian Advocate* in this time, saying, “Southern Methodists do not interfere with politics and Northern Methodists preach and write and talk more about politics than about the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>108</sup> In all of these actions, the South interpreted a post-war religious invasion. Northern missionary efforts appeared as a natural extension of the aggressions Southerners experienced in the Civil War. Rather than buildings and human life being in chaos, the culture of the South appeared to be under the same threat.

The article from the Baptist newspaper *Biblical Recorder* in Chapter One also helps in understanding the Southern perspective of church incursions. In June 1868, the North Carolina author had responded to accusations from the Boston newspaper *Christian Era* of the South committing all wrongdoing in the war. The author then equated Northern evangelists to the Union soldiers who decimated the South in the war. From the Southern point of view, the missionaries were the same as the Union army, having “burned houses, robbed widows and orphans, not only of gold and silver,

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 106-108.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 105.

but of the means of living... is [then] appointed a missionary."<sup>109</sup> With this parallel, the author condemned the argument of Southerners having any obligation to accept Northern missionaries into their lives. Their work was equivalent to the armies that already caused havoc in their lives. This comparison may appear as an overreaction, but with the twenty-year isolation of Southern religious culture by the 1860s, any intrusion from a Northern denomination served to divide. Just as the public had faced destruction of life and physical property, Southern whites saw Northern missionaries as a threat to their culture while the North saw spiritual footholds to be gained from the reunion of Southern states.

The exodus of African Americans and Northern missionary incursions also disturbed Southern beliefs in the role of spiritual paternalism for African Americans. The dominant race saw themselves as having a personal responsibility from God to convert blacks and minister to their behaviors. Southern whites saw them as children to be brought up in the faith, whether the proselytization occurred through the slave trade or upbringings on plantations. For Southern whites, the separation of African Americans and Northern activities of religion threatened to destroy the social order. Southern whites were no longer able to control religious lessons to African Americans, but their fears also extended to belief in the North turning former slaves against them. The perception of societal disorder was analogous to a breakup in the relationships between parents and children, to the revulsion of Southern whites.

---

<sup>109</sup> "Never," *Biblical Recorder*, June 10, 1868.

Hildebrand demonstrates the heavy feeling of paternal loss from white Southerners as blacks formed the new denomination of African American Methodism in 1871. Hildebrand highlights the agony of Bishop Robert Paine in delivering a speech announcing the transfer of religious authority to black pastors. When doing this, Paine recalled the memories of Southern evangelism to slaves with language showing a pride reminiscent of soldier conquests. Paine said, "Our missionaries are buried on the rice and cotton and sugar plantations, who went preaching the Gospel to your fathers and to you while slaves."<sup>110</sup> With clear sadness, Paine encapsulated the Southern loss of paternalism with one question: "Can a mother forget her children?" It was a powerful analogy to a spiritual world turned upside-down for the South in recent years. While Reverend Hagood showed hints of pride in the advancements of Northern Methodism, Bishop Paine, by contrast, lamented the spiritual consequences of the upheaval. Despite the endless offenses committed against blacks in slavery, the separations caused heartache for Southern white religious leaders, to the hindrance of reconciliation.

J. R. Ralls, in an 1877 publication speaking against the federal Reconstruction amendments, further demonstrated public sorrow for the loss of spiritual paternalism. Ralls unleashed a series of arguments in defense of the paternalism once held by Southern whites. Ralls compared numbers of black converts to Christianity through slavery versus those recorded by American overseas missionaries. According to his statistics, by 1859, the South, through slavery, had influenced 453,000 blacks to

---

<sup>110</sup> Hildebrand, *The Times Were Strange*, 14.

embrace Christianity while missions to Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, West Indies and Native Americans converted only 250,000. While claiming to not argue for slavery, Ralls said he was noting the statistics “simply to show what was done for the moral improvement of the negro in slavery, by way of vindicating our people from the malignant and mendacious assaults of the fanatics of the North, who, now merged into the Radical party, are still rehearsing the stale slanders of injustice and inhumanity against the people of the South.”<sup>111</sup> With slavery alleged to be the best way to make new converts, the loss of the institution meant the loss of American whites controlling societal order and the spiritual directions of African Americans. This loss, caused by the Union government and encouraged by Northern ministries, was an additional barrier for Southern whites to have empathy for the North after the war. Reconciliation faced another impediment by Southern whites losing religious control of their territory.

Ralls later went on to lament the enforcement of federal laws during Reconstruction, claiming there was a “complete obliteration” of Southern ministries to raise the morality of former slaves. With the exodus of freedmen from white ministries, they were “be[ing] left to the fearful experiment of his own spiritual guidance, with all his inherent depravity and unreason operating to increase the hazard he was undergoing.”<sup>112</sup> He then claimed Northern Methodism had failed to draw Southern blacks to its denomination. At the same time, according to Ralls, even if Northerners

---

<sup>111</sup> J.R. Ralls, *The Negro Problem: An Essay on the Industrial, Political and Moral Aspects of the Negro Race* (Atlanta: James P. Harrison & Co., 1877), 95-96.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-98.



were successful in conversions to turn freedmen against Southern whites, Southern Christians were ready to give a fierce backlash.

If the Methodists of the North had met with any considerable degree of success, in bringing the negroes of the South into their church, it would, at that time, have been the cause of unmixed evil to the peace and welfare of both races in the South. The conditions of success, as they thought and as their actions confirmed, were to play upon the prejudices of the negro, so as to alienate him from his then existing church relations, and to have kept him permanently in their society, which would have necessitated the continuance of the iniquitous policy that had brought him in.<sup>113</sup>

Southern animosity toward the attempts of division was clear. Southern whites felt a continuing obligation to oversee the spiritual upkeep of freedmen. Otherwise, they alleged freedmen were bound to descend into paganism and immorality. Ralls did not quote the Great Commission as Reverend Hagood did, but his claim of slavery fulfilling the divine command of evangelism makes the same case for God siding with Southern ministries. Just as one may have argued in this time for slavery being good for societal livelihoods, white Southerners claimed religious well-being was also at stake in their surrender of religious paternalism.

The loss of paternalism for Southerners included the belief of chaos to come for freedmen. I. T. Tichenor, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, looked at former slaves as having no resource or capability to provide for themselves physically or spiritually. In a speech describing the alleged shortfalls of freedmen, Tichenor defended slavery as having been light in labor while offering amicable

---

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 100.

provisions for health and happiness. Emancipation was “a misguided philanthropy” to which slaves no longer looked to masters for spiritual guidance and support.<sup>114</sup> Tichenor then gave a stern warning of what would happen to social order with Northern attempts to influence African Americans.

If you cast them off, by that act you invite others to take charge of their spiritual interests. And who will come? Do you not know the Baptist Home Missionary of the North has declared that the colored population of the South is missionary ground which belongs peculiar to them? That the triumph of the federal arms has given them a sort of preemption right to them? ... And what will they teach them? That you have never preached the Gospel to them; that you have been “slave-drivers,” oppressors of the innocent and the helpless; that you were “in league with hell to hold them in bondage,” that you have never repented of your crimes – of being owners of slaves – of rebellion – of treason – and that you are not Christian; that the wrongs of the past have never been righted; that there is yet due to them, from you, long years of unrequited toil which, in your broad lands and splendid mansions, you are now enjoying.<sup>115</sup>

Tichenor closed the speech by pressing the obligations of himself and other white Southerners to care for former slaves, lest they fall to their supposed instincts of idleness and animalism. Tichenor claimed the paternal guidance of former masters was the only way of continuing the edification of African Americans. According to Tichenor, “[The] duties are ours – results are of God.”<sup>116</sup>

With laments of the old religious order passing away in the South, Tichenor and others professed a profound sense of loss in the departure of blacks from white

---

<sup>114</sup> I. T. Tichenor, *Report of the Committee of the Alabama Association Upon the Relation of the Colored Members to the Church* (Montgomery: Barrett and Brown’s Book and Job Office, 1865), 6-7.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

churches. The reasoning went even beyond the worry of blacks being a depraved race straying to crime and immorality. The loss also spoke to a belief in the requirement of white guidance to maintain their allegiances to God. This racism manifested in such a way as to show care for the race while also having no belief in their ability to maintain faith for themselves. To forfeit the spiritual leadership of Southern whites was to escalate these dire consequences. As the paternalism went by the wayside with emancipation, religious resentment from the South further complicated reconciliation. Even with the commonality of white Protestantism between the North and South, there was little common ground for comradery with the creation of African American denominations.

Along with Southern antagonism, there was also significant potential for Northern Protestants to resent the South for the persecution of their missionaries. Charles Spencer Smith, in *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, memorialized church leaders traveling to the South in a chapter called "A Resume." The title was meant to show the high spiritual qualities of Northern missionaries by their efforts. Smith offered an emotional tribute to their heroism. With the first subsection titled "March of the Trailblazers," Smith described the modern martyrs as "selfless" in their initiatives to create schools and churches for freedmen. Southern animosity led to violence against the Christian faithful of the North, and Smith recognized this as religious persecution. According to Smith, "Everywhere they were taunted with the epithet 'nigger teacher.' They were despised and rejected by their own race for no other

reason than that they sought to enlighten the children of the freedmen. ... They were in every sense true followers of the lowly Nazarene. A few of them suffered martyrdom for the cause they espoused.”<sup>117</sup> This was a powerful statement, claiming the harassment of Northern ministers was equivalent to the New Testament persecution of Jesus. Smith wrote the publication more than fifty years after emancipation, but his heartache for the fate of the missionaries was apparent. It is reasonable to speculate how many in the Northern generations of the late nineteenth century lamented the persecution of their neighbors by the Southern faithful. While Southern whites stewed over the loss of religious order, the North, in turn, mourned the casualties of their church leaders.

Smith made one other Biblical parallel to the missionaries of “The Resume” with a profound message of which side was being faithful to God. Smith bestowed on the missionaries of the North the same credit God gave to the martyrdom of Saint Paul in the New Testament. Smith quoted 2 Corinthians 11, where Paul boasted of the persecutions against him in his years of ministry. Paul did this in order to show the power of God working within his frail body to bring the Gospel to the Roman Empire. Smith had similar thoughts of his Northern brethren.

In many respects their experiences tallied with that of Paul, as set forth in 2 Corinthians 11: “In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. ...Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned... In journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers; in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in

---

<sup>117</sup> Charles Spencer Smith, *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1922), 73.

fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” Verify these men [the missionaries] sowed in tears, and endured privations and sufferings which it is not possible for those of this generation to make sense.<sup>118</sup>

Earlier in the chapter, Smith had given lists of individual ministers of whom he was making comparisons to Paul. The South saw them as a religious enemy, but the North saw them as heroes of the faith. According to sympathizers like Smith, God favored their efforts in evangelism and education with a status of faith equivalent to Paul, the greatest martyr in Christian history. This clash of perspectives with the advent of new denominations was significant to reconciliation in the post-war era, with tense, hostile divisions prominent in the minds of American citizens.

The laments of the North for the casualties of their ministers shows one more dimension of how the reorganization of denominations impacted the relationships between citizens. Freedmen were in awe of their newfound status, to the grief of Southern ministers. Meanwhile, the religious order of the South had perished while the North sent blood and treasure in the form of missionaries for spiritual reform. Southern whites loathed the efforts of the North to impede on a religious paternalism developed over decades. By contrast, Northerners mourned for the victims of Southern whites refusing to accept their religious incursions. The prospect of reconciliation was dire as religious perceptions were unhelpful to the process.

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 68.

## CONCLUSION

Professor W. S. Tyler of Amherst College gave the eulogy of a former student in May 1864: Union Captain Samuel Fiske, shot through the right lung in battle. When addressing hundreds of New England mourners, Tyler spoke at length of the religious character of Fiske, giving numerous compliments with heart-warming testimonies of his virtue and faith. Toward the end of his tribute, Tyler took the image of Fiske's piety a step further, combining the memories of the soldier with the imagery of Revelation 6:10. In a story many believed to be a future event, Christian martyrs were in Heaven pleading to God for wrath to come on those who slayed them in life. According to Tyler, Fiske and his fellow soldiers were, in the eyes of God, the modern equivalent to the blessed victims of persecution from Revelation.

Methinks I see him, with the souls of innumerable other martyrs of liberty and religion, pleading before the alter of God, and crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true! Dost thou not avenge our blood on the oppressors and persecutors of our race?" And then me thinks I see him revisiting the scene of conflict, and hear him re-animating his fellow-soldiers, ay, and all his fellow-countrymen, in the same stirring words which burst from his dying lips in one of his seasons of mental wandering: "Forward, boys, to the last charge!"<sup>119</sup>

The eulogy exemplifies what religious imagery was capable of doing in the minds of faithful Americans. The oratory of Tyler combined the inspiration of Christianity with

---

<sup>119</sup> Samuel Wheelock Fiske, *Mr. Dunn Browne's Experiences in the Army* (Boston: Nichols and Noyes, 1866), 36-37.

the sorrow of the local population for the death of Captain Fiske. The faithful, honorable soldier was no longer a mere war hero to his neighbors. With his death at the hands of the Confederacy, religious rhetoric made Fiske both a martyr and a living spirit now advocating for God to bring wrath on his enemies. Anyone at the funeral was now able to keep this image of Fiske for the rest of their lives, mourning his death while also holding antipathy for the enemy causing his fall. His death, already a tragedy for the public, became poised to serve as an event beyond the temporal realm.

The persuasive words of Tyler showed one more avenue for religious rhetoric to influence the course of citizens holding life-long resentments of their former enemies. With the religious meaning of one man's death now in the minds of hundreds of New Englanders in 1864, it is humbling to realize the scope of such messages. Captain Fiske was only one of hundreds of thousands of casualties from the North and South. Whether the funeral of a soldier hosted ten people or a thousand, religious imagery had the ability to influence millions by the end of the war. As time passed, America moved forward to expand Protestant denominations, but popular interpretations of religion continued to heighten the complexity of reconciliation.

The South mirrored the North in the religious imagery of Tyler through the deaths of Confederate soldiers. A similar service of mourning was possible even for a soldier unknown to the local population. Edward Dicey, in a publication of his journeys through Union states in 1863, provided an analysis of public opinions toward the war in Kentucky. When doing so, he noted a wounded private from Louisiana making it as far

as the small town of Owensburgh before dying sixteen days after a bullet wound at Shiloh. Despite the fallen soldier being a stranger to Owensburgh residents, Dicey quoted a local newspaper claiming 1,000 - 1,500 people attended the funeral. Southern sympathizers organized the service with the eulogy from a reverend, Dr. Nicolson. The minister made comments of similar imagery Tyler gave of Captain Fiske. In this case, however, the North played the role of the evil-doers.

It may be of some consolation to the friends of the deceased to know that, though buried amongst strangers, in a strange land, he was interred in a manner becoming his cause, and that thousands of sympathizing tears were shed over his grave for the loved ones at home, and many a fervent prayer offered up to God for his safe deliverance to that haven of rest where strife, dissensions, and *abolitionism* never enter, and where peace and harmony reign forever.<sup>120</sup>

Dicey noted the purpose of quoting the article was to show the level of free speech allowed in Kentucky with such rebellious language in public. However, the advancement of Southern animosity through religion is apparent in the eulogy as well. Readers do not have the full scope of what *abolitionism* meant in the speech, but it almost served as a curse word by this time. For Southern whites, abolitionism had threatened every aspect of life the region held dear. The alleged God-sanctioned institution of slavery was disappearing with encroachments of the South inspired by the political zeal of Northern churches. At the same time, the war itself had killed thousands of Southern neighbors. With these experiences, Heaven itself, in the minds of the Southern faithful, became a destination without any room for the likes of the North. The

---

<sup>120</sup> Edward Dicey, *Six Months in the Federal States*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1863), 69.



Confederacy saw it fitting to banish the Union from any reality with themselves, whether in Heaven or on Earth.

Another example of the promotion of such religious imagery comes from a much higher level of the Confederacy: The death of President Jefferson Davis. In 1897, John William Jones authored a biography of the Confederate president. Though other biographies of his life were in the works, Varina Davis and others had encouraged Jones to write the memoir, promising to be “a prized souvenir in the homes of the people who loved him, and not unacceptable to others who are willing to know more of the man who played so conspicuous a part in American history.”<sup>121</sup> From the pages of telegrams and public condolences for the passing of Davis in December 1889, Jones quoted Dr. T. R. Markham in a speech to the Association of the Army of Tennessee Veterans four days after his death.

Reading yesterday, from the other side, a not unfriendly criticism, it was said, Mr. Davis died *unrepentant*. And of what was he to repent? That as ‘a good and faithful servant’ he had obeyed the voice of his own sovereign State and then of his and her sister sovereignties? Repent! Why, had the faintest whisper of such a word parted his lips, from a hundred Confederate cemeteries, and from a thousand battle-fields where sleep our undiscovered dead, skeleton forms, reanimated, turning uneasily in their graves, would have cried ‘shame!’ and have rent the heavens with their groans.<sup>122</sup>

The label of “good and faithful servant” refers to Matthew 25:23, where Jesus tells the parable of servants investing talents their master gave them. In this case, Davis,

---

<sup>121</sup> John William Jones, *The Davis Memorial Volume: or Our Dead President, Jefferson Davis, and the World’s Tribute to His Memory* (Chicago: The Dominion Company, 1897), v.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 514.

in the eyes of God, lived as a wise investor of his duties. Even though it had been more than twenty years after the war, Markham still raised the memory of thousands of slain soldiers with imagery of their desires. Though perhaps not intending to be as literal as Tyler, Markham created the image of Confederate soldiers as worthy of Heaven with anguish at the thought of their leader succumbing to Northern demands. Of particular note as well is the use of the term repentance. It carried the religious theme of admitting wrongs to God for the forgiveness of one's sins. For Markham, the calls for Davis and other leaders to disavow the Confederacy was a continuing insult to thousands who died at the hands of the Union decades earlier.

One more point of note from Markham is the audience of the speech. As noted in the Introduction, the focus of recent historical studies on reconciliation has been on the memories veterans held in post-war years. In this case, the speech by Markham came to a Southern veterans group with religious wording further contributing to their resentment. With the memories of death and destruction recalled in the lodges of veteran gatherings, faith was able to further inspire bitterness, stretching hostility even more. Religious devotion added something extra to the influence of veterans reminiscing of the tragedies they faced. This makes the religiosity of the era all-the-more worthy of further study in Civil War reconciliation.

While there was an enduring animosity from the memories of war and devotion to religion, churches still moved forward to expand Protestantism in America. Historians have done well in showcasing evangelism in the late nineteenth century as the frontier

of the West coalesced with the East. Salvatore Mondello, for example, writes of massive funding from churches and Christian-minded tycoons to harness the railroad for evangelism. With a fleet of Baptist ministry trains having chapel boxcars and ministers, the American Baptist Publication Society spread Christianity through the Rocky Mountains and Southwest as much as preachers did in the South decades earlier.<sup>123</sup> Also, Derek Chang, focusing on race and nationalism as the inspiration for Baptists to target non-white ethnicities, writes of evangelical efforts toward freedmen and Chinese immigrants in Western states. Chang argues the outreach set the course for each group to create networks of cultural organizations for future generations. Even though most Baptists believed in racial decadence, ministers believed in their own ability to reform other races for a preservation of moral order.<sup>124</sup> When combining these initiatives with the extensive missionary work toward Native Americans, historians have proven the continuing efforts of evangelism after the Civil War.

While churches sustained evangelism into the new century, arguments of formal reunion occurred between denominations, giving further insight into the long road of reconciliation. William Glass, in a study of negotiations by Methodists and Presbyterians, argues the preservation of Southern culture was the key motivation of opponents up to the 1930s. Glass also notes a significant difference in the success of

---

<sup>123</sup> Salvatore Mondello, "Baptist Railroad Churches in the American West, 1890-1946," in *Religion and Society in the American West: Historical Essays*, ed. Carl Guarneri and David Alvarez (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 110-123.

<sup>124</sup> Derek Chang, *Citizens of a Christian Nation: Evangelical Missions and the Problem of Race in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 6-10.

reunion discussions in the 1920s versus the 1930s. A crucial factor to positive dialogue in the latter decade was the entry of new leadership. In other words, new generations came to replace the last remnants of the faithful who may have heard the eulogies of Civil War soldiers like Captain Fiske. For reconciliation to have a genuine chance of success in denominational reunions, it appears to have required the deaths and retirements of the previous generations.<sup>125</sup>

Glass also confirms the continuing Southern mindset of shunning political activities from the duties of churches. Southern religious media in the early twentieth century accused agendas of social reform as communist and against God's command for churches. With substantial political disagreement over capitalism, Glass notes the objection of anti-reunion Methodists to churches serving the world in such an unspiritual way. According to *Southern Methodist Journal* in 1943, "The *primary objectives* of the church are *neither moral nor social uplift nor the improvement of individual or community ethics and economic standards* ... The primary objective of the Church is *SALVATION!*"<sup>126</sup> As the thesis addressed in Chapter Two, religion inspired this additional sticking point of conflict between Northern and Southern citizens. Even with generations long removed from the debates of abolitionism, theological concepts

---

<sup>125</sup> William R. Glass, "Reconciliation and Regionalism: Reunion among Southern Methodists and Presbyterians, 1920-1955," in *Warm Ashes: Issues in Southern History at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Winfred B. Moore, Kyle S. Sinisi, and David H. White (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 224-226.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-231.

continued to strike a nerve in the faithful. According to the South, the North was once again neglectful in the spiritual mission God held for churches.

The long-term feelings of conflict also resonate in a study by Ernest Trice Thompson of Presbyterian attempts at national reunion. Thompson first explains communications between the branches over decades to unite in missional efforts with the eventual goal of reaching an organic reunion. This had failed for many years with Southern Presbyterians giving a published listing of fundamental differences in 1894. Along with objections to the integration of races and threats of property confiscation, the declaration noted a division of general animosity. According to the statement, “God’s blessing has manifestly rested upon our church in its separate existence and work, and to spring the divisive question of organic union we believe will bring upon us needless agitation and hurtful disturbance.”<sup>127</sup> This is a vague point in the resolution against reunion, but it appears that even if the North made all concessions of race and church relations with politics, a sourness still festered from the thought of reunion. For all the reasons outlined in the thesis, this appears to have been the case as religious thoughts came to have a negative impact on reuniting citizens.

Further observations by Thompson confirm those of William Glass in the difficulties of church reunion. In 1919, the argument of church neutrality in politics again rose as a Southern Presbyterian committee advised its regional assembly of “the

---

<sup>127</sup> Ernest Trice Thompson, “Presbyterians North and South – Efforts Toward Reunion,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 43, no. 1 (1965): 1-5.

spiritual mission of the Church and its obligation to abstain from interference in matters purely of civil or political concern.”<sup>128</sup> Also, Thompson makes an intriguing point of the 1929 Southern Assembly. Thompson notes this specific attempt was the first time in the post-war decades that the assembly showed a genuine interest in reunion. His research found a shift of generational leadership in the same way Glass had. In the promotion of reunion, Thompson noted, “This, some pointed out, was a young man’s Assembly.”<sup>129</sup> Communications continued through the 1930s, and the time period was parallel to when Glass argues that older generations stepped down from leadership. It appears reconciliation, in the end, was unachievable for some as ill-will from religious discourse lingered through the remaining decades of their lives.

For many Protestants who lived through this time, the long-lasting strife perhaps began with anguishing scenes of war like the funeral of Captain Fiske. This brings the prospects of reconciliation back to this powerful scene of emotion as hundreds remembered the reason for his death. At the very end of the eulogy, Tyler made an especially strong declaration of how New England communities ought to see the South and any resistance going forward.

Gathered are we are to-day, from every part of the country, for his burial, - relatives, neighbors, citizens of this and other towns, delegates from his college and his church, representatives of the army and the press, a great multitude of weeping friends and sympathizing strangers, - while we gaze on his lifeless body, still wearing the pierced and bloody uniform of the service, as we drop a tear on these mute but speaking wounds, let us learn a new lesson of self-sacrifice from his life and death; and swearing

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

eternal hostility to rebellion and oppression in all its forms, and perpetual devotion to the rights of man, the religion of Christ, and the kingdom of God, let us go forth to the conflict, shouting the watchword, "Foreword to the last charge!" against the enemies of God, our country, and mankind.<sup>130</sup>

In this intense declaration, the sorrow of death turned into an intense, righteous anger. The scene represented the outrage religion weaved into the resentments of Americans. The death of Captain Fiske, in and of itself, did not need religion to create the agony from the crowds seeing his burial. The passing of such a respectable member of New England was reason enough to harden oneself against those who killed him. However, religion came onto the scene to create the perception of a modern martyr with a divine calling to forever oppose Confederates. With the mindset of the kingdom of God being the rearguard of the Union, New England found religious purpose to their hostility as the Confederacy was not only the enemy of America, but the enemy of God. Likewise, Southern generations remembered the eulogies of their own brethren with animosity to carry for decades to come.

When reflecting on the substantial weight of emotion that millions carried from these experiences, historians ought to further examine the role of religion in reconciliation. As noted in the Introduction, Edward Blum has been the sole authority on the influence of religion in citizen paths to reconciliation. Churches, according to Blum, served over the long-term as a rallying point for whites to find commonality in race. On one hand, the research of this thesis does not take away from the arguments Blum

---

<sup>130</sup> Fiske, *Mr. Dunn*, 40.

raises as events of unity occurred over decades. The diminishment of hostility may have been inevitable as white supremacy had the ability to take hold of post-war generations. However, Blum being the one prominent resource creates an oversimplified picture of religion in reconciliation. Many other aspects of faith came to divide the minds and hearts of millions. Just as recent scholarship has shown the chronic hostility of Civil War veterans to complicate the image of unity Ken Burns showed in 1990, there is much more to consider in how religion influenced the public.

The purpose of this research has been to offer evidence of the various ways in which religion hindered Civil War reconciliation. Southern whites cringed at Northern religious rhetoric, the burning of churches, and endeavors to destroy religious paternalism over former slaves. For the North, the evils of slavery, the inspirations of ministers leading to the creation of the Lost Cause, and the casualties of Northern missionaries all carried weight in prolonging their animosity. Sermons, religious newspapers, and national publications all point to the prominence of lingering resentment for decades after the war. Religion also inspired new religious meanings to the deaths of soldiers, increasing hostilities further. The experiences of these events inspired perceptions of God loving one side and hating the other. While the virtues of Christianity had the potential to offer forgiveness, religious perceptions spread divisions in the reunited nation. With this, historians cannot dismiss the obstacles to Civil War reconciliation provided by the common faith of the United States.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "The Bible is the Southern Confederacy." *Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser* (Liverpool, England). April 18, 1863.
- Blum, Edward J. "God of Wrath, God of Peace: Popular Religion, Popular Press, and the Meaning of the Civil War during Reconstruction." In *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism*, edited by David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr., 363-376. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008.
- Blum, Edward J. *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism 1865-1898*. 2nd ed. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015.
- Blum, Edward J., and W. Scott Poole, eds. *Vale of Tears: New Essays on Religion and Reconstruction*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005.
- Brinsfield, John Wesley, ed. *The Spirit Divided: Memories of Civil War Chaplains, The Confederacy*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005.
- Burns, Ken, dir. *The Civil War*. Episode 9, "The Better Angels of Our Nature – 1865." Aired September 28, 1990, on PBS.
- Chaffin, Nora C. "A Southern Advocate of Methodist Unification in 1865." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 18, no. 1 (1941): 38-47.
- Chang, Derek. *Citizens of a Christian Nation: Evangelical Missions and the Problem of Race in the Nineteenth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.
- Claim Against U.S. for Burning of Georgia Church During Civil War*. H.R. Rep. No. 70-14783, at 15-16 (1929).
- Clebsch, William A. "Stephen Elliott's View of the Civil War." *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 31, no. 1 (1962): 7-20.
- "Correspondence: From Thomaston, GA." *Southern Christian Advocate* (Macon, GA). April 27, 1866.
- Crowther, Edward R. "Holy Honor: Sacred and Secular in the Old South." *The Journal of Southern History* 58, no. 4 (1992): 619-636.

- Curtis, O. B. *History of The Twenty-Fourth Michigan Of the Iron Brigade, Known as The Detroit And Wayne County Regiment*. Detroit: Winn & Hammond, 1891.
- Daniel, W. Harrison. "The Effects of the Civil War on Southern Protestantism." *Maryland Historical Magazine* 69, no. 2 (1974): 44-63.
- "Dedication of Prospect M. E. Church, Hamilton Circuit, GA." *Southern Christian Advocate* (Macon, GA). March 23, 1866.
- "A Denial." *New York Observer*. August, 15, 1867.
- Dacey, Edward. *Six Months in the Federal States*, Vol. 2. London: Macmillan and Co., 1863.
- "Dr. Colver's Questions." *Biblical Recorder* (Raleigh, NC). April 8, 1868.
- Feemster, Zenas E. *The Travelling Refugee, or The Cause and Cure of the Rebellion in The United States*. Springfield, IL: Steam Press of Baker & Phillips, 1865.
- Ferguson, Robert. *America During and After the War*. London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1866.
- Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.
- Fiske, Samuel Wheelock. *Mr. Dunn Browne's Experiences in the Army*. Boston: Nichols and Noyes, 1866.
- Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.
- Fuller, Richard. "Let all who truly love the Union now bury past dissensions." In *The Routledge Sourcebook of Religion and the American Civil War: A History of Documents*, edited by Robert R. Mathison, 464-465. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Glass, William R. "Reconciliation and Regionalism: Reunion among Southern Methodists and Presbyterians, 1920-1955." In *Warm Ashes: Issues in Southern History at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Winfred B. Moore, Kyle S. Sinisi, and David H. White, 224-229. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003.

- Hagood, L. M. *The Colored Man in the Methodist Episcopal Church*. Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1890.
- Harper, Matthew. *The End of Days: African American Religion and Politics in the Age of Emancipation*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.
- Harris, M. Keith. *Across the Bloody Chasm: The Culture of Commemoration Among Civil War Veterans*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014.
- Harvey, Paul. "'Yankee Faith' and Southern Redemption: White Southern Baptist Ministers, 1850-1890." In *Religion and the American Civil War*, edited by Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson, 169-187. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Hatch, Nathan O. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Hawley, Silas. *National Reconstruction. The Glory and the Shame of a Nation. A Thanksgiving Sermon*. Cincinnati: Western Tract and Book Society, 1866.
- Heyrman, Christine Leigh. *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1997.
- Hildebrand, Reginald F. *The Times Were Strange and Stirring: Methodist Preachers and the Crisis of Emancipation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Holsey, Lucius H. "The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church." In *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, edited by Milton C. Sernett, 251-255. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Irons, Charles F. *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Janney, Caroline E. *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013.
- Jay, John. *Our Duty to the Freedmen: Mr. Jay's Remarks at the Inaugural Meeting of the American Freedman's Aid Union*. New York: Cooper Institute, 1865.
- Jemison, Elizabeth L. "Proslavery Christianity After the Emancipation." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (2013): 255-268.

- Jones, John William. *The Davis Memorial Volume: or Our Dead President, Jefferson Davis, and the World's Tribute to His Memory*. Chicago: The Dominion Company, 1897.
- "A Loyal Southern Presbytery: A Cheering Indication in the Southern Sky." *New York Observer*. October 24, 1867.
- McGuire, Judith White. *Diary of a Southern Refugee, During the War*. Richmond, VA: J. W. Randolph & English, Publishers, 1889.
- Mondello, Salvatore. "Baptist Railroad Churches in the American West, 1890-1946." In *Religion and Society in the American West: Historical Essays*, edited by Carl Guarneri and David Alvarez. Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1987.
- "Never! No, Never!" *Biblical Recorder* (Raleigh, NC). June 10, 1868.
- Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Noll, Mark A. *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006.
- Pelletier, Kevin. *Apocalyptic Sentimentalism: Love and Fear in U.S. Antebellum Literature*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2015.
- Pepper, George Whitfield. *Personal Recollections of Sherman's Campaigns in Georgia And the Carolinas*. Zanesville, Ohio: Hugh Dunne, 1866.
- Ralls, J. R. *The Negro Problem: An Essay on the Industrial, Political and Moral Aspects of the Negro Race*. Atlanta: James P. Harrison & Co., 1877.
- "Rebuilding the Ruins." *New York Observer*. May 25, 1865.
- Reed, V. D. *A Sermon Preached in the First Presbyterian Church*. Camden, NJ: West Jersey Press, 1865.
- Schaff, Philip. *The American Church History Series: Consisting of a Series of Denominational Histories Published Under the Auspices of the American Society of Church History*. New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1893.
- Schultz, Kevin M., and Paul Harvey. "Everywhere and Nowhere: Recent Trends in American Religious History and Historiography." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 1 (2010): 131-135.

- Schwartz, Stephen. *Twenty-Two Months a Prisoner of War: A Narrative of Twenty-Two Months' Imprisonment by the Confederates, in Texas, Through General Twigg's Treachery, Dating from April, 1861, to February, 1863*. St. Louis: A. F. Nelson Pub. Co., 1892.
- Silber, Nina. "Reunion and Reconstruction, Reviewed and Reconsidered." *The Journal of American History* 103, no. 1 (2016): 59-83.
- Smith, Charles Spencer. *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1922.
- Snyder, Ann E., ed. *The Civil War from a Southern Standpoint*. Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1893.
- Thompson, Ernest Trice. "Presbyterians North and South – Efforts Toward Reunion." *Journal of Presbyterian History* 43, no. 1 (1965): 1-15.
- Tichenor, I. T. *Report of the Committee of the Alabama Association Upon the Relation of the Colored Members to the Church*. Montgomery: Barrett and Brown's Book and Job Office, 1865.
- Wilson, Charles Reagan. *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. 2nd ed. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009.
- Wright, Kai, ed. *The African American Experience: Black History and Culture Through Speeches, Letters, Editorials, Poems, Songs and Stories*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2001.
- Young, Michael P. "Confessional Protest: The Religious Birth of U.S. National Social Movements." *American Sociological Review* 67, no. 5 (2002): 660-688.