

“We Are Conservative:” Protestant Ministers, History,  
and the Creation of Southern Christian Identity, 1830-1865

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## Introduction

In his famous dissection of the Southern mind, W. J. Cash compared the South to an old English parish church, a building made up of elements from various periods of construction. The visitor walks past Gothic windows to behold Norman arches and even Saxon stones or “bricks made by Roman hands.”<sup>1</sup> Cash, in this image, described the South in a way that antebellum and Civil War Southerners would have appreciated and with which they would have resonated. Furthermore, it would have been an image that most Southern Protestant clergy would have understood and with which they would have readily identified. The simile, therefore, could be transferred from the South generally to Southern Protestantism more specifically. Southern ministers of various stripes felt that their respective traditions had venerable histories that stretched back through the ages. They viewed their Southern expressions of Christianity as in continuity with what had preceded them, back to the old world, through the Reformation, and to the New Testament. In addition, they saw their world of the South as a place made up of layers of history, back through the Revolution and colonial settlement to England, Europe, and even containing trace elements of classical Greece and Rome.

However, they also lived in a modern world that was clearly distinct from what had gone before. Rapid changes in the economy, industry, commerce, and transport multiplied during the antebellum period, which was itself a time when the very notion of what constituted the South was expanding.<sup>2</sup> This climate of change was also felt in the region's religious culture, where establishment had given way to a proliferation of newer, in some ways more dynamic, forms of Christianity, and the second great awakening had unleashed the destabilizing forces of revivalism. Southern clergy engaged with history from within the tension produced by these realities. I contend that looking at White Southern Protestant uses of history reveals the nature and concerns of antebellum and Civil War Southern Christianity. I argue that Southern clergy produced history in books, sermons, and journal articles in identity-forming ways for Southern denominations, congregations, and individual Christians. These histories reinforced a conservative Southern Christian identity concerned primarily with

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<sup>1</sup> W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1941), x.

<sup>2</sup> An important element of this is the integration of slavery into nineteenth-century capitalism, moving away from Eugene Genovese's description of Southern Slavery as pre-capitalist to seeing slavery as a firmly capitalist venture interlinked with the economic development of the North and the rest of the country. See Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965); Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1974); and more recently, Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman ed., *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

maintaining and preserving and had little place for change. Additionally, this identity glorified acts of resilience, perseverance, and even resistance in the face of opposition and persecution. This identity was often denominational, but in the context of sectionalism, secession, and the Civil War, its boundaries expanded, and clergy translated the emotional content of the identity from denomination or church to the South or Confederacy. This historical Christian Southern identity that prized continuity at the expense of change could be used to inform Christian interpretations of the very meaning of the Confederacy and its connection to American history. Thus, Southern clergy used secular history as well as church history in their sermons and articles. Southern ministers were not simply Biblicists, therefore, concerned at Northern departure from accepted norms of Biblical exegesis, although they certainly were that. They were also motivated to oppose their Northern co-religionists and the Union by a historical Southern Christian identity that they shaped and deployed during the antebellum period and Civil War. This description of Southern ministers contrasts with the characterization by some historians of the evangelical nature of Southern Protestantism as focused on the future rather than preoccupied with the past.<sup>3</sup> I believe this is a misrepresentation, and Southern Protestantism should rather be seen as using a deep connection to the past to orient itself in an uncertain present and navigate the oncoming future.

In the context of the upheavals and vicissitudes of the antebellum period and the Civil War, there was an increased need for the rooting effects of history. Southern ministers used history to provide a past for their people, to legitimize themselves and their denominations by connection to what had gone before in the flow of church history. To name but some of the most common uses of history, Southern ministers turned to history to provide stability amid change, to explain the value of what currently existed and the danger of rejecting the wisdom of the past. They used it to solidify existing identities and cohere bonds between congregants and between citizens, to recapture a world that they felt was slipping away, and to preserve the memories of those they felt were worthy of preservation. Moreover, history instilled pious virtue in readers and hearers and encouraged them to live up to the memory of their forebears through examples of Godliness and faithfulness. By examining some of these uses of history in the books, sermons, and journal articles produced by ministers, I will demonstrate the centrality of historical identity and the authority of history to Southern Protestantism of this period. Moreover, I will argue that this historical identity is crucial for explaining the fervency of

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<sup>3</sup> Beth Schweiger, *The Gospel Working on Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Pearl J. Young, "Secession as a Moral Imperative: White Southerners and Evangelical Theology" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 2018), 95.

the clergy's defense of slavery and support for the Confederacy. Uncovering the reoccurring themes of their historical imaginations can help us understand how they conceived of the Civil War's meaning and predicted its eventual outcome. The self-image that clergy built up in the antebellum period as conservative, pious, orthodox, and those who persevere in the face of persecution, through histories and historical references that emphasized these traits, provided a lens through which Southerners could interpret contemporary events. The patterns of behavior and expectations derived from the past, as told by Southern clergy, set a conceptual framework that restricted the range of possible responses to contemporary crises. It set various dichotomous positions that were thought to reoccur through history in any given conflict, for example, persecutor and the persecuted, the innovator and the conservative, those who advance God's kingdom and those who oppose it, and begged the Southern Christian to imagine themselves as one or other of those parties. Additionally, their historic identity blinded the Southern clergy to other potential options of action, such as modification, change, or compromise.

History was, of course, being produced at various levels of society and in multiple ways. I will focus on the clergy of the four largest Protestant denominations – Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian - and their production of history in the form of books, sermons, lectures, and articles. This concentration attempts to reconstruct the historical identity Southern clergy created through closely examining their rhetoric, historical arguments, and uses of the past.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the source material for this exploration is mainly popular or semi-popular history, either in the case of sermons aimed at attendees of the church or in the case of larger history books for educated laypersons. Journal articles and lectures were potentially at a slightly higher level and would be expected to be read by other ministers and educated persons interested in theology. Seminary lectures and addresses were intended for those with at least some education in theology and church history. This exploration will focus on the discourses contained within these types of texts produced by Southern ministers to uncover what the assumptions, tropes, chosen topics, and lessons drawn by Southern ministers can teach us about Southern Christianity, its relation to society, to slavery, Southern sectionalism, and to Confederate nationalism.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I am making claims about the Southern ministers use of history in the construction of historical identities and the importance and authority of history in Southern Protestantism. How far the ministers were successful in the minds of their hearers and readers is beyond the remit of this study. A reception history of these sorts of histories would be illustrative and helpful but largely impracticable given the scope of my work here.

<sup>5</sup> The existence of Confederate nationalism is accepted by the majority of Civil War historians working on the South. Michael Bernath has suggested that Southern intellectuals and thinkers attempted to create and demarcate a separate Southern self-sustaining intellectual print culture within the Confederacy in *Confederate Minds: The Struggle of Intellectual Independence During the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). George Rable has cataloged the popular level rhetoric of hatred towards a Northern 'other' that sustained the idea of a

## *Creating Historical Identity*

The importance of history in forming and maintaining religious and national identity in antebellum America has been the focus of a growing body of scholarship that has uncovered the ways in which history has been used, constructed, erased, or ignored in society to contribute to cultural and political activity.<sup>6</sup> Southern ministers were participating in these processes, and their historical writing and preaching occurred against the backdrop of broader developments in the practice of history. This backdrop has traditionally been described as a move from providentialist history toward a more professionalized secular history concerned with standards of scientific objectivity. Scholars such as Eileen Cheng and Sarah Koenig have recently challenged this narrative and argued for a much more complex reality whereby such a smooth transition from one form of history to another is itself a historical myth.<sup>7</sup> Several of the ministers I discuss, especially in chapters one and two, had claims to be historians but felt quite comfortable with a combining of sincere belief in providence with a commitment to supposed objectivity. Many more of the ministers did not have pretensions to being historians and had no quibble over providential readings, but rather intended their use of history to bolster belief in and reliance upon God's work within human history. For all Southern ministers, history

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distinct and separate Southern People in the Confederacy in *Damn Yankees! Demonization and Defiance in the Confederate South* (New Orleans, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2015). See also Robert Bonner, *Mastering America: Southern Slaveholders and the Crisis of American Nationhood* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Anne Sarah Rubin, *Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); and Aaron Sheehan-Dean *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Arguably the most influential study is still Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988). Older works include Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); and Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Jordan T. Watkins, *Slavery and Sacred Texts: The Bible, Constitution and Historical Consciousness in Antebellum America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) and Kenyon Gradert, *Puritan Spirits in the American Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> See classic works on American historiography, David Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley and Parkman* (Stanford, CA: University of Stanford Press, 1959); David Van Tassell, *Recording America's Past: An Interpretation of the Development of Historical Studies in America, 1607-1884* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); William Raymond Smith, *History as Argument, Three Patriot Historians of the American Revolution* (The Hague: Morton & Co. 1966). For debates surrounding objectivity, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). For the nuances added to the historical development of objectivity in history writing, see Eileen Ka-May Cheng, *The Plain and Noble Garb of Truth: Nationalism & Impartiality in American Historical Writing, 1784-1860* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008) and Sarah Koenig, *Providence and the Invention of American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021). For the contribution of Christian historians to the development of history as a subject and profession in the British context, see Joshua Bennett, *God and Progress: Religion and History in British Intellectual Culture, 1845-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) and J. E. Kirby, *Historians and The Church of England: Religion and Historical Scholarship, 1870-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).



had a purpose beyond antiquarian interest or philosophic inquiry. It was used unapologetically in service of the church. History filled the need to provide a backstory to the contemporary world, situating it in a narrative of how the church got to where it was in its Southern and slave-holding context and could therefore assist in ascertaining the meaning and purpose of Southern society. By attempting to provide meaning to their version of Christianity, ministers also created meaning for the United States and the South.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, this work is based on the simple yet profound reality that looking at the use of history employed by Southern Christians can tell us about Southern Christianity and the culture in which it operated. It is, therefore, my task to chart the references to history deployed by Southern clergy in their work to see how they used the entirety of the past.<sup>9</sup>

When describing something similar concerning the generation of the American Revolution, Michael Hattem has used the term "History Culture."<sup>10</sup> This he helpfully describes as encompassing "all references to and uses of the past in a given culture." I believe the Southern ministers operated in a history culture, and taking history as referenced in sermons, journals, addresses, and other discourses, as well as more straightforward books of history, can reveal an underlying conception of the past which tells about how they interpreted their present. Hattem's notion of a history culture could also include elements of visual and material culture, which undoubtedly played a role in Southern religious life. For example, the design of printed books and the layout and decoration of churches would all prove fruitful and fascinating. However, they can only receive the slightest glancing references in this work. Rather, I focus on history and references to history in the books, sermons, lectures, and articles produced by Southern ministers. In these sources, ministers oscillated between relatively recent events, such as the French Revolution, or more remote epochs of history, such as the Roman Republic; therefore, the task

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<sup>8</sup> Other scholars have highlighted the ways in which the continent of America was filled with historical meaning through narratives about Native American origins and the discovery of America. These gave the 'new' world significance in the grand scope of history; see Elizabeth Fenton, *Old Canaan in A New World: Native Americans and the Lost Tribes of Israel* (New York: New York University Press, 2020) and Edward Watts, *Colonizing the Past Mythmaking and Pre-Columbian Whites in Nineteenth-Century American Writing* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2020). An interesting review of this historical turn can be found in Rochelle Raineri Zuck "National Narratives and the Colonial Politics of Historiography," *Early American Literature* 56, no. 3 (2021): 907-919. See also Thomas M. Allen, *A Republic in Time: Temporality and Social Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008) and Lloyd Pratt, *Archives of American Time: Literature and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). See Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> For an interesting discussion of evangelical uses of the past, especially in the British context, see Andrew Atherstone and avid Ceri Jones ed., *Making Evangelical History: Faith, Scholarship and the Evangelical Past* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2019) and Ian Hugh Clary, *Reformed Evangelicalism and the Search for a Usable Past: The Historiography of Arnold Dallimore Pastor-Historian* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020). Also, Charlotte Methuen and Peter Clarke, *The Church on Its Past* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Michael D. Hattem, *Past and Prologue Politics and Memory in the American Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 5.

of this work is to uncover the assumptions and identity behind this broad array of historical influences. Clergy were also happy moving between different types of history, church history, political history, military history, and especially the history of the United States. They often observed that the progression of the kingdom of God appeared to be linked to the rise and fall of various nations and peoples at various times. Therefore, we must view both sacred and profane history to expose the inner workings of the mind of Southern Protestant clergy and their churches.

Several key terms lay beneath this project, and one that has already appeared in what I have discussed thus far is "usable history." This was first coined by Van Wyck Brooks, who argued that American writers, lacking a real literary past, were forced to create one for themselves. This was achieved by picking and choosing elements from the pre-existing literary history of Europe with which to identify, rejecting other works, and constructing a history of literature that could be of use in an American context.<sup>11</sup> This concept has readily been applied to the church, which also tends to select elements, figures, and movements from the past and construe them in their own light to create relevance for the present moment. This is precisely the dynamic that was in play with the Southern clergy, they too found themselves in a relatively new continent, and the further they moved away from the East coast, the further they were away from that which could be described as historic. However, they often belonged to religious bodies, which in some cases, claimed to be traceable back over centuries. Thus, they made connections to the past, saw their stories repeated in different epochs, and deployed them in a way that was helpful to the issues they were addressing in their time, mainly the issue of slavery.

This usable past was applied in the context of churches as communities of believers. Here, Benedict Anderson's incredibly influential concept, "imagined community," becomes a helpful tool. He used this idea to describe nationalism, arguing that the nation could be seen as imagined "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members...yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion," and a community "because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."<sup>12</sup> This fits well with a church, where coreligionists would likely not meet yet felt an affinity towards one another based on a shared identity and, crucially, history. The imagined

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<sup>11</sup> See "On Creating a Usable Past," in *Van Wyck Brooks, The Early Years: A Selection from his Works, 1908-1925*, ed. Claire Sprague (Boston: University of the North East, 1993), 219-227. See also Henry Steele Commager, *The Search for a Usable Past, and Other Essays in Historiography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 3-27.

<sup>12</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, Revised ed.* (New York: Verso, 2006), 5, 7.

community also transcended temporal boundaries, just as Christians would be expected to feel an affinity with the past experiences and lives of those from the history of their denomination, but also those who were felt to embody the same faith even if they were outside of their particular tradition. What is important is that in the case of the Southern Protestant churches, one can detect an elastic quality to the boundaries of this imagined community. The imagined community could include simply co-denominationalists or Christians or even be expanded to include the state or nation, especially in times of war.

The identities of the imagined communities of the Protestant Churches in the South were shaped and formed by narratives of history, which, in the language of Jan Assmann, could be called cultural memories. Assmann has described how "cultural memories preserve a store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its peculiarity and unity." This knowledge acts as a shared set of symbols, stories, and beliefs that are constantly reconstructed and working within a contemporary frame of reference. Churches engaged in creating and preserving such cultural memories through their histories and their use of history and, in doing so, were "handing down...meaning" from one generation to another.<sup>13</sup> Southern minister's use of history preserved but continually recreated identity-shaping ideas about the group they were speaking or writing to and formed a store of shared "memories" which, just like in the case of being an imagined community, could extend to the limits of the denomination or wider as needed. In their sermons and writings, Southern clergy can, therefore, be seen as agents of cultural memory in the decisions they made regarding what to retell and what to omit and the choices they made regarding what narratives to repeat and what lessons to draw. Stories about a denomination's origins in America, for example, or their supposed advocacy for the principles of the American Revolution, could become cultural memories from which Christians derived their own identity and self-awareness.<sup>14</sup> These cultural memories offered a means of binding Southern Christians together through a collective sense of cohesion as church communities reinforced by their own traditions of denominational piety and orthodoxy.<sup>15</sup> Part of the unifying power of these cultural memories lay in the

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<sup>13</sup> Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* no. 65, (Spring-Summer, 1995): 130. Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>14</sup> Aleida Assmann has also pointed out that cultural memory "always depends on personal decisions and selections, on institutions and media." Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>15</sup> A related term to what I have been discussing is "invented tradition." This is a useful term and not irrelevant to the Southern Church, especially when architectural styles are considered. The definition offered by Hobsbawm is "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past." This would apply to Gothic architecture in the South and the issuance of Cromwell's prayer book during the Civil War.

emotional attachment they formed between historical and present identity, which could then be tapped into regarding church history or the nation's history.<sup>16</sup> One's identity was, therefore, constructed as, say, a Presbyterian or as a Baptist, but the emotional import from the cultural memories associated with that identity could be transferred to the state or nation when the time or need required. For example, a Baptist may glean from their storehouse of cultural memories that they are part of a community that stands firm in times of persecution. When supposed Northern interference in slavery was presented in terms of persecution, one's Baptist identity could inform one's sense of oneself as a Southerner.

### *The Authority of History in American Protestantism*

Antebellum and Civil War Protestantism was steeped in history. Ministers of the major Protestant denominations - Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopalian, and Baptist - read, taught, wrote, and discussed history. What is more, this was true of various varieties of history; Biblical history, church history, classical history, the history of their nation, their states, their regions, and the history of the places from which their ancestors originated. When constructing a theological argument, they turned to history; when explaining current political events, they turned to history; when assessing the state of the nation and the state of the church, they turned to history. History had authority for them in their ministries and

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However, most of the traditions I am dealing with are narratives or discourses and are not enacted or overtly physically ritualized in the way that Hobsbawm is envisioning here. Nevertheless, I will use the term occasionally to refer to "traditions" of denominational or regional piety, orthodoxy, or other virtues embedded in narratives and tropes employed by Southern clergy. Eric Hobsbawm "Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Hobsbawm and Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1. Michael Kammen has also helpfully commented that a "surge of tradition can supply the basis for social cohesion," which is certainly true in the South of the period under examination. Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1991), 4.

<sup>16</sup> As Lutz Niethammer wrote, "The magic of traditions, and more recently constructed versions of collective memory is to be found...in the efficiency of the forms of emotion and attachment it can arouse." Lutz Niethammer, *Memory and History: Essays in Contemporary History* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 36. Astrid Errll Wrote of the close "connection that exists between, say, a nation's version of its past and its version of national identity." This is the key fact that applies to the church also. Astrid Errll and Ansgar Nünning ed., *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2008), 2. Identity is itself a slippery concept, but one that runs through the vast amount of scholarship on the South and Southern religious history. Historians commonly treat it as a given that Southerners had a Southern identity, and Southern Christians had an identity distinct from their coreligionists in the North. Memory and identity are linked, and group identity was formed by cultural memories produced and maintained by the clergy. The OED offers various definitions of identity, several overlapping to form what is often meant in historical scholarship by identity; for our purposes, I will treat identity as "a set of characteristics or a description that distinguishes a person or thing from others." These descriptions and or characteristics grew out of a historical conception of who these people were. "Identity OED Online. December 2022. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91004?redirectedFrom=identity> (accessed February 07, 2023) In the language of sociology, I follow the theory of identity, which emphasizes culture and situational context. Timothy J., Owens, Dawn T. Robinson, and Lynn Smith-Lovin, "Three Faces of Identity," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (August 2010): 477-99.

their churches. In some ways, this is an unsurprising thing to assert. As many scholars have observed, Christianity is a religion based on an assertion of historical facts. Therefore, Christians have a vested interest in knowing and understanding the past.<sup>17</sup> Each of the Christian denominations most influential in Southern society, while belonging to specific recent American incarnations or iterations, descended from preexisting traditions. By the mid-nineteenth century, each tradition had accrued a mass of cultural memories. Southern ministers valued these stories and retold these narratives.<sup>18</sup>

However, this picture contrasts with the dominant image presented by historians of American Christianity in the early republic and even through the antebellum period to the Civil War. Nathan Hatch perceived a democratizing force at work in American Protestantism as Christians moved westwards and became increasingly emancipated from traditional hierarchies and authority structures.<sup>19</sup> He emphasized the pervasiveness of a leveling tendency in the religious expressions, which enjoyed the highest rate of growth in the new republic. Hatch wrote of a "passion for equality," matched by a "passionate rejection of the past." Methodism and the Baptist churches, in particular, were seen to have

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<sup>17</sup> Classic works on the relationship between Christianity and history stress this point. For example, Herbert Butterfield writes, "the Christian must find that religious thought is inextricably involved in historical thought. The historical Jesus on the one hand brings to a climax the kind of developments which I have mentioned, gathering up the whole story and fulfilling the things to which the Old Testament had so often pointed. In this respect, His life his teaching and his personality are the subject of an historical narrative which knits itself into the story of the Roman Empire. Over and above all this, however, Christianity is an historical religion in a particularly technical sense that the term possesses – it presents us with religious doctrines which are at the same time historical events or historical interpretations. In particular it confronts us with the questions of the incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection, questions, which may transcend all the apparatus of the scientific historian – as indeed many other things do – but which imply that Christianity in any of its traditional and recognizable forms has rooted its most characteristic and daring assertions in that ordinary realm of history with which the technical student is concerned." in *Christianity and History* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1954), 3. Owen Chadwick has written, "Christianity is not only religion. It is historical religion. It appealed to something which could be dated." in *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 191. In a more philosophical vein, Hans Urs Von Balthazar has stated that "The historical life of the Logos – to which his death, Resurrection and Ascension being – is, as such, that very world of ideas which, directly or reductively, gives the norm for all history; yet not as coming forth from some non-historical height above, but from the living center of history itself." *A Theology of History* (San Francisco: Ignatius books, 2021), 24. More recently, a group of prominent Christian historians wrote, "As Christian historians we mark our identities by the "reality" that God exists and that God came among us in the person we know as Jesus." Ronald Wells ed., *History and the Christian Historian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Ministers were often encouraging people to read history for edification, see for example, Robert Lewis Dabney's article originally printed in Richmond's *The Watchman and Observer* in which he advises, "The true history of the past, on the contrary, gives true and useful views of life, because they are painted from nature. There men are drawn as they really lived and acted. There the youth who would learn from an experience more cheaply purchased than his own, may look for instruction in the character of man, and the ways of the world in which he is to live. Let our readers resort to these wholesome pages, which instruct while they amuse." Robert Lewis Dabney, "On Dangerous Reading," *Discussions by Robert Lewis Dabney D.D., LL.D., Vol. II*, C. R. Vaughn ed. (Richmond: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1891), 160.

<sup>19</sup> Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), also "The Democratization of Christianity and the Character of American Politics," *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the 1980s*, Mark Noll ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 92-120. An earlier form of the argument can be found in "Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum," *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, Mark Noll and Nathan Hatch ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 59-78.

ridden this wave of rebellion against inherited religious forms, and revivalist movements such as the Churches of Christ flourished in its wake. As part of this general trend, Hatch traced a prevalent renunciation of the past as a source of authority in the Christian life and the life of the church, claiming that history was little cared for by these new movements. Furthermore, the effect was also felt in some sections of the more traditional denominations, such as Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. Mark Noll has also relied on this narrative while also seeing other factors at work in this democratic anti-tradition impulse, namely the prevalence of Scottish common sense realism and the commitment to Biblical literalism that characterized Protestantism at this time.<sup>20</sup>

Historians have been interacting with this thesis since it was first published in 1989. Notably, Amanda Porter sees not a positive movement towards social and religious equality and the parity of church members in the early republic but rather fear and doubt in the context of social upheaval being the dominant shaping force of American Christianity in this period.<sup>21</sup> If America in the early nineteenth century was, to borrow Jon Butler's metaphor, "awash in a sea of faith," then there were, below the tumultuous surface of the deep, multiple strong currents pulling against one another and causing multiple eddies to form and dissipate under the waves.<sup>22</sup> Hatch and Porter correctly identified two such currents, occasionally contradictory, clashing against one another but often flowing in the same direction and co-existing in such a vast sea as American Christianity. Nevertheless, while it interacts with Hatch and Noll, Porter's thesis does not fully bring back the centrality of history and historical identity to American Protestantism. Alongside the streams of democratization and doubt, and often flowing from them, there also developed a deep swell of conservatism, expressed in Protestantism's use of history. In the context of the proliferation of new forms of religious expression, as well as great doubts and fears, history provided an air of continuity, the safety of the known, and the security of the understood.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the diversification and pluralization of American Christianity did not push the past out of the churches but rather necessitated it to acquire a new authority in denominations that wished to legitimize their existence and anchor themselves to something that would hold them fast in

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<sup>20</sup> See Mark Noll, *Christianity in the United States and Canada* (London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992), 155, and *America's God: From Johnathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 227-252.

<sup>21</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt Religion and Politics in the New American Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> This is why Thomas Howard can chart negative reactions to American Christianity from both conservatives and liberals in Europe. American Christianity contained multiple strands, subcultures, and forces at work, including a deep conservatism and a profound love for the past. Thomas Howard, *God and The Atlantic: America, Europe and the Religious Divide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

the swelling sea of religious opinion.

Paul Gutacker has recently recovered the importance of church history in several key debates in American politics and society during the Early Republic.<sup>24</sup> He rightly acknowledges, as do I, that Hatch and Noll do not claim that historical Christianity did not inspire denominations, congregations, and individuals or that churches did not create new traditions and hierarchies themselves but that Hatch and Noll's emphasis on American Protestantism's rejection of the authority of the past can seem to imply this. Ultimately, I believe the picture they paint does not accurately portray the claims made by American Christians to continuity with Christianity as practiced prior to its American iterations, nor the fervor with which they attempted to create American traditions as natural developments of what had gone before. Gutacker demonstrates that American Christians were not simply Biblicists and rejecting of the past, but did accord church history an authority in their opinions and position on various subjects. I agree with this but argue that clergy did not simply use examples and precedents from church history to supplement biblical arguments on a given issue or to try and break exegetical deadlocks, Protestant clergy also used history to build up a Southern religious identity, which was then re-deployed in the context of the Civil War. I contend that Christians, especially ministers, were invested in producing not just church history and histories of their denominations but also discussing the history of the nation, various states, and other areas of world history, which they felt to be illustrative and instructive for their present experience. The way in which these categories overlapped and interacted in Southern Protestant "uses" of history is a central concern of this work. History provided a way to navigate the experience of social change and supplied a narrative of continuity in the face of upheaval. It was also used to create an identity and a past for relatively new denominations and regional churches. Through this complex and sometimes contradictory barrage of historical ideas, ministers simultaneously shaped the identities of their congregants on multiple levels; as members of a particular denomination, as Christians, as citizens of a specific state, and as citizens of the nation. An interchangeable set of values based on providence, piety, liberty, and conservatism meshed and morphed in various configurations depending on the historical subject matter.

Another current moving below the surface of the sea of American faith in the first half of the nineteenth century that carried with it echoes of the past was primitivism. Richard T Hughes has asserted that, in the quest to recapture the "first times," Americans fell prey to the "illusion that they were a fundamentally natural people, who, in effect, have stepped outside of history, thereby escaping

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Gutacker, *The Old Faith in the New Nation: American Protestants and the Christian Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

the powerful influences of history, culture and tradition.”<sup>25</sup> The attempt to return to a pure origin of pristine primitive religion can be a way of circumnavigating the intervening history. It can entail a rejection of tradition in order to make an imaginative connection to an early point in a religion's development from the cultural moment in which one finds oneself. However, this is not always necessarily the case.<sup>26</sup> The spirit underlying a primitivist urge can manifest itself in different ways. In the first instance, it can be a movable impulse directed at multiple periods in the past. Southern clergy - Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian, but also Methodists - did not tend to argue that there was a primitive purity to which the church must return and that everything in between was, therefore, a departure, a degradation, and something to be rejected. Far from it, each of these traditions saw a continuity of what they believed to be the spirit of early Christianity in subsequent movements in church history, in persecuted sects and reform movements, the Reformation, and in various revivals. Thus, it was possible to hold to an early pure form of Christianity, call the church back to that, but still apportion a certain amount of authority to periods in church history that had faithful adherents to that pure Christianity. Recalling these witnesses throughout history is precisely what we see happening in the works and sermons of Southern ministers during the antebellum and Civil War periods.

In addition to this more overtly obvious form of primitivism with regard to church history, one can also observe a similar impulse in the uses of secular or “profane” history. In matters regarding the political history of the United States, there was a clear and continual hearkening back to a purer time, a golden age, when Christianity was fervent, and citizens enjoyed and understood the true nature of liberty. Southern ministers believed they had a correct view of the original intent of the founding of the United States and the Colonies of British North America before it. This attitude has been described by historians such as Zur Shalev, arguing that citizens of the early republic had a primitivist view of the country's history, which was projected back to other examples such as the classical empires of Greece and Rome and ancient Israel.<sup>27</sup> A primitive view of liberty entrenched in republican histories and

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<sup>25</sup> Richard T. Hughes and C Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xiii.

<sup>26</sup> Hughes's own work on Southern minister Benjamin Morgan Palmer shows this when he argues that Palmer drew upon five different eras, “Israel, the ancient Jewish patriarchs, primitive Christianity, the Puritan fathers, and founding fathers,” in his construction of a civic theology. Richard T. Hughes, "A Civil Theology for the South: The Case of Benjamin M. Palmer," *Journal of Church and State* 25, no. 3 (Autumn, 1983), 467.

<sup>27</sup> Eran Shalev, *American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013) and *Rome Reborn on Western Shores Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009). These build on the earlier work by Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). See also Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).



articulated by Whig historians also pervaded the thought of Southerners in this period. Importantly, however, it was a primitive spirit that emerged and manifested itself in multiple epochs in the history of the world, all leading up to the American expression, which Southern clergy felt was their duty to urge people to guard. In this sense, it becomes clear that there was a close relationship between a primitive view of church history and a primitive view of the nation's history. Both were connected with a recapturing of a perceived truth that had originally been given or received in a time of primitive purity and then never entirely lost throughout the rest of history, but rather maintained and guarded by the heroes and obscured and neglected by the villains.<sup>28</sup>

This work will demonstrate the connection between this view of church history and the view of secular history and show that Southern ministers held both, and there was significant overlap and interaction between the two.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Southern Protestant clergy used history to reinforce a Christian Southern identity which then had implications for Southern nationalism and the blending of religious and political identities. The critical area of overlap was in the role assigned in each case as maintainers, as those who conserve, as ones who held onto the pure and correct form of the thing under threat, be it Christianity, the church, the Bible, the idea of America, or the principle of liberty properly regulated, and ultimately, slavery. It was slavery, and particularly the attempt to maintain and defend it, which caused this unification of historical identities, and served to converge the church's use of the Bible and history into a distinctly Southern expression of Christianity.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This is similar to Theodore Dwight Boseman's argument about Puritanism in America. "Primitivism embraced the conviction that the Christian pilgrimage forth through the age of Reformation and toward the eschatological climax was simultaneously a retrogression. To move forward was to strive without rest for re-connection with the paradigmatic events and utterances of ancient and unspoiled times." It was simply seen as the case by Southern clergy that the essence or spirit of these unspoiled times reoccurred in specific periods throughout history, giving those epochs their value. *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 11.

<sup>29</sup> See the comment made by John Bailey Adger, "A full and complete learning and teaching of the history of the Church of Christ would demand a full and complete mastery by the pupils as well as by the Professor of nearly all human history, because, for the most part, wherever in human affairs there has entered no influence from the Church of Christ—wherever the interest of a nation have had no connection at all with the interests of the Church of Christ, neither influencing them nor being influenced by them—there, for the most part, there has been little for history to record, and history has recorded but little. The world and all its kingdoms have been kept in being and in action for the church's sake. They have constituted simply her theater upon which to act out the drama of her life and progress." in "Inaugural Discourse on Church History and Church Polity," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 12, no. 1 (April 1859): 141.

<sup>30</sup> For how this denominational identity blurred the line between church and society, see the comment of E. A. Nisbet, signer of the Georgia ordinance of secession, writing about the Southern Presbyterian Church in an article published in *The Southern Presbyterian Review*, which glories in its history and its impact on civil society. "The Presbyterian Church maintains its ancient repute for the soundness of its doctrines, the excellence of its polity, and the learning of its ministry...Its firm conservatism in these days of novelties in politics, morals, and science gives it a strong hold upon the sympathies and the judgment of the public. It is still a bulwark against error and a standard against iniquity. Its government still illustrates the dream of civil perfectibility—strength in administration, with popular representation. It rejoices still in its historic renown. It still points without exultation, yet with inoffensive pride, to its long roll of patriotic reformers, profound theologians, and eloquent defenders of the faith." *Southern Presbyterian Review* 13, no. 1 (April

## *North and South in American Religion*

One of the main reasons for the conclusions reached by the religious historians mentioned above, and the narratives they present is the region and cross-section of American Christianity upon which they focus. Namely, these are mainly Northern and Western histories. This work presents an alternative case study, showing that the experience of the South reveals the conservative, historical, and traditional impulses at work in American Christianity, particularly in the older Eastern regions. This oversight in the historiography can also be explained to some extent by the understandable, older tendency to see the pro-slavery South broadly, and Southern church more specifically, as outside of the mainstream of American history, something of an aberration or a confusing deviation from the true meaning of America and the correct trajectory of its history.<sup>31</sup> The reality was, however, that antebellum Southern Christianity formed a distinct American religious tradition with its own emphasis and aesthetic determined by its commitment to racial slavery, one that ultimately decided that the meaning of America and the Union were not identical.

The South, however, is not a homogeneous region but rather a conglomeration of sub-regions with distinctive patterns of settlement, urban and rural experiences, and divergent religious histories. Therefore, complete blanket assertions are to be treated with due caution; instead, I seek to elucidate trends and identify commonalities without claiming uniformity or hegemonic views across all places and all denominations. Most of the subjects treated in my study came from the more established urban and cultural centers in the South, Charleston, Richmond, and the North of Georgia, most specifically.

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1860): 103.

<sup>31</sup> An excellent example of viewing the South this way is in Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution*. (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1955), 8, where he describes the South as, "an alien child in a liberal family, tortured and confused, driven into a fantasy life." Quoted in Larry Tice, *Conservatism and Southern Intellectuals, 1789-1861: Liberty, Tradition and the Good Society* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 3. This attitude also pervades classic works on Southern history, such as C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1960). This tendency was also no doubt aided by the dominating force of Perry Miller, who traced so much of the American mind back to the Puritans and, therefore, to the North, not the South. Sydney Ahlstrom, perhaps the most influential historian of American Christianity in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, must also be seen as contributing to this attitude. His *Theology in America: The Major Protestant Voices from Puritanism to Neo-Orthodoxy* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967) contains not a single Southern voice, and his, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972) is an entirely Northern story, where Southern Christianity makes a slight appearance for a dozen or so pages around the Civil War. E. Brooks Hollifield has recalled how, in Sydney Ahlstrom's lectures at Yale, his treatment of Southern religious history consisted of making "a few funny references to the nineteenth-Century Baptist James R. Graves" and commenting on the "folksy and simplistic quality of nineteenth-century antebellum Southern religious polemic." in "The Gentlemen Theologians Revisited," *Autobiographical Reflections on Southern Religious History*, John B. Boles ed. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 138.

Nevertheless, this does not render the work hopelessly skewed, as ministers in these centers outweighed their rural and frontier colleagues in influence, output, and denominational leadership.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, as will become apparent, usage of history was spread out across other states of the South so that ministers in rural parishes and circuit riders on new routes were also concerned about the history of their traditions, the history they were making, and the history of the country in which they lived. However, I have chosen to focus only on the states that broke away from the Union during the Civil War to form the Confederacy. This is not to argue that ministers and churches in Kentucky, Maryland, Kansas, and Missouri did not contribute to the trends and ideas I discuss in my chapters, and indeed I acknowledge that some of my subjects were active in those states at various points in their careers. However, I have focused on work done in the states of the Confederacy because my narrative covers the antebellum and Civil War periods. The ideas developed prior to the war evidently had an impact during the war and were used in defense of the Confederacy in ways they simply were not in states that sided – albeit contentiously - with the Union.<sup>33</sup>

However, it should be kept in mind that although I focus on the South, this is not an argument that the interest in and production of history was unique to the South. Indeed, many of the things I describe also occurred in the North. Northern Christians were writing and reading their own histories, teaching history in the universities and seminaries, as well as suffusing their sermons with historical themes, references, and illustrations.<sup>34</sup> Yet, this phenomenon played out distinctly in each region and shaped Christianity in each location into two different traditions which were in ultimate opposition to one another. In this, I am following the work of Samuel Hill, who argued that the divergent experiences of the North and the South were the products of the same national religious culture, saying, "South and North have had distinctive careers inside the pervasive unity of a Protestant Christianity" and that by the Civil War, "only a national culture so united could be so divided."<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the work of Mitchell Snay has highlighted the difference between Northern and Southern religion, arguing that the relationship between Southern religion and Southern sectionalism was one of a mutual and cyclical

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<sup>32</sup> Eugene Genovese said, "The power of the [mostly urban and eastern] Presbyterian divines, for example, would be hard to overestimate." Eugene D. Genovese, *The Slaveholders Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 1.

<sup>33</sup> For a specific treatment of the border states, see April E. Holm, *A Kingdom Divided: Evangelicals, Loyalty, and Sectionalism in the Civil War Era* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2017). For another discussion of upper South and lower North ministers and the controversy over regional allegiances, see Timothy L. Wesley, *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> George Callcott, *History in the United States 1800-1860: Its Practice and Purposes* (Baltimore, MD: Hopkins Press, 1970) documents the large amount of history written by Northern clergymen.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Hill, *The South and The North in American Religion* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 10, 46.

reinforcement whereby "Religion worked as an active agent translating the sectional conflict into a struggle of the highest moral significance. At the same time, the slavery controversy sectionalized Southern Religion, creating separate sectional institutions and driving theology further toward orthodoxy."<sup>36</sup> I agree with his assessment, but I am asserting the centrality of a historically constructed identity to the reinforcing of this religious sectionalism and the defense of slavery as integral to maintaining the distinctive nature of that historical identity. In addition to Snay's work, Clarence Goen, in a very influential argument, posited that the rupture between the Northern and Southern branches of the Methodist and Baptist churches, as well as the earlier Presbyterian division into the Old School and New School, gave the nation a conceivable framework for disunion. With this in mind, studying Southern religion as a distinct entity becomes legitimate and necessary.<sup>37</sup>

Distinct, however, is not to be taken as meaning disconnected. Several scholars have pointed out that Northern depictions of the South were integral to the construction of Southern identity by Southerners who received, internalized, and reproduced tropes and common presuppositions from these depictions. Classic works on the Southern character, such as William Taylor's *Cavalier and Yankee*, and more recent works, such as James Cobb's *Way Down South*, show that Northern visitors and Northern commentators perpetuated an image of an exotic South that was all the things the North was supposedly not; hot, violent, lazy and characterized by, "iniquity, aristocracy and luxury."<sup>38</sup> As well as this, Susan Grant has demonstrated the existence of a distinct Northern nationalism developing in the antebellum period that saw itself in distinction to a Southern "other."<sup>39</sup> This experience of difference led to the separation of identity regionally and religiously. The history of the North and South was central to these competing conceptions of their distinct nature, and ministers were complicit in creating, reinforcing, and historically constructing these differences. Here Sam Haselby has been helpful in identifying two different streams of religious nationalism, one located in New England and one predominately on the frontier West, which he believes merged to form what we now think of as America's religious nationalism. Where he errs and what this work seeks to correct is his presentation of a revivalist anti-hierarchical Western version of religious nationalism, under which the South is

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<sup>36</sup> Mitchel Snay, *The Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6.

<sup>37</sup> Clarence C. Goen, *Broken Church, Broken Nation: Denominational Schism and The Coming of the American Civil War* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988).

<sup>38</sup> William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: George Braziller, 1961) and James C. Cobb, *Way Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) esp, chapter two, 34-66, the quote from 14.

<sup>39</sup> Susan Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Kansas, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2000).

subsumed. I believe it is more helpful to think of a distinctly Southern religious nationalism, which may have contained elements of Jacksonian populism but was primarily constructed by educated authorities who valued hierarchy and social order and placed a high premium on maintaining religious tradition.<sup>40</sup> In this way, we can begin to see the centrality of history to constructing religious sectionalism, and no group was more central to that than the ministers of the major Protestant denominations.

### *Antebellum Southern Religion*

Much of Southern church history has been preoccupied with understanding how a region that was conspicuously irreligious and lacking an outwardly pious culture in the Revolutionary period and the early republic became such a religious powerhouse by the eve of the Civil War. Classic titles such as John Boles, *Great Revival: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* and Christine Leigh Heyrman's *Southern Cross: Origins of the Bible Belt* are primary examples of this.<sup>41</sup> Together they present a compelling case that disestablishment and revivalism unleashed a tide of evangelical fervor that saw unprecedented growth in the Baptist and Methodist traditions in the South while also, to a lesser extent, impacting the Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches. As this fervor came in increasing contact with the slaveholding Southern society, it relieved itself of its more radical implications and made concessions to racism and social hierarchy. There is truth to this narrative, yet I believe it is more accurate to see competing impulses within evangelicalism, such that it has both an equalizing tendency as well as the potential for the conservatism which pervaded Southern society in the antebellum period. During this time, the propensity to turn to history, invent traditions, and emphasize the maintenance of past theology and piety helped to forge an evangelical cultural identity within the churches, which bled over into the wider society. In his influential *Religion in the Old South*, Donald Matthews argued that Southern evangelicalism, through its reception in a rising middle class, underwent a process of gentrification and achieved “identity and solidarity.”<sup>42</sup> I believe that this thesis still stands, and I am

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<sup>40</sup> Sam Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), see also the idea of multiple nationalisms in Benjamin Park, *American Nationalisms: Imagining Union in the Age of Revolutions, 1783-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> John Boles, *The Great Revival 1787-1805: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1972), and Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), Colonial historians are not immune from the desire to explain the origins of Southern evangelicalism either, see for example, Thomas J. Little, “The Origins of Southern Evangelicalism: Revivalism in South Carolina, 1700-1740,” *Church History* 75, no. 4 (December 2006): 768-808.

<sup>42</sup> Donald Matthews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977), 18. Beth Schweiger's *The Gospel*

showing in this work that part of the way this solidarity and identity was formed was through shared stories, ideas about the past, and a shared sense of being on the right side of history. The side considered to be right was the conservative side, which maintained truth against error and rejected innovation and religious tyranny.<sup>43</sup>

One of the most significant and controversial practitioners of Southern history in recent decades, Eugene Genovese has, along with his wife, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, characterized the minds of the Southern elite as consumed with historical thought. Their project, to reconstruct and explain the "world view" of the "Master Class," presents a group of individuals with an ambiguous relationship to the past, at once deeply conservative but not tied to a particular era, concerned with material progress, but afraid of any corresponding moral progress that may entail.<sup>44</sup> The figures they treat were deeply skeptical about modernity and afraid of the cyclical nature of societies they saw as decaying from within. He elaborates on a rich worldview and one deeply affected by Christian thinkers. Men such as James Henley Thornwell are regularly cited, yet it remains a history of the Southern slaveholders in general. Genovese - an able historian of theology and the church - saw no reason to distinguish between the various churches and Southern society. One might argue that to attempt to extricate the church's thinking from the society around them by exclusively looking at Southern ministers would be to

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*Working Up* has argued that Baptist and Methodist evangelicals in Virginia used their religion for social improvement and advancement in civil society. I believe that history and historic identities have much to do with social status and the process of gentrification.

<sup>43</sup> It is common among histories of Southern religion to equate Southern Protestantism with Evangelicalism; this has its obvious flaws. Recently Thomas Lawrence Long has written, "If the South had never been monolithically Christian, southern Christianity has likewise never been monolithically evangelical Protestant." in "Religion in the South," *Civil War in America: A Social and Cultural History*, Maggi M. Morehouse and Zoe Trodd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 83. However, with regards to my work here, Methodists and Baptists are usually agreed to have been evangelical denominations, Presbyterians are usually also considered as containing evangelical sections, and Episcopalians are not universally included in this group, although this varies from history to history. I would broadly include them under this designation while also acknowledging that there were clergy who would not have fallen into this category. Therefore, in this work, I occasionally use the term evangelical, as it is clear that most individuals I discuss could reasonably be called evangelical. However, more often, I simply refer to Protestant clergy. Offering precise definitions of evangelicalism is no easy task; still common are variants on the quadrilateral offered by David Bebbington, Biblicism, Crucicentrism, Conversionism, and Activism found in his *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730's to the 1890s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989). I do not intend to coin a new definition in this work, and I would happily use any definition that emphasizes the central place in the Christian life of a personal individual saving relationship to Jesus Christ, which usually contains an emotional component of awareness of that reality. Other adjectives such as conservative, confessional, orthodox, biblical, or perhaps even historical may be closer to Southern Protestants' own self-identification.

<sup>44</sup> See Especially Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Slaveholders Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), for an assessment of Genovese, see, J. William Harris, "Eugene Genovese's Old South: A Review Essay," *The Journal of Southern History* 80, no. 2 (May 2014): 327-372, and Manisha Sinha, "Eugene D. Genovese: The Mind of a Marxist Conservative," *The Radical History Review* 88 (Winter 2004): 4-29.

embark on a fool's errand because the church was so deeply enmeshed with Southern life. To attempt to treat Southern clergy as hermetically sealed off from the rest of society and independently creating their own ideas would indeed be unwise. I intend to observe the influence of Southern culture broadly on the Southern clergy (acknowledging the fact that they are constantly being shaped by the culture that they are shaping) while keeping in mind the fact that the fervent piety of Southern ministers, regardless of how embedded they were in the social life of the South, required a sense that the "world" was distinct from the church. Therefore, there was difference and distinction, which is a crucial and overlooked insight of Anne Loveland.<sup>45</sup> Studying Southern clergy as a unique section of society is granted legitimacy by the fact that churches had their own publishing, literature, method of discourse, and priorities, which, while overlapping with those of politicians and intellectuals, were different. Understanding Southern Christianity on its own terms requires that we take the insight of Genovese that history mattered to Southern elites and apply it to the churches and clergy without subsuming it under a general Southern worldview. Rather we must ask, how did ministers interact, reject, modify, or simply assume and acquiesce to such a worldview, as far as we can reconstruct it?<sup>46</sup>

Another bright light in the firmament of Southern history, Michael O'Brien, can help us rectify some of the excesses of Genovese's project. By focusing on the intellectual networks and readership of Southerners O'Brien has also underlined the importance of history to the intellectual life of the Old South and helpfully describes Southern thought as simultaneously "National, postcolonial and Imperial all at once."<sup>47</sup> This highlights the contradictory and competing way Southern intellectual movements worked, in tension with multiple identities and priorities. If we apply this to the church, we see the same pattern of attempts to forge a historical identity through various uses of history at once, regional, national, and denominational. Christian historical identity could also draw on multiple sources, and clergy at times could exhort their congregants to act like Biblical patriarchs, classical patricians, English aristocrats, Scottish Covenanters, or patriots from the American Revolution, the list of historical types to emulate was almost endless. Thus, the historical identities of Southern Christians

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<sup>45</sup> Anne C. Loveland argues for the integration of Evangelicalism into society as a key component of Southern religious life. However, Christians became dissatisfied and angered by their inability to effect real reform of slavery along biblical or Christian moral grounds. Anne C Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

<sup>46</sup> Figures Such as Benjamin Morgan Palmer, who features prominently in this work, are often treated entirely in their political and sectional context, devoid of theological, ecclesiastical, and religious contexts. For example, see Bonner, *Mastering America*, xi-xvi, 142-147. Treating them the other way, as clergy, Southern Protestants, members of religious communities, and ecclesiastical bodies first, can offer an alternative avenue of interpretation.

<sup>47</sup> Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 2.

were not static nor derived from one place. However, Southern clergy drew from these different times and places remarkably similar points, often disregarding the historical realities of the period being evoked in order to recreate the past for use in the present. The lessons learned from history and applied to the Southern context revolved around conservation, preservation, commitment to inherited rights, fidelity to orthodoxy, courage in the face of opposition, personal and public piety, and the rejection of novelty.

The ability to draw out common themes from different historical epochs points to the belief held by the Southern clergy of all Protestant traditions in the existence of timeless and unchanging truths and principles. This belief reinforced their theological commitments and the implications they derived from these commitments for society. The ability to draw out these common themes also enabled the Southern clergy to address and, in some cases, cover the tensions of Southern intellectual and social life. Bertram Wyatt Brown, for example, has painted a picture of Southern Society where issues of gender, masculinity, and honor jostled against the piety, emotionalism, and potential socially transgressive elements of evangelicalism, all acting within the need to maintain social norms and racial hierarchies.<sup>48</sup> It was through historical narratives and identities that Southern ministers could provide a precedent for joining together piety (seen as feminine) and honor (seen as masculine) for their Southern congregants.<sup>49</sup>

Paul Harvey has commented that “Southern historians have searched for a central theme to bring together these difficult contradictions of the Southern past in particular, the paradox of slavery and freedom.”<sup>50</sup> The same has been true with Southern church history; historians have often sought a central theme to bring together contradictions; in *The Sacred Mirror*, Robert Elder has taken up Wyatt-Brown's preoccupation and argued that honor was just such a theme. He posits that evangelicalism acted as a "cultural bridge between two ways of conceiving of oneself, one essentially premodern and one the essence of the modern era." He argues that "evangelicalism drew its animating force from the

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<sup>48</sup> See Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), *Yankee Saints and Southern Sinners* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1985); *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Another scholar who has identified honor as a peculiar Southern feature is Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor, and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as Women, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, The Pro-slavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); also Edward Crowther, “Holy Honor: Sacred and Secular in the Old South,” *Journal of Southern History* 58, no. 4 (November 1992): 619-36.

<sup>49</sup> See Richard Rankin, *Ambivalent Churchmen and Evangelical Churchwomen: The Religion of the Episcopal Elite in North Carolina, 1800-1860* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).

<sup>50</sup> Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1997), 1.



same cultural wellspring that fed honor...premodern communalism."<sup>51</sup> He argues, therefore, that the dominant form of piety in the South contained within it backward and forward-oriented elements and honor held them together. It is my contention that history enabled ministers to hold that tension and construct narratives in which honor and piety were joined and modeled. Other historians have offered their "central" explanation of Southern Christianity; a Southern view of markets and economics; the attempt to reconcile racial slavery and Biblical inerrancy; or to reconcile slavery and evangelicalism with slave missions.<sup>52</sup> Each of these are important ways to understand Southern Christianity. However, my belief is that to understand the Southern minister's mind; one must see who they thought they were. This can be done by asking where they thought they came from, what they believed made them distinct, and by seeing whom they identified with throughout history, what movements, and what battles. Time and time again, they thought they were defenders of an unchanging revealed truth, conservers, and maintainers.

In this conservative identity, piety and practice were maintained; belief and behavior counted, and orthodoxy and orthopraxy went hand in hand. Confessionalism, orthodoxy, or Biblical faithfulness were the watchwords of the day. Yet systematic studies of the theology of Southern churches have been few and far between. The work of E. Brooks Holifield dominates this small field.<sup>53</sup> Holifield's most famous book, *The Gentlemen Theologians*, took one hundred of the most well-educated urban ministers of the South in order to discuss the intellectual life of the Southern churches. Many of the names mentioned in this work will also come from that range of individuals, but some will not; I have not restricted myself to any particular level of wealth, education, or economic status.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, I do

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<sup>51</sup> Robert Elder *The Sacred Mirror: Evangelicalism, Honor, and Identity in the Deep South, 1790-1860* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2016), 1.

<sup>52</sup> For economics, see Kenneth Moore's Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, 1997). For the reconciliation of racial slavery and biblical literalism, see Stephen Haynes *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification for American Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Thomas Virgil Peterson *Ham and Japheth: The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978). For the relationship between Southern evangelicalism and slave missions, see Charles Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

<sup>53</sup> E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture 1795-1860* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978). His *Theology in America: Christian Thought from The Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003) also treats the Southern context more than most. See also James Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon, GA: University of Mercer Press, 1987). It is denominational histories that contain the most theology, see for example, the Presbyterian case, Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South: Volume One 1607-1861* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963), and Section four in David Wells ed., *Reformed Theology in America: A History of its Modern Developments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985) and Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1987).

<sup>54</sup> Kenneth Startup has commented that "It is in fact very difficult to...place a minister definitely within a social or cultural category" and that "designations such as "town" or "city" pastor are highly problematic," arguing that ministers moved

not claim to have a representative sample or accurate cross-section of the various Southern churches I discuss. Instead, the influence of the leading figures, the sophistication of their thought, and the regularity with which they are published make them ideal case studies and types from which examples can be extrapolated. However, one should not overstate this distinction; what evidence there is suggests that rural ministers were also capable and able to use history in their preaching and conceive of themselves historically and did so.

For Holifield, the theology of the Southern church was under-girded by a commitment to Scottish Common Sense philosophy such that realism could be seen as Southern Christianity's "Reliable handmaiden" and "the foundation of Southern ethical thought." This was because its "defense of the reliability of knowledge" provided Southern theologians with a way to "demonstrate the congruity between thought and behavior and prove the reasonableness of faith."<sup>55</sup> Where Holifield leaves off, we can pick up and say that this commitment to the knowability of the world and ethics also functioned in attitudes to history. If history could be understood, it could be subject to moral criticism; in effect, there was a right and a wrong side to each debate or conflict in history. In this way, history became useful for illustration and example. Furthermore, Holifield's correct discussion of the theory of epistemology and ethics accurately depicts the technicalities of academic and professional theology but misses the emotional and aesthetic power given to Southern Christianity by articulating these views historically. Translating theology from the textbook and the classroom to the pulpit and the pews was aided by history.

South Carolina Presbyterian James Henley Thornwell is a prime example of someone who rooted his theology in both rational philosophic thought and a powerfully emotional resonance with the past at the same time. Upon becoming Professor of Theology at Columbia Seminary, he declared, "I am not ashamed of that confession of faith. I am not ashamed of the men who formed it, of the men who adopted it, of the noble army of martyrs and confessors who have sealed its doctrines with their blood."<sup>56</sup> Such confessionalism gives historical theology authority in the church; other denominations did the same. Theology was deeply polemical; debates were waged with ferocity and were dressed in historical arguments. The side of each historical, doctrinal debate a minister felt themselves to be on instructed their view of the contemporary world; for example, a Baptist recounting the imposition of

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around and did not stick to one category, and depending on the town or city, rural elements would still very much form a part of the culture and life of the place. *The Root of All Evil*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians*, 112,126.

<sup>56</sup> James Henley Thornwell, "Discourse Delivered by Dr. Thornwell, Upon Being Inaugurated as Professor of Theology," *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell D.D., LL.D., Vol. I.*, ed. John B. Adger (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1871), 575.

pedobaptism through an error on the church in the fourth century could make an emotional connection between the persecution faced by his religious forbears and the opposition he and his fellow contemporary Baptists faced over slavery.

### *Religion and the Civil War*

In 1999 three leading historians of American religion stated that the religious history of the Civil War had yet to be written.<sup>57</sup> This statement was made in the introduction to *Religion and the Civil War*, a book that has set the tone for much of the subsequent work on this subject.<sup>58</sup> Comprised of papers from a conference on the same theme, various chapters highlighted; the role of religion and churches in sectionalism; the importance of the religious press during the war; how narratives of revival and Christian soldiery functioned during and after the war, as well as the role of religion in the lives of women on the home front. This volume has had a wide-reaching impact on the works which followed it and displays something of a tendency in the study of religion and the Civil War, which I am counteracting here. Most work on religion and the Civil War focuses on the war itself and the sectionalism in the year or two prior to the war. On the other hand, most work on Southern Christianity tends to restrict itself to the antebellum period and stop short of the war. I see the Civil War as a focusing lens on Southern religion, which helps us understand it in continuity and connection to antebellum religion. By putting both together alongside each other, I will show that ideas, trends, and developments in the antebellum period were amplified and given a higher sense of urgency during the Civil War.

When this is done, we see an obsession with history, of what had happened in the past, but also the end of history, universal history, and the historic purpose of the South and slavery. Mark Noll famously described the Civil War as a theological crisis. His argument is that Common Sense Realism

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<sup>57</sup> Randell Miller, Harry Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson, "Introduction," *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Harry Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3. Mark Noll has since commented that "gone are the days when the intense religious engagements of Americans in the Civil War and surrounding decades received only isolated scholarly attention. "Forward," *Apocalypse and Millennium in the American Civil War*, ed. Ben Wright and Zachary Dresser (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 2013), viii.

<sup>58</sup> See Timothy Wesley, *The Politics of Faith During the Civil War* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2013); Robert R. Matheson ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and the American Civil War: A History in Documents* (New York: Routledge, 2014); John Brinsfield, William Davis, Maryniak and Robertson ed., *Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole books, 2003), John Brinsfield, ed. *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of the Civil War Chaplains* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005); Stephen E. Woodsworth, *While God is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers* (Kansas, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001); Robert J. Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God: Religion and Faith in The American Civil War* (New York: Lexington Books, 2007).

and a commitment to reading the Bible literally on both sides led to a crisis in theology as both sides used this framework to reach completely different conclusions and thus could not deal with the problem of slavery.<sup>59</sup> His analysis has many merits, and one could simply add that this difficulty led to the reading back into the history of various times of conflict through which to identify and understand current problems by Southern ministers. However, while that is true, on a deeper level, the Civil War should also be seen as a crisis in the interpretation of history. When it came down to it, the North and South had two distinct views of history, what had happened in the past, who were the correct inheritors of that past, who was on the right side, and who was in the wrong. They also fundamentally disagreed over the nature of history's course; what lay behind the passage of time? Was it the progress of liberty or the maintenance of existing liberties? These issues divided Northern and Southerners, who shared so much of the same beliefs in other areas of religion. History was crucial to understanding this theological crisis.

The two works that most comprehensively deal with religion and the Civil War are George Rable's *God's Almost Chosen Peoples* and James Byrd's *Holy Baptism of Fire and Blood*.<sup>60</sup> Rable sees a belief in providence that pervaded both sides at every level of religious experience as the best way to understand religion's role in the Civil War. He discusses the religious life of soldiers, chaplains, the home front, the role of ministers, and the religious press. Similarly, Byrd narrates the ways in which the Bible was a constant reference point for both sides, helping them understand the war, its progress, and its meaning, as well as dealing with the experience of war, especially that of death and killing. It is, therefore, the Bible and providence, respectively, which provide the imaginary framework for Christians to interpret the war and make sense of it. These compelling arguments must be expanded to understand religion's role in the Civil War fully. I focus on sermons and religious journals to show the extent to which history was used to prove providence, to see how it worked, and to provide meaning and justification for the war. The greatest way in which ministers shaped the narrative of the war for their congregants, listeners, and readers was by presenting a view of history developed in the antebellum period and given utmost importance in the context of war.

The role of the clergy in the Confederacy has proven to be a particularly fruitful area of scholarship. Drew Gilpin Faust's *Confederate Nationalism* established that ministers were integral to building and maintaining such an ideological cohesion to the South's war effort. She drew on James

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<sup>59</sup> Mark Noll, *The Civil War as Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>60</sup> George C. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press 2010); James P. Byrd, *A Baptism of Fire and Blood: The Bible & The American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

Silver's earlier work *Confederate Morale* that argued the churches of the Southern states were influential in creating and sustaining the cause of the South by theologizing the struggle and providing hope for victory even when defeat began to appear inevitable from a human perspective.<sup>61</sup> There has been debate about how far the clergy's opinion changed throughout the war or if there began to be a sense of guilt over slavery and encroaching self-doubt observable in public intellectuals.<sup>62</sup> Rather than engage in questions about the extent to which clergy contributed to Confederate nationalism or attempt to gauge the effect of their rhetoric, I am more concerned with what we can learn about the religious world of the South by what ministers preached and wrote during the war. The fact that they felt themselves to be explaining the war reveals something about their worldview when it is considered that their explanations rely on views of history and how God had acted in past historical examples. Furthermore, I believe it is evident that in the war, they were able to present what they felt was a full-orbed civil theology, which they desired to under-gird any Confederate nationalism which did exist or could come into existence. This required them to draw on historical conceptions of nationhood, the relationship between church and state, and warfare and religion, all of which were historically constructed and argued.

Much of my source material for the thought of ministers during the War comes from sermons. David Chesebrough has argued that "to read sermons...is to become aware of how greatly the preachers contributed to the war."<sup>63</sup> The prevalence of public fast days and the adoption of the jeremiad form of discourse forms an important theme in the work of Harry Stout, among others.<sup>64</sup> Sermons were preached to the remaining congregants at home, as well as to soldiers, to regiments going off to war, at public occasions, before the meeting of state legislators and denominational bodies. Sermons, therefore,

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<sup>61</sup> Faust, *Confederate Nationalism*, 16, 22, 28. James Silver *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing co. 1957). For questions of how much Southern Nationalism and the lack of willpower of the South to win played into Confederate defeat, see Richard Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William Still, *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988) for an account which emphasizes the lack of Confederate will. See Garry Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) for the counter-argument that Confederates had a high expectation of winning and a desire to do so.

<sup>62</sup> Kimberly R. Kellison, "Towards Humanitarian Ends? Protestants and Slave Reform in South Carolina, 1830-1865," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 103, no. 3 (July 2002): 210-225. For those that see guilt and lack of desire to fight for slavery as contributing to the defeat of the Confederacy, see the chapter "The Southern Road To Appomattox," in Kenneth Stampp, *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) and the chapter, "God, Guilt and the Confederate Collapse," in Richard Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William Still, *The Elements of Confederate Defeat: Nationalism, War Aims and Religion* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988); and Eugene Genovese, *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

<sup>63</sup> David Chesebrough, *God Ordained this War: Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 1.

<sup>64</sup> Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Alter of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (London: Penguin, 2007).

afford an especially clear insight into the workings of the Southern minister's minds; what they felt would work, what they felt they could say, and how they constructed it. Ministers felt their audiences would understand and respond to historical references and follow historical arguments. They expected their hearers to be able to imagine a connection to the past and impose their emotions regarding the current crises into other eras of history. It will be important to this work that the sermon was a tool for shaping the historical identity of those in the South, not just during the war but also in the antebellum period.

### *Race and Slavery*

In constructing a usable past, White Southern clergy tacitly conceded that there was also an unusable past. This past was that of Black Christians and the multitude of enslaved people in their midst. Where they came from, their past, and their heritage were largely passed over in silence and ignored. For Southern clergy, the story of Protestantism was White, and the role to be played by Black Christians was a passive bit-part, an unhistorical race to be enlightened but not to the level of equality. Thus, Protestant uses of history were inherently exclusionary and racist and cannot be understood apart from the cruelties of racial slavery. It was this that animated the historical identities of Southern Christians into life. The conservative identity linked to each denomination's past taught those who identified as such to resist change and to walk in the old paths (Jer 6:16, KJV), and for them, that meant upholding racial slavery. Fighting for slavery in the minds of the Southern clergy was another iteration of the ongoing fight between Christ's kingdom and the world, good and evil, conservation, and innovation. To understand the vitriolic passion with which James Henley Thornwell made his declaration that in the contest between abolitionists and slaveholders, "the world is the battleground – Christianity and atheism the combatants; and the progress of humanity at stake," one must understand the idea of history in which it was couched.<sup>65</sup> To the Southern clergy, these forces had clashed before; they had read about those conflicts and now rejoiced in their chance to play the role of heroic martyrs for the cause of fidelity to the old ways.

The presence of racial slavery, however, did need to be addressed by Southern ministers who were open to the accusation of deviating on this point from slavery as practiced in the Bible. This

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<sup>65</sup> James Henley Thornwell, *The Rights and Duties of Masters: A Sermon Preached at the Dedication of a Church, Erected in Charleston S.C., for the Benefit and Instruction of the Colored Population* (Charleston, SC: Steam Power Press to Walker & James, 1850), 14.

required extended discussions of the origins of the Black race and its lack of historical progress, which usually revolved around the curse of Ham.<sup>66</sup> The only occurrence of Black Christians in history produced by Southern ministers was to serve as proof of a denomination's piety and devotion to missions. The fact that White Christians largely passed over the history of Black Christians and treated them exclusively as passive tools for their own agendas and ideas does not mean that the Black population was not active agents in constructing their own historical identities. Instead, the Black population in the United States underwent its own religious development, in which history played a significant role. John Ernest has cataloged how free Blacks in the North wrestled with history and formed communities with collective memories through telling and retelling their pasts.<sup>67</sup> A prime example of this is the Presbyterian minister, James W. Pennington, who wrote the first history of the Black race and which was in profound distinction to White histories serving as a stinging rebuke to them.<sup>68</sup> Laurie Maffly-Kipp has also shown the importance of *Setting Down the Sacred Past* to Black Christians who “despite unremitting cultural assaults...began to reconstruct a history for themselves.”<sup>69</sup> One such cultural assault was the oft-repeated idea that Africa had no history below the Sahara and its people were not historic.<sup>70</sup> This restricted history to a White experience and a White story, excluding Black people from the narrative. Thus, it was that the imagined community of the White church, along with its cultural memories, was complicated by the presence of Black Christians. As we shall see, slave missions formed an important part of Southern Protestant culture in the antebellum era, and the inclusion of Africans in the purpose of history and the ends of time was held across traditions. However, the narratives constructed by clergy and the ways they used the past limited the ability of Black Christians to identify with the communities that White ministers built.

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<sup>66</sup> Stephen Haynes, *Noah's Curse*; Thomas Virgil Peterson, *Ham and Japheth*; Sylvester Johnson *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity: Race, Heathens and the People of God* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>67</sup> John Ernst, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>68</sup> James W. C. Pennington, *A Textbook of the Origin and History, &c. &c. of the Colored People* (Hartford CT: L. Skinner, 1841).

<sup>69</sup> Laurie F Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past: African-American Race Histories* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>70</sup> G. W. F. Hegel had written about Africa in his philosophy of history, commenting dismissively that the population of Africa “is capable of no development or culture, and as we see them at this day such have they always been.” and went on to write “At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world.” *Lectures on the Philosophy of History by G. W. F. Hegel*, trans. J. Sibree (London: George Bell & Sons, 1894), 102-3. It was another German philosopher, who, like Hegel, was controversial to Southern theologians, but could be used for this opinion, Friedrich Schlegel, that Benjamin Morgan Paler chose to reference in the validation of his assertion that “with the exception of Egypt and the Mediterranean coast, the whole of Africa may be disregarded, as contributing nothing to human progress.” *Our Historic Mission, an address delivered before the Eunomian and Phi-Mu Societies of La Grange Synodical College* (New Orleans, LA: “True Witness” office, 1859), 4.

This is, therefore, a study of White Protestantism. Black Christians appropriated some narratives from White history for themselves, and historians such as Paul Harvey and Albert Raboteau have done the hard and necessary work of reconstructing African American and slave religion.<sup>71</sup> How the view of history shaped slave Christianity would be a fascinating area of study, but it is beyond our remit here. It has been observed that we know a lot about how White slaveholders defended racial slavery, far more than how Black evangelicals fought against slavery, and this is true.<sup>72</sup> What follows is not simply another discussion about how Whites defended slavery, although that is a crucial component, but rather an argument about the authority of history in Southern Christianity. Secondly, it is an argument about how Southern ministers' use of history formed the Southern Christian identity to be primarily conservative, which, when acting in conjunction with slavery, had a cyclically reinforcing effect. How they interpreted history revealed their conservatism, and how they told their history reinforced that conservatism. The emotional impact of the sectional conflict, the resort to warfare, and the readiness to separate from Northern brethren all speak of a deeply felt and resonating identity. Identity is reinforced in no stronger way than narratives about that past. The fact that clergy turned to the past repeatedly in their seeking to maintain and resist change shows the level to which their historic identity had grasped and taken hold of their minds.

It is my contention that Christians constructed an identity for themselves as maintainers of pure faith and told the stories of how their particular brand of Christianity had held onto the truth through centuries of oppression and infidelity. The same could be said of their view of secular history, where they positioned themselves as the true interpreters of society and the values of the American Republic, which had been forged and honed through various struggles for liberty before the founding of America. Thus, when their slave society felt threatened, and the attack on the very institution of slavery was couched in religious language and biblical rhetoric, the historical identity was triggered, and it was as if all the attacks on true orthodoxy and piety, as well as liberty, were being replayed in real time before their eyes. Maintaining and conserving became integral not just because they would lose their livelihoods, their honor, and experience shame but because they would not be themselves, they would lose their very identity, and they could not live up to the faith of their fathers.

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<sup>71</sup> Paul Harvey, *Christianity and Race in the American South: A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); *Through the Storm, Through the Night: A History of African-American Christianity* (New York: Bowman & Littlefield, 2011); *Bounds of Their Habitation: Race and Religion in American History* (New York: Bowman & Littlefield, 2016). Also, Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (New York: OUP, 1978) and *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>72</sup> Joel R. Iliff, "Sustaining the Truth of the Bible: Black Evangelical Abolitionism and the Transatlantic Politics of Orthodoxy," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 11, no. 2 (June 2021): 165.



What follows will be a discussion of how this worked in the antebellum and Civil War periods. I begin with the often overlooked denominational and congregational histories written by Southerners searching for a usable past. These form the bedrock of denominational identity and historic cultural memories from which the imagined communities of the churches were built. These linked Southern Protestantism to previous periods of Christianity and narrated an honorable heritage to be emulated. Each denomination had its preoccupations and things they wished to highlight, defend or prove about themselves. Nevertheless, these histories all emphasized the piety and orthodoxy of the faith that had come to the South and flourished, an identity that would have profound ramifications for the sectional conflict and Civil War. Following this, I examine the teaching of history in seminaries, where the place and authority given to church history and the theory of history set ministers up for a lifetime of using history in their ministries, reinforcing and recreating the historical identity of their congregants. Teachers of church history were wary of new forms of history that challenged received wisdom regarding the development of doctrine. Rather history, as taught in Southern seminaries, reinforced the concept of a pure deposit of unchanging faith. The church's understanding of this could deepen, but the faith itself was not susceptible to reinterpretation; in this context, theological developments in the North looked decidedly dangerous. Finally, for the antebellum period, I look at how history was deployed in relation to slavery, the critical battleground for Southern ministers in distinguishing themselves from their – in their mind – errant Northern counterparts. This issue drew the denominations together and facilitated a full switch from regional denominational identities to simply Christian regional identities. Part of this process was the attempt to integrate the reality of the presence of an enslaved population into Southern church history, to explain its presence, and use it to demonstrate Southern Protestantism's piety, orthodoxy, and place in God's scheme for history.

The following section will address the Civil War, where the themes and ideas developed over the preceding decades were increased in magnitude and severity and deployed in aid of the Confederacy. Here I discuss the very notion of history and universal history and how it was theologized to define the purpose of the Confederacy and the clergy's role within Southern Society during the war. Ministers drew on their knowledge of history to extrapolate the meaning of the crisis and believed that the conservation of slavery, the maintenance of the current system of "regulated freedom," and the preservation of orthodoxy and piety would be the cause of Confederate victory and explain its purpose in the course of human history. The example of the English Civil War forms the basis of the next chapter. This consistent reference point enabled Southern clergy to present their cause in a deeper and

longer tradition of those who fought for true piety and liberty, even if this meant appropriating Puritan memory and subverting Northern uses of the same. The English Civil War allowed ministers to forefront religiosity in soldering and argue for the need to fight for religious and political liberty. Then I examine the most common historical allusion, that of the American Revolution, seeing that these clergy had a clear concept of what they felt was the true nature of America, one from which the North had departed and one they were, by God's grace, still maintaining. Southern Clergy were keen to present the American Revolution as a conservative revolution that preserved more than it changed and that secession was a continuation of that principle. Furthermore, the memory of their own Southern experience of the Revolution, the battles, the graves, and the heroes from that region sacralized the ground of the South and turned Northern aggression into a defilement of sacred space. Finally, I address the concept of republican history, seeing in classical illusions and discussion of France and Holland a desire to construe the Confederacy as a true republic which was Godly in the way that the Dutch example was and the French was not. All of this was inflected through deep conviction of God's action in history and a theological belief in God's kingdom prevailing against the gates of hell. Ministers were keen to use the war to create a Godly republic where Christianity would provide the correct levels of civic virtue for the project to break the cycle of history and avoid an ignominious downfall.

Throughout the Civil War, ministers used history to interpret the war's course, explain its meaning, and provide examples for emulation. They sought precedents and looked for patterns in God's dealings with nations to discern the likely outcomes of the conflict they were experiencing. Clergy proclaimed a Confederate Christian nationalism, with dreams of a Godly society, calls to be a holy nation, and orations that demanded the Confederacy take its place in the march of history. However, in all their expositions and constructions of and references to history, they did not see slavery as an evil to be removed from it. When the losses mounted up and surrender came, the link to history sustained the same Southern identity that had fueled secession and the war effort throughout reconstruction and beyond.

## **Section I: The Antebellum Period**

## Chapter One: Denominational and Congregational Histories

The three decades leading up to the Civil War saw a deepening of the historical culture of the South. In 1831, Virginia became the first state in the South to found a historical society, followed by Georgia and South Carolina in 1839 and 1855, respectively, and there was an increase in the number of histories published in and about the Southern states.<sup>73</sup> The South's most prestigious and widely read journals, such as the *Southern Literary Messenger* and *Southern Quarterly Review*, filled their pages with reviews and discussions of the latest historical publications. Authors, such as William Gilmore Simms, were busy molding the South's awareness of its past through popular historical novels. At the same

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<sup>73</sup> "Our History," Virginia Museum of History & Culture, accessed February 27, 2023, <https://virginiahistory.org/our-history>. "About," The Georgia Historical Society, accessed February 27, 2023, <https://georgiahistory.com/about-ghs/> and "About," The South Carolina Historical Society, accessed February 27, 2023, <https://schistory.org/about-us/>. This is fifty years after the first historical society in the United States, the Massachusetts Historical Society, was founded in 1791.

time, colleges and universities across the South adopted historical studies as an integral part of the education of the young. The College of William and Mary and The College of Charleston offered some of the country's first courses on American history, and the first Department of History was instituted at the University of North Carolina in 1853.<sup>74</sup> Ultimately, Michael O'Brian has concluded that the antebellum Southern historical consciousness "had a powerful sense of connection with times and places far beyond itself. Ancient, medieval, modern, European, colonial, American—these were terms that made a succession, offered a sense of place, and ventured an explanation of a social self."<sup>75</sup> This observation remains true when applied more specifically to the churches of the South, and understanding this fact will act as the first step in appreciating the nature and characteristics of White Southern Protestantism.

Churches, denominations, and ministers contributed and benefited from this increase in historical enthusiasm. The leading religious journals published article after article discussing history. Presbyteries, synods, associations, circuits, and conventions commissioned various works of history. Furthermore, religious colleges and seminaries in the South pioneered the teaching of history. Yet, the output of this historical impulse as it manifested itself in the Southern Protestant denominations has not been the focus of most scholarship on Southern religion, and the fruits of what this can tell us remain unpicked.

In the various discussions about the rise of evangelicalism in the South, and the increasing socio-economic status of the adherents to evangelical religion, church histories are largely ignored as a source.<sup>76</sup> Yet, what we see in the works under examination here is evidence of a Christian culture coming of age. Congregations and denominations were reaching a point where they had established themselves in society long enough to have history to tell, and the desire to know their roots and their past grew to such an extent that they produced histories, sermons, and addresses on the subject. As religious bodies matured into institutions, they looked back over decades of experience, and what they saw reinforced their sense of accomplishment but also the divine inevitability of the growth of Christianity in the Southern States. These histories also served to orient denominations facing religious pluralization and theological innovation on an unprecedented scale. They rooted congregations and denominations to a firm and secure past in the midst of change and uncertainty. In this way, they provided a usable past, a lineage that served as an identity-forming link to history when large-scale

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<sup>74</sup> Callcott, *History in the United States*, 60-61.

<sup>75</sup> O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 596.

<sup>76</sup> For example, classic histories of Southern religion such as Matthews, *Religion in the Old South*, Christine Leigh Heyrman *Southern Cross*, and Snay *Gospel of Disunion*.

forces were pulling at the world that White Southerners had built over the decades.

Historians have also outlined the intellectual, theological, and philosophical particularities of Southern Christianity without reference to the fact that these debates were waged with continual reference to past theological controversies, which were themselves told in a way that reinforced conservative denominational identities.<sup>77</sup> Historians of the culture of Southern Christianity, in their discussions of honor, chivalry, and masculinity, have yet to take sufficient notice of these histories. Ministers fused Southern values with historical narratives of theological controversy and persecution and, thus, embedded them in denominational and Christian identities.<sup>78</sup> Finally, these histories show how Southern Christians could use the experience of past ages in the church as a framework for interpreting the threat they felt they were facing in their contemporary experience, namely abolitionism. In this way, looking at these histories in close detail can tie together various strands in the study of Southern Christianity to show how, as the Protestant denominations grew in size and social standing, they wrote histories that cemented their position in society, established a role for honor, masculinity, and chivalry within piety and thus gave examples of ways to emotionally and rhetorically identify the debate over slavery with historic ecclesiastical and theological conflicts of the past.

Reconstructing this use of history will be necessary to understand how ministers contributed to the developing sectional tensions and the eventual Civil War. As will become apparent, the historically constructed identities of all the major Protestant denominations in the South underpinned their stances against abolition and the Union. Reconstructing this process requires us to begin with some simple questions; who did the Southern Protestant clergy think they were? Where did they believe their denominations came from? What made them distinctive? What did they feel was worth preserving from the past? What was worthy of emulation, and what was to be avoided? The answers to these questions can reveal the mindset of White Southern Protestantism. Histories penned by clergymen appeared during the antebellum period, narrating their denominations' origins and experiences in the United States. Furthermore, others told the story of particular congregations or ministers worthy of note, renown, and to be remembered by fellow Christians. It is these publications that this chapter will explore. This was not a new phenomenon; histories of the various denominations had existed prior to this period, and these were read, used, and repurposed by Southern writers and thinkers in the antebellum period. Nor was this a particularly Southern phenomenon. A larger volume of publications poured forth from Northern presses written by Northern historians. Indeed, histories produced in the

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<sup>77</sup> Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy*, Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians*.

<sup>78</sup> Wyatt-Brown, *Shaping of Southern Culture*.

South did, sometimes happily, other times ironically, and occasionally grudgingly, build upon and borrow from their Northern counterparts. There is a complexity to historical identities such that the history of a denomination could be identity-forming for a Southerner even though parts of the story occurred in the North. Therefore, a nuanced picture of historical imagination and appropriation will emerge over the course of this investigation. Yet, despite this, it is also true that the histories consulted for this chapter are of specific places, specific congregations in the South, and persons who ministered there. These histories strengthened a sense of regional identity, and, what is more, for Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, the division of their denominations led to a heightened awareness of their histories in their distinct localities.

The histories under consideration here are primarily spiritual in nature, focusing on morality, piety, faith, and perseverance. Many fall into the category of evangelical hagiography, and in this they are unashamedly didactic; a particular form of Christianity is promoted, and a specific view of the Christian life is encouraged.<sup>79</sup> Each denomination had its preoccupations that, in turn, reinforced its own self-perception as ecclesiastical bodies. These preoccupations can help us to understand how each denomination viewed its relation to broader Southern society. Contained within these histories are narratives concerning the progress of Protestantism in America, arguments about the correct nature of the church, and a recurring obsession with persecution and the maintenance of orthodoxy and piety. It would be an oversimplification to say that these narratives were responsible for the attitude of Southerners that led to the Civil War. However, I contend that the conservative historical identities developed over the decades before the Civil War by churches and clergy could be redirected from interdenominational debates to national divisions in the context of sectionalism and the Civil War. The repeated calls to faithfulness, warnings against deviation from orthodoxy, glorifying of martyrdom, accusations of persecution, and pride in standing up for the truth of God regularly referenced in these histories all functioned as a constitutive part of the cultural atmosphere breathed by Southern Protestants who increasingly saw the Northern church as hopelessly corrupt and degenerate. Philip Mulder has argued of an earlier period that Southern Christians "wrote their histories to address their current concerns about denominational interaction and the resultant tensions."<sup>80</sup> Mulder is correct; these histories reinforced distinctiveness over and against other denominations and traditions, yet in the context of the antebellum period, the point of tension was slavery, and the "other" against which self-

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<sup>79</sup> For a good discussion of evangelical uses of history in this vein, see the introduction and chapter 2 of Clary, *Reformed Evangelicalism and the Search for a Usable Past*, 17-57.

<sup>80</sup> Philip Mulder, *A Controversial Spirit* (Evangelical Awakenings in the South (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 149-167.

definitions were made in all denominations could and did shift from different denominations to abolitionists and the North.

### *Rehabilitating the Episcopal Church*

The histories produced by Episcopal clergy during the antebellum period evidence two preoccupations: First, to exonerate the Episcopal Church from its negative associations with the colonial establishment and support for the loyalist cause during the Revolutionary War. Second, to rehabilitate the history of the Episcopal Church by highlighting the role of piety in its founding, recent growth, and experience of renewal. These two emphases stem from the precarious position that the Episcopal Church experienced in the Southern States in the early nineteenth century and into the antebellum period. It had long lost its established privilege in Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas and was lagging far behind the newer, less tradition-bound denominations, especially the Baptists and Methodists.<sup>81</sup> The Episcopal Church labored under the stigma of its association with establishment and religious tyranny in the eyes of many. It also lived with the constant knowledge that the historical identity of a large portion of their fellow Protestants was constructed around a rejection of the authority of the Church of England from which the Episcopal Church descended. The efforts to present the history of the Episcopal Church in a light favorable to the sensibilities of the antebellum South resulted in the forging of a historical identity in which Episcopalianism embodied Southern values. It claimed to be the oldest denomination, with a proud pious history, that, through its vestries, provided the country with its founding principles and the correct combination of democratic representation and hierarchy.

Following disestablishment, the Episcopal Church in Virginia had to contend with a sharp numerical decline and loss of prestige.<sup>82</sup> Yet, the history of the relationship between the state of Virginia

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<sup>81</sup> By 1850 Methodists had 1025 congregations in Virginia, Baptists 649, Presbyterians 240, and the Episcopal Church just 173. Statistics are from Goen, *Broken Church Broken Nation*, 51.

<sup>82</sup> Although the examples discussed here are from Virginia, other states also produced histories with similar arguments and points. For examples of a parish history like Rev. Slaughters but from North Carolina, see R. B. Drane, *Historical Notices of St. James Parish, Wilmington, North Carolina* (Wilmington, NC: R.S.H. George, 1843). For South Carolina, see Christopher Edwards Gadsden, *An Essay on the Life of The Right Reverend Theodore Dehon D.D., Late Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of South Carolina* (Charleston, SC: A.E. Miller, 1833), which has an extended history of the Episcopal Church in South Carolina and also has many of the same preoccupations as historians of the Episcopal Church in Virginia. Frederick Dalcho had already published his magnum opus, *A Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina From the First Settlement of the Colony to the War of the Revolution* (Charleston, SC: E. Thayer, 1820). Biographies of most of the significant early Bishops of Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina form part of the period's historiography, yet for many, the authors were not Southern. Indeed J. P. K. Henshaw, who would go on to be bishop of Rhode Island, was to be the biographer of Richard Moore, the man so beloved by Meade and Slaughter as the conduit through which God blessed the diocese of Virginia. Henshaw's account of the colonial church in Virginia is more sanguine than Meade's, although it only occupies a few pages of the book. J. P.



and the Episcopal Church went back to the very start of British North America. Retelling that story could reassert the Episcopal Church's historic position within the antebellum South's diverse religious culture. Rev. Philip Slaughter's parish histories aimed at just such a rehabilitation of the historical image of the Episcopal Church. Slaughter proudly announced that he was "one of those Virginians who regards his native state with the feelings of a Southern man's heart."<sup>83</sup> He once gave a speech to the Virginia historical society, which comprised entirely of anecdotes about his pride in observing connections to his home state when traveling abroad.<sup>84</sup> During the Civil War, he served as chaplain to the 19th Regiment of Virginia Volunteers, and after the war continued publishing works of history as the historiographer for the Diocese of Virginia.<sup>85</sup>

Slaughter outlined the purpose and intent of his project neatly for the reader in the preface to his history of Bristol Parish by contending that "the church establishment in Virginia before the Revolution is very little understood. There is much obscurity and confusion in the ideas of most men upon that subject." Despite praising the Northern historian Francis Lister Hawkes, Slaughter generally felt that "historians are not very satisfactory in their expositions of the relations of the church to the state." Slaughter went on to explain, "In our judgment, the continuous records of one of our old parishes will do more to elucidate that subject than anything to which the public have yet had access."<sup>86</sup> He wished

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K. Henshaw, *Memoir of the Life of the Rt. Rev. Richard Channing Moore, D.D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia* (Philadelphia: W. Staveland & Son. 1843). John Norton of Kentucky wrote biographies of many Episcopal and Church of England bishops for the Sunday school union. This minister had a prolific pen that rattled off edifying and sentimental prose that was noncritical of the Southerners about which he wrote. See John N. Norton, *The Life of Bishop Ravenscroft* (New York: The Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union & Book Church Society, 1858) and John N. Norton, *The Life of Bishop Bowen, of South Carolina* (New York: The Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union & Book Church Society, 1859).

<sup>83</sup> Philip Slaughter, *A History of Bristol Parish, with a Tribute to its Oldest Rector, and an Appendix Containing the Epitaphs of Some of its Earliest Officers and Friends* (Richmond, VA: B.B. Minor, 1846), 5.

<sup>84</sup> *The Virginia Historical Register and Literary Companion Volumes II-IV*, (Richmond, VA: Virginia Historical Society, 1850), 29-37.

<sup>85</sup> For an overview of Philip Slaughter's life, see Jane Chapman Slaughter, "Reverend Philip Slaughter: A Sketch," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (July 1936): 435-56.

<sup>86</sup> Slaughter, *History of Bristol Parish*, 6-7. Francis Lister Hawkes had already written an extensive history of the Episcopal Church in Virginia. He did so because he believed it to be the oldest and most distinguished of states and would furnish him with the most interest for the first volume of what he intended to be a series covering the history of the Episcopal Church in each state. Ultimately, his project only produced two volumes on Virginia and one on Maryland. Francis L. Hawks, *Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of the United States of America: Vol. I, A Narrative of Events Connected with the Rise and Progress of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1836) and Francis L. Hawks, *Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of the United States of America: Vol. II, A Narrative of Events Connected with the Rise and Progress of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Maryland* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1839). Francis Lister Hawkes was by birth a Southerner and held pastorates in North Carolina and New Orleans, but most of his career was spent in the North, and at the outbreak of War, he remained with the Union and died in New York. Therefore, his work must fall outside of our specific remit, yet, it is important to take account of his work as it is the book that subsequent work on the history of the church in Virginia and the South more broadly is indebted to. Hawks is not hostile to the South, but rather evenhanded and at points sympathetic, but highlights the ineptitude and corruption of the Colonial and Revolutionary clergy, a view from which Slaughter and Meade would be keen to distance

to dispel the idea that the colonial church was completely inept or morally compromised. Instead, he showed there were examples of gospel ministry, even if not every chapter of Episcopal history was equally edifying. He readily admitted there were problems with colonial clergy but put this down to the constraints arising from the lack of an American episcopacy under which the clergy labored. Slaughter defended the Episcopal Church's previous status as an established church by reminding the reader that state religions were the norm in the eighteenth century and that people should not judge the past by their own moral standards.<sup>87</sup> A key component of his rehabilitation of the Episcopal Church was highlighting its positive role in the American Revolution, seeking to dispel the idea that it was utterly complicit with British tyranny. Slaughter pointed out that it contained the likes of Washington, Henry, Lee, and other Revolutionary heroes within its number.<sup>88</sup> However, the narrative conceded that the church was in a poor state after the Revolution, which was related mainly to underscore the revival and growth experienced by the Episcopal Church in the 1830s. This revival was shown to have been conducted in an orderly fashion in complete keeping with the precepts of the prayer-book and rules of the Episcopal Church. This resulted in Bristol Parish going from having 40 communicants in 1830 to 300 at the time Slaughter was writing his history.<sup>89</sup>

Slaughter published a history of St. George's Parish the following year and echoed many of the points asserted in the previous volume. Again, he sought to enhance the reputation of the Episcopal Church, particularly before the Revolution, with anecdotes that he thought would nuance the prevailing negative view. He recounted instances when parishioners had exercised their authority against that of state and ecclesiastical power.<sup>90</sup> Thus he moved away from the simply hierarchical image of the Episcopal Church to present it as a movement that allowed for the correct balance of authority between clergy and laity. His narrative of the revival and fortunes of the church in the nineteenth century continued his apologetic depiction of the Episcopal Church as a balanced church. He attributed the low moral state of the church following the Revolution to "the prevalence of an infidel philosophy among the higher classes and the outbreak of a malignant fanaticism among the lower order of the people."<sup>91</sup>

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themselves. See William F Morgan, *Francis Lister Hawks, D.D., LL.D., A Commemorative Discourse Preached in the Chapel of the Holy Savior, on the Anniversary of His Burial, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1867* (New York: Wynkoop and Hallenbeck, 1867) and Evert Duyckinck, *A Memorial of Francis L. Hawks, D.D., LL. D* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1871).

<sup>87</sup> Slaughter, *History of Bristol Parish*, 8-9.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 40-41.

<sup>90</sup> Philip Slaughter, *A History of St George's Parish in the County of Spotsylvania, in The Diocese of Virginia* (Richmond, VA: A.W. Randolph, 1890), 17.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

The correct implementation of pious Episcopalianism would be seen to keep these impulses in check, as evidenced in the narrative of the revival of 1831. Furthermore, these descriptions were calculated to resonate with a public suspicious of infidel philosophies and fanatically revolutionary ideas, both terms which would be used about abolitionist sentiment situated in the North.<sup>92</sup> Recounting this element of the Parish's history allowed Slaughter to place the Episcopal Church within the evangelical culture of the South and call his readership back to that level of faithfulness that he saw in "former periods."<sup>93</sup>

Slaughter believed himself to have originated the idea of writing a church history based on the early record books of individual parishes. He planned to write a history of all the parishes in Virginia, but health concerns prevented that possibility. Instead, he passed the documents and information he had gathered to William Meade, Episcopal Bishop of Virginia, for him to undertake his own historical work.<sup>94</sup> Eventually, Meade's research would lead to the encyclopedic two-volume *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia*.<sup>95</sup> Meade's first foray into Virginian ecclesiastical history, however, occurred on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1845, when he gave an oration to the Episcopal convention of the diocese held in Fredericksburg entitled, *A Brief Review of the Episcopal Church in Virginia*.<sup>96</sup> This address, published as a pamphlet later that year, must be read in the context of the ongoing effects of the Oxford movement in the Episcopal Church.<sup>97</sup> The waves from the Oxford movement were felt mainly in the North. However, there were pockets of interest in the South. North Carolina experienced controversy in the late 1840s over attempts by Bishop Levi Ives, who converted to Catholicism in 1852, to introduce confession into the church and found a religious order.<sup>98</sup> The Oxford movement gained its other name, Tractarianism, from the publication, beginning in 1833, of a series of pamphlets known as *The Tracts for the Times* which, reacting against the interference of parliament in church matters, emphasized

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 39-42.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>94</sup> Philip Slaughter, *A History of St Marks Parish, Culpeper County, Virginia: With notes of Old Churches and Old Families, and Illustrations of the manners and customs of the olden time* (Baltimore MD: Innes & Co. 1877), iii.

<sup>95</sup> William Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia In Two Volumes* (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippett, 1857).

<sup>96</sup> William Meade, *A Brief Review of the Episcopal Church in Virginia: From its Establishment to the Present Time* (Richmond: WM McFarlane, 1845).

<sup>97</sup> For the Oxford movement in the United States, see Peter B. Nockles, "The Oxford Movement and the United States," *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World 1830-1930* ed. Steward J. Brown and Peter B. Nockles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 133-152. For the evangelical nature of the Southern diocese, see Diana Hochstedt Butler *Standing Against the Whirlwind: Evangelical Episcopals in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>98</sup> See *Statement of the Difficulties Between the Diocese of North Carolina and Dr. Ives, The Lately Bishop of said Diocese* (Fayetteville, NC: Edward J. Hale & Sons, 1853). Also, Richard Rankin, "Bishop Levi S. Ives and High Church Reform in North Carolina: Tractarianism as an Instrument to Elevate Clerical and Lay Piety," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 51, no. 3 (September 1988): 298-319. For the arguably high church successor to Ives, see N. Brooks Graebner, "The Rt. Rev. Thomas Atkinson (1807-1881): Advocate for an Apostolic and Catholic Church," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 86, no. 2 (June 2017): 133-166.

apostolic succession and sacramental theology at the same time as downplaying the effect of the Reformation on the Church of England. Meade sought to counter this tendency at any opportunity, leading to his publishing works on the Reformer's views of baptism and a new edition of the homilies of the Church of England.<sup>99</sup> In 1845 however, it was a narrative of the history of the Episcopal Church in Virginia that he used to combat what he saw as a dangerous tendency.<sup>100</sup>

Meade's address set out the history of the Episcopal Church in Virginia as a cycle of worldliness and corruption leading to decline and disorganization, which was then countered by gospel preaching and fidelity to the Reformation principles of the Church of England. He painted a negative picture of the church in the colonial era to highlight the effect of George Whitefield's revivalist preaching.<sup>101</sup> Then Meade narrated another downward turn occurring in the fortunes of the Episcopal Church during the Revolutionary War, which he saw as a catastrophe, relating that "At the commencement of the war of the Revolution, Virginia had ninety-one clergymen, officiating in one hundred and sixty-four Churches and Chapels; at its close only twenty-eight ministers were found laboring in the less desolate parishes of the State."<sup>102</sup> This downturn was countered with the consecration of the orthodox and pious Bishop Moore of Virginia in 1811, since whose episcopate the diocese had enjoyed steady growth, proper oversight, and the blessing of God.<sup>103</sup> Meade believed, however, that the specter of false doctrine and teaching could bring about another downward turn in the church's fortunes. He was perplexed that anyone who had seen the blessings poured out by God upon "the doctrines preached" would ever be seeking a change. He placed the church's experience in Virginia alongside the Church of England's, recalling that "The English church [was] most sadly defective, both in doctrine and practice. But God raised up the Venns, Newtons, Scolts, Cecils, Martins, Buchannans, among the clergy, and the Wilberforces, Thorntons, Grants, and Hannah Moores, among the laity,...And what a blessed change has been effected!"<sup>104</sup> Meade used, therefore, the history of the Episcopal Church in Virginia and the

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<sup>99</sup> See, for example, William Meade, *Wilberforce, Cranmer, Jewell and the Prayer Book on the Incarnation* (Washington: Gideon & Co, 1850); and his views expressed in William Meade, *The True Churchman: An Address of the Rt. Rev. William Meade to the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA: James Alexander, 1851); and see the preface to *A Selection from the Homilies of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: Protestant Episcopal Society for the promotion of evangelical knowledge, [unknown]).

<sup>100</sup> Philip Slaughter, *A Memoir of the Life of The Right Rev. William Meade, D.D., Bishop of the Protestant Church in The Diocese of Virginia* (Cambridge: John Wilson & Son, 1885) and John Johns *A Memoir of the Life of The Right Rev. William Meade, D.D., Bishop of the Protestant Church in The Diocese of Virginia* (Baltimore, MD: Innes & Co., 1867).

<sup>101</sup> Meade, *A Brief Review*, 4, 5.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>103</sup> Meade, *A Brief Review*, 8. For Bishop Moore, see William A. R. Goodwin, *The Right Richard Channing Moore, D.D., Second Bishop of Virginia, And the Beginnings of the Theological Seminary in Virginia* (Alexandria, VA: Alumni Society, 1914).

<sup>104</sup> Meade, *A Brief Review* 12.

Church of England to advocate for the maintenance of what he believed to be true historic Episcopal piety and belief exhorting his clergy to “in the spirit of Christian kindness and patience, set forth the true doctrines of [the] Church, as established by the Reformers, and their conformity with Scripture, more emphatically than ever.”<sup>105</sup>

Meade would not cease researching and writing about the church's history in Virginia for the next decade. His full-scale history began with articles in *The Southern Churchman*, and the *Southern Literary Messenger* declared that hardly an educated person would not have read some part of Meade's work by the time both volumes emerged from the press.<sup>106</sup> It was a well-received work that re-cycled the material from the earlier 1845 address but vastly supplemented it with reams of genealogical and familial information and meticulously researched anecdotes procured from living members of established families of Virginia.<sup>107</sup> Meade was concerned with exonerating the colonial church and clergy from the charge of intolerance and religious tyranny and re-framing the memory of the Episcopal Churches' role in the American Revolution. Concerning the colonial church, Meade argued that “we are firmly persuaded that her misconduct...has been greatly exaggerated, and is much misunderstood to this day.” He asserted that far from being religiously oppressive, the “French Huguenots and German Lutherans were not just tolerated but patronized.”<sup>108</sup> Moving on to the Revolutionary War, Meade downplayed the extent of Loyalism among the clergy and informed the reader that the Episcopal Church was responsible for the spirit of the Revolution. He made this claim with recourse to the vestries, a system of church governance that took on a much more democratic aspect in Virginia than in England, where they had originated, and allowed laymen significant authority over the running of parishes.<sup>109</sup> These bodies were presented by Meade as fermenting the ideas behind the Revolution, arguing that the Vestries “had been slowly fighting the battles of the Revolution for a hundred and fifty years. Taxation and representation were only other words for support and election of ministers. The principle was the same.” Not only this, but he was keen to point out that the Virginia Convention of 1776 was filled with “vestry men.”<sup>110</sup> In his retelling, the Vestries were a powerful example of representative government that kept pure democracy in check by being reserved mainly for

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>106</sup> “Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 15, no. 3 (September 1857): 161.

<sup>107</sup> His other sources were church parish records, visits to historical sights, and, in one case, visiting Jamestown to trace out the foundations of the original church with a spade. Ibid, 162

<sup>108</sup> Meade, *Old Churches Vol 2.*, 554, 545.

<sup>109</sup> For the vestries as developed in Virginia, see William H. Seiler, “The Anglican Parish Vestry in Colonial Virginia,” *The Journal of Southern History* 22, no. 3 (August 1956): 310-337.

<sup>110</sup> Meade, *Old Churches*, 151.

elite White males of the community. Thus, the Episcopal Church had thrown off enough of its old-world hierarchy to function in the republican South but kept enough to make sure that republic did not slide into anarchy, which was just what slave-holding Virginians wished for from their Christianity.

*Old Churches* was admired by the southern critic George Fitzhugh who, when reviewing the book, observed that the focus on families gave the work a conservative tendency and praised the fact the piety of families would be strengthened.<sup>111</sup> There is no doubt that this was Mead's intention. The near obsession with tracing families back to England, Scotland, and the dim and distant romantic past was more than simple antiquarian interest; in the slave-holding South, it was a racially charged activity steeped in notions of nationality, ethnicity, and lineage. Meade's probing into the marriages, coats of arms, mottoes, and narratives of prominent families re-enforced the White public's belief in a hereditary right to own, to rule, and to elite status on account of the history they embodied. Furthermore, recapturing these ancient ancestral monuments of the Virginians from the crumbling decay of the years and setting down their memories before they were no longer accessible had another effect. The localities and places of Virginia were romanticized, Holy associations hallowed its landscape, and the spiritual presence of the past was recaptured for the contemporary world. Thus, the *Southern Literary Messenger* observed that in time churches may be "swept away" by a "spirit of improvement" and that Virginians would then be "compelled to look into this work for the only existing representations of objects which had been familiar to our fathers as well as to ourselves." The article went on to say, "No error is more fatal to the happiness or the character of a nation than that which leads us to undervalue the worth of ancestry...Indeed the name and fame of an illustrious ancestry is the noblest heritage which man can bequeath to his fellow man."<sup>112</sup> When the War came, the associations of home and the sacredness of place and heredity, hallowed by the past, were used by rhetoricians and orators in the cause of the Confederacy, drawn from a stock of images reinforced by works such as Mead's.

### *The Trail of Blood Leads to the Baptist South*

The 1834 Baptist state convention of Alabama passed a motion requesting that Rev. Hosea Holcomb compile a volume of its history.<sup>113</sup> Holcombe was a native of South Carolina who, after ministering in North Carolina for some time, moved to Jefferson County, Alabama. He took charge of multiple Baptist

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<sup>111</sup> "Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia," *DeBow's* 26, no. 2 (February 1859): 125.

<sup>112</sup> "Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia," *Southern Literary Messenger*, 167.

<sup>113</sup> Hosea Holcombe, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Alabama* (Philadelphia: King and Beard, 1840), 1.

congregations, baptized hundreds of new converts, and was present at the founding of Alabama's Baptist State Convention in October 1823.<sup>114</sup> In the preface to his history, Holcomb asked his reader a simple but profound question, "who does not delight to trace the history...of his own kindred?"<sup>115</sup> It was clear that Baptists were among those who wanted to know their history, as attested by their sermons and literature produced during these years. Yet, it was seen by some, such as James Graves, the Landmarkist editor of *The Tennessee Baptist*, that Baptists were remarkably ignorant of that history.<sup>116</sup> We are confronted then with a situation whereby the Baptist Church was simultaneously deeply conscious of itself as a historical body yet painfully aware of the failure of this knowledge to filter down to the rank and file of Baptist laymen. Therefore, the antebellum period represents a pivotal moment in creating a Baptist historical identity. After rapid growth and the experience of success in rural and frontier regions, such as Alabama and Mississippi, Baptist numbers were swollen with members of the lower classes, uneducated in the basics of church history.<sup>117</sup> This would not do in a climate where competing denominations used history in polemics against Baptists. Consequently, much of the literature concerning history produced by Baptists of this period can be seen as attempts to increase Baptists' knowledge of the history of their own tradition. Vital areas for Baptists to know about were early Christian baptismal practices, the existence of Baptists in each age of the church, and Baptists' historical connection to the civil liberties of the United States. This information and ability to defend and debate the validity of historic Baptist faith and practice reinforced a Southern Baptist identity.

This historical Baptist identity emerged in a complex relationship with contemporary church histories written by historians of other denominations. Baptists needed to use the authority of existing histories at times but reject them as biased against Baptists when they did not fit a Baptist interpretation of events. *The Tennessee Baptist* told its readers that "the Baptist Element in history has ever been its most important one" but that "Baptists have not been the main writers of church history."<sup>118</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. and William Buell Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit: Vol VI* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860), 442-444

<sup>115</sup> Holcombe, *Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Alabama*, 9.

<sup>116</sup> For James Graves, the Landmark Baptist, whose emphatic belief in the absolute necessity of correct practices of Baptism for a community of believers to be a true church led to a deep obsession with church history see James A. Patterson, *James Robinson Graves: Staking the Boundaries of Baptist Identity* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2020); and Scott Stephan, "A Sectarian's Success in the Evangelical South: J. R. Graves and the *Tennessee Baptist*, 1846-1860," *Journal of Southern Religion* 17 (2015): <http://jsreligion.org/issues/vol17/stephan.html>.

<sup>117</sup> For example, Mississippi Baptists grew from 5,000 to 41,482 between 183 and 1860, Randy J. Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 88. Alabama Baptists grew from 37,000 in 1845 to 237,000 in 1860. Wayne Flint, *Baptists in Alabama: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 66.

<sup>118</sup> "Baptist History," *Tennessee Baptist*, Feb 17, 1855, 3.

a historian such as Holcomb had concerns about the exclusion of Baptists from church history and questioned the validity of historians such as the widely used eighteenth century Lutheran, Johann Lorenz Mosheim, but was quite content to quote him where necessary to bolster their claims.<sup>119</sup> What was felt to be needed were histories by Baptists that retold the narrative of church history from a Baptist perspective. Making such histories available to the reading public was the express intention of James Graves, who published the work of an English Baptist historian, G. H. Orchard, and that of Baptist minister S. H. Ford, *The Origin of the Baptists*.<sup>120</sup> Both authors traced the Baptists' history back to the beginning of Christianity. Proving that the New Testament church was Baptist and that Baptists could be found throughout the church's history was a central tenet of the Baptist's identity-forming project.<sup>121</sup>

Holcombe also began his account of the Baptists in Alabama in the first century, assuming that the earliest Christians were Baptists. According to Holcombe, the entire post-New Testament church history was a catalog of accretions to and confusions of the true gospel maintained by the Baptist faithful. His definition of Baptist was not derived simply from baptismal practices but rather the more fundamental belief that the gathered church should consist solely of saved individuals.<sup>122</sup> He believed the manifestations of such a pure society of believers were preserved through centuries of continual and unceasing persecution. To the question, "why are Baptists persecuted thus?" he replied, "Because it is Christianity that is being persecuted."<sup>123</sup> The impulse to trace the true church by the presence of opposition was not unique to Baptists but had been a mainstay of Protestant historiography from the Reformation onward and included such luminous histories as the English reformer John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, known colloquially as *The Book of Martyrs*. Baptists in America continued this tradition, arguing that the trail of blood could be traced along the centuries in various places. Thus, Ford claimed Donatists as Baptists pushed out by the corrupt hierarchy of the church, and *The Southern Baptist Review* asserted the fact that the Waldensians, so beloved by the Protestant denominations of this period were, in fact, Baptists, spiritual and ecclesiastical ancestors of the current day faithful.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Holcombe, *Alabama Baptists*, 9.

<sup>120</sup> J R Graves ed., *A Concise History of Foreign Baptists* (Nashville, TN: Graves and Marks, 1855), and S. H. Ford, *The Origins of the Baptists* (Nashville, TN: Graves and Marks, 1860).

<sup>121</sup> See "Origin of the Baptists," in *Tennessee Baptist*, December 8, 1860, 1.

<sup>122</sup> Holcombe, *Baptists in Alabama*, 16

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 38-40.

<sup>124</sup> Ford, *Origins*, 76-81, and T. W. Tobey, "Historical Inquiry into the Waldensian Origins of the Dutch Baptists" in *Southern Baptist Review and Eclectic* 1 (January 1857): 331-361. Also illustrative of this phenomenon is W. Carey Crane's "History and Principles of Baptists," *Baptist Preacher* 5, mo. 8 (August 1846): 143-165, which was a



Holcomb continued his historical background to the Alabama Baptists by following the presence of persecution in North America, where he recounted that Baptists had also been opposed for their faithfulness to scripture and primitive Christianity. In this, he highlighted that Baptists were "always the advocates of liberty "and were, therefore, to be thanked and seen as responsible for the principles of the American Revolution.<sup>125</sup> As he brought his narrative closer to his own time, he admitted that the growth of the Baptist church in Alabama had been steady but unimpressive. This he attributed to worldly affairs and the all too ready acquiescence of members to having only monthly or bi-weekly sermons. That was not enough in the mind of Holcomb, and he wished to stir his readers onto higher levels of devotion to the church and gospel as he saw it in the past centuries of Baptist history. He observed, however, a ray of hope in the revivals of 1831 and was delighted to welcome new converts into the church but feared that some might prove to be hypocrites. He identified universalists, an almost entirely Northern group, as one danger and Anti-Mission Baptists as another located closer to home.<sup>126</sup> Groups such as these formed a potential threat for Holcombe comparable to historical examples of corruption and hypocrisy that had sullied the pure deposit of faith.

In 1810 Richard Semple, minister in King and Queen County, Virginia, published *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia*.<sup>127</sup> His expressed desire in writing this history was "an ardent wish for the prosperity of truth," which he thought could be "greatly promoted, by a plain and simple exhibition of God's dealings towards his people. The volume had included an appendix of Virginia Baptist ministers, which inspired James Taylor, minister of Second Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, to collect and present biographies of each of the ministers of the Baptist tradition within that state.<sup>128</sup> The result was his monumental two-volume work, *Lives of Virginia Baptist Ministers*. Initially printed in 1837, it had gone through three editions by the opening of the Civil War, each with more biographies added.<sup>129</sup> Several years later, Jesse Campbell, evangelist for the Baptist

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reproduction of a sermon preached before the Mississippi Baptist Association in 1845 and is replete with many arguments about the persecution of Baptists.

<sup>125</sup> Holcombe, *Alabama Baptists*, 13.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 44-48. The anti-mission Primitive Baptists represent an attempt to form a different historical identity for Baptists while at the same time also using history in a very similar way to Holcome and other pro-mission Baptists by still arguing about the presence of the true church in history through persecution and opposition. See Joshua Lawrence, *A Patriotic Discourse*, (Tarboro, NC: Free Press, 1830); Holcome's response, *A Refutation of the Rev. Joshua Lawrence's Patriotic Discourse, or AntiMission Principles Exposed*. (? 1836); and Benjamin Griffin's *A History of the Primitive Baptists of Mississippi* (Jackson, MS: Barksdale and Jones, 1853).

<sup>127</sup> Richard Semple, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists In Virginia* (Richmond, VA: John O'Lynch, 1810). Another important earlier work was David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World in Two Volumes* (Boston: Lincoln and Edwards, 1813).

<sup>128</sup> James Taylor, *Lives of Virginia Baptist Ministers*, (Richmond, VA: Yale & Wyatt, 1837).

<sup>129</sup> The concept of a collection of biographies of ministers was in vogue during the antebellum period; it was a historical dictum that the history of individuals and biography was of particular interest and moral and social importance. The

State Convention of Georgia, was inspired to attempt something similar. The result was his *Georgia Baptists Historical and Biographical* (1847).<sup>130</sup> These works form an interesting case study of the issues close to the heart of Baptists, a tradition that had praised personal testimony and had a place for individual conversion narratives within its forms of worship and piety.<sup>131</sup> The biographies of these ministers were used to construct a history of the Baptist church in these states full of saints to be emulated. Taylor, in particular, focused on the zeal and faith of early Baptists in North America in the face of opposition, stating, "these holy men had to contend with a hierarchy, in which the spirit of piety, if it ever existed, had been succeeded by the spirit of bigotry and persecution."<sup>132</sup> He warned that the relative ease, social acceptability, and economic comfort which Baptists could enjoy in the antebellum period had caused degeneration from these earlier examples, which is what Taylor sought to counter, referring to ministers who "[maintained] the combat" against oppression. This sentiment could easily translate from an anti-Episcopal establishment feeling to antagonism against the North. The cumulative effect of these short biographies was to endow the church in these states with a spiritual history with which they could be proud and to make deviation from its memory undesirable. The connection to place, the resonances of specific localities, names, and commonly experienced lives of these eminent men linked the reader to a tangible past. It was not distant and remote but barely gone and could be picked up and carried on. Baptists of the antebellum period could prove to be comparable to the men Taylor and Campbell wrote about by maintaining their faith in the face of Northern oppression and deviation.

The connection to place felt by Southern Baptists was heightened as Baptist churches and associations began to reach historic milestones. One such example is the Charleston Baptist Association which in 1851 celebrated the 100th anniversary of its founding. In 1834 it proposed a motion to produce a history of the Association, and in 1835 an additional historical discourse was attached to that narrative. The main point made in the account was that faithful Baptists are the victims of oppression, never the perpetrators. Indeed, it was asserted that "The Baptist...never can persecute while they adhere

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most prominent example of this form of literature was provided by the Northern Presbyterian William Buell Sprague, who worked on his *Annals of the American Pulpit* over the decades 1857 to 1869 and covered the major denominations.

<sup>130</sup> Jessie Harrison Campbell, *Georgia Baptists historical and biographical* (Richmond, VA: H. K. Ellyson, 1847); for Campbell, see Samuel Boykin, *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia* (Atlanta: Jason. P. Harrison & Co, 1881), 95-99.

<sup>131</sup> For the development and importance of conversion narratives, see Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Rodger Payne, *The Sacred and the Self: Conversion and Autobiography in Early American Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narratives: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>132</sup> Taylor, *Lives of Virginia Baptist Ministers*, viii.

to God's word."<sup>133</sup> The message was given that Baptists have always been the champions of liberty of conscience, the most patriotic, and the first to fight for independence. The association was proud that its members were quick to ally with Massachusetts in 1775 and used this memory to express "sorrow" that Southern ministers would no longer be welcome in the pulpits of that state.<sup>134</sup> Such also was the heritage of the oldest Baptist congregation in the South, the First Baptist Church of Charleston. The minister, Basil Manley, who would later play a central role in the spiritual and ceremonial life of the Confederacy, delivered an extended oration on the church's history over two evenings in September of 1832.<sup>135</sup> He followed the tradition of claiming the earliest and most ardent support for the Revolution when it came, but the bulk of his discourse is focused on doctrinal purity. He listed the fortunes and downturns of the congregation's passage through time by linking it to the faithfulness of the ministers and their perching. Thus, the two elements of orthodoxy and political independence were forged together to form one Baptist identity, which would have a powerful resonance in conflict with the North.<sup>136</sup>

In 1845 the identity that Southern Baptists had been building up as both Southern and Baptist was tested. Controversy over the issue of slavery came to a head when the Alabama Baptists asked the National Triennial Convention to clarify if slave owners could serve as missionaries.<sup>137</sup> The convention's negative response caused Baptists around the South to meet and form a separate convention to organize missions. They met at First Baptist Church Augusta in May 1845, and historical identities were crucial for the emotions involved in the decision. The rationale for the split given by the new convention was that the Northern Baptists had deviated from historically accepted ecclesiastical norms and were accused of pursuing "innovation and a departure" from traditional practice. This narrative was reinforced by William Bullein Johnson, the president of the convention, who composed a letter to Baptists to explain the split. He wrote that the Southern Baptist Convention was a self-

<sup>133</sup> *Minutes of the Charleston Baptist Association at its One-Hundredth Anniversary, Held with the First Baptist Church Charleston, S.C., November 1, 2, 3, 4, 1851. Together with the Centennial Sermon by the Rev. James Furman* (Charleston, SC: A. J. Burke, 1851), 57.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, 62. The influence of Baptists in the Revolution and formation of the American political system was a refrain heard from the pens and pulpits of Baptists across the country, see R. B. C. Howell, "The Influence of Baptists on the Virginia State Government," *Southern Baptist Review and Eclectic* 2, no. 6 (August 1856): 457-489.

<sup>135</sup> James Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy: Basil Manly and Baptist Life in the Old South* (New Orleans, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); and Basil Manly, *A Discourse Containing Some Fragments of the History of The Baptist Church in Charleston S.C.* (Charleston, SC: Knowles, Vose and Co, 1832). Basil Manley relished the experience of compiling this history, and during his preparation, he collected a great deal of material. Much to the chagrin of later historians, he lost some of the manuscripts, *Minutes of the Charleston Baptist Association 1851*, 61.

<sup>136</sup> Manly, *A Discourse*, 31.

<sup>137</sup> For the narrative of the division, see Goen, *Broken Church Broken Nation*. For a pro-Southern Baptist view of events, see Hortense Woodson, *A Giant in the Land: The Life of William B. Johnson: First President of the Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1851* (Missouri, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1950).

consciously “conservative” body that would “do the Lord's work in the way our fathers did it.” The actions of the Northern Baptists were also compared to the tyranny of Rome, and a direct appeal was made to Baptist's historical identity as those who are opposed and oppressed. Johnson claimed, “Our brethren have pressed upon every inch of our privileges and our sacred rights.” The clinching argument was summed up by characterizing the actions of the North as “FORBIDDING us to speak UNTO THE GENTILES [emphasis in original].” This phrase came from St. Paul when describing the efforts of Jews to persecute Christians in Judea and Thessalonica.<sup>138</sup> By this appeal to the experience of the New Testament church, Johnson connected to the Baptist historical identity of those prohibited from preaching under European and colonial establishments and back to the very beginnings of the faith. He thus implicitly accused the North of stifling the progress of the gospel.

From the first Southern Baptist Convention onward, the division itself became part of the Southern Baptist historical identity, as at each biennial convention, "histories" of each of the various missions were given, which recounted the division as a freeing and liberating experience that had allowed Southern Baptists to experience growth and blessing.<sup>139</sup> The importance of the connection to region and place instigated by the division of the Baptists can be gauged by an address delivered by R.B.C. Howell, minister of Richmond's First Baptist Church and second president of the Southern Baptist Convention. It was given to the Baptist Historical Society in the North and formed a prolonged defense and glorification of early Virginian Baptists. He told his audience, "churches, as well as families and nations have their pride of ancestry," he was concerned with redeeming the memory of what he believed to be great and heroic fathers in the faith, men who had done mighty deeds and were now overlooked.<sup>140</sup> The decision of the Northern Baptists to bar slaveholders struck at the root of Howell's pride. The original constitution of the Baptist triennial convention stated that the only requirement to be a missionary was that one was to be "in full communion with some regular church of [the Baptist] denomination, and [to be able to] furnish satisfactory evidence of genuine piety, good talents and fervent zeal for the Redeemer's cause." To insinuate that slaveholders did not fulfill that qualification was, in the mind of Southern Baptists, to cast aspersions on their claims to be true churches and that their members were the gathered community of saved individuals. Such a suggestion was beyond the pale to Southern ministers accustomed to looking back on their forefathers with

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<sup>138</sup> *Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention, Held in Augusta, Georgia, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>, 1845.* (Richmond, VA: H.K. Ellyson, 1845), 12, 17-20.

<sup>139</sup> See the proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention for the years 1846, 1849, 1851, 1853, 1855, 1857, and 1859. Most printed by Richmond's H.K. Ellyson.

<sup>140</sup> R.B.C. Howell, *An Address, Delivered in New York, Before the American Baptist Historical Society, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1856.* (Philadelphia: Press of the Society, 1857), 105.

increasing reverence.

### *Methodism Began with Luther*

In a review of Isaac Taylor's *Wesley and Methodism*, *The Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* resoundingly declared that “the time has passed for Methodism to be scouted as a spurious development of Christianity.”<sup>141</sup> This confident assertion belied the fact that not all thought it was so, and many still did see Methodists as a spurious development of Christianity. In 1855 James Graves published the excoriating attack on the Methodist Church, *The Great Iron Wheel*, which comprised of his letters to Joshua Soule, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, mounting his charge with the first assault of vitriolic outrage in the simple argument that the Methodism was just too new to be a true Christian church.<sup>142</sup> Defending against this attitude was the perennial concern of Methodist history in the antebellum period. Southern Methodists were jealous of their right to be considered a true church, and this took the form of an offensive to justify Methodism as a movement worthy of historical study and valid as a source of historical Christian identity. The following year an article in the same publication argued that Methodism, in all but name, began with Martin Luther.<sup>143</sup> Methodists were not content to allow themselves to be portrayed as a recent development but as the true inheritors of the faith of Christians who were truly pious through the ages.<sup>144</sup>

*The Southern Methodist Almanac* of 1855 demonstrates this fact. Its pages are replete with historical references, pictures, and quotes. It evidences all the contemporary fascination with the romanticized past, the gently crumbling and warped ivy-clad walls of England and Europe as the source from which this new church had sprung but had not rejected nor left behind. Interspersed throughout the information and statistics for the year are images of J. C. Ryle's English parish church and an early Methodist church in New Jersey.<sup>145</sup> All are comprehended in the encompassing view of the

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<sup>141</sup> “Wesley and Methodism,” *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South*, 6, no. 3 (July 1852): 361. The book being reviewed was Isaac Taylor *Wesley and Methodism* (London: Longman: 1851). Taylor advocates for the modes of theology and worship of the Church of England over-enthusiasm and excess.

<sup>142</sup> J. R. Graves, *The Great Iron Wheel: Or Republicanism Backwards and Christianity Reversed* (Nashville, TN: Graves and Marks, 1855), 19-33. This precipitated the work in return, William Gannaway Brownlow, *The Great Iron Wheel Examined: or It's False Spokes Extracted, and an Exhibition of Elder Graves, its builder.* (Nashville, TN: 1856).

<sup>143</sup> “Methodism by Inskip,” *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South*, 7, no. 1 (Louisville, KY: July 1853), 100. The work being reviewed was by English-born and Northern Methodist minister John Inskip, *Methodism Explained and Defended* (Cincinnati, OH: H. S & J. Applegate, 1851).

<sup>144</sup> This was a primary concern of the essays issued under Thomas O. Summers ed., *Methodist Pamphlets for the People in Vol I* (Nashville, TN: E Stevenson & F. A. Owen, 1857), which is a defense of the ecclesiology of the Methodist church against the charge it only began with Wesley.

<sup>145</sup> *The Southern Methodist Almanac: For the Year of Our Lord 1855, And the Seventy-Ninth of American Independence*

church, which comes from the heritage of all who had sincere piety and faith in Christ. Similarly, the *Southern Methodist Pulpit*, edited by the North Carolina minister Charles Deems and intended to showcase the best Methodist preaching in the South, demonstrates the role history played by the denomination. Works of the latest history were reviewed, the contemporary history of the denomination was recorded, and the Christian past was used to legitimize Methodism as something old rather than new.<sup>146</sup>

Yet the Southern Methodists did not just feel the need to defend themselves against the attack of being a recent invention as a Methodist body; they also had the added issue of defending themselves more specifically as the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Thus, the history produced and consumed in the South tended towards defending this newly formed denomination and creating a historical identity for it, building up the Southern Methodists' appreciation for their own past within the South without encouraging too radical a rupture with what had proceeded it. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church South*, first published after the split in 1845, contained a historical preamble that placed the Southern Methodist Church in line with the original beginnings of Methodism as a church that existed to be used by God to extend his kingdom over the North American continent.<sup>147</sup> In the body of the text, which functioned as the doctrinal standards and constitution of the church, the first heads related the origins of Methodism in America, which was, in the compiler's opinion, a legally and correctly constituted Episcopacy descending from the legitimate authority to perform the task of ordination given to Dr. Coke by John Wesley in 1784.<sup>148</sup> The second is similarly a matter-of-fact narrative of the legally acceptable and authoritative act of separation that occurred in 1845 to form the Southern and Northern branches of the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>149</sup>

The split had occurred over statements regarding the propriety of a Bishop of the Southern Methodist Church owning slaves. James Osgood Andrew, a native of Georgia, had been elected to serve as a Bishop in 1832, but controversy erupted in the denomination when it emerged in the 1840s that he owned enslaved people. Since Methodist Bishops were not diocesan but had jurisdiction over the whole country, there was a concern that Osgood Andrew could not fulfill his episcopal duties with

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(Nashville, TN: Stevenson & Owen, 1855), especially, 14,16,20,22.

<sup>146</sup> Charles F. Deems ed., *Southern Methodist Pulpit Vol I. 1848-9*. (Richmond, VA: C. M. Wynn, 1849); and Joseph Cross "Enoch: A Discourse on the Death of Bishop Bascom," *Southern Methodist Pulpit* 4, no.1-2 (April May 1851): 72, where the preacher links Paul, Luther, Wesley, and Bascom in a line of renowned men whose name will be remembered long after Cesar and Washington are forgotten.

<sup>147</sup> *Doctrine and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal South* (Nashville, TN: Stevenson & Owen, 1854).

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 7-9.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, 9-12.

authority in Northern areas that had a significant population of anti-slavery Methodists.<sup>150</sup> The issue came to a head in 1844, and a separation between the Northern and Southern branches was enacted in 1845. Almost as soon as the ink was dry on that agreement, the writing of "histories" of the division began so that the correct narrative of events could be preserved for posterity. In the first general conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, held in Petersburg, Virginia, in May 1846, Bishop Joshua Soule delivered an address on the denomination founding that related the historical build-up to the split.<sup>151</sup> He viewed it as a legally legitimate separation and would still consider the North as brethren but with no jurisdiction in the South. The *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South*, founded to be a voice for the new denomination in distinction to the existing Northern journals, summarized the feeling of the church in its first edition. It was argued that the Southern Methodists had the correct legal position, and the North effectively refused to allow their case and hounded them out of the denomination.<sup>152</sup>

The Louisville convention of 1845 requested that the editors of the *South-Western Christian Advocate* should undertake a history of the founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The result was the publication of *The History of the Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church South*, which was rushed to the press and issued the very same year. The second half of the title was illuminating; it ran *Comprehending all the Official Proceedings of the General Conference, The Southern Annual Conferences, and The General Convention, with Such Other Matters as are Necessary to a Right Understanding of the Case* (my emphasis).<sup>153</sup> The work was intended as the first volley in the battle to decide whose version of events would go down in history as the real cause for the separation of the church. The volume began with a history of Methodist attitudes to race, admitting that it had been a subject of "great perplexity" for the Methodist Church. The editors concluded that

"Had the Church followed the example of Christ and his Apostles in this respect, and left the gospel, in the exercise of its inherent energies, to work out its legitimate results on the civil relations and moral duties of society, the effect would probably have been much more beneficial on all the nation involved, than it has been by pursuing an

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<sup>150</sup> Goen, *Broken Churches Broken Nation*, 83.

<sup>151</sup> Joshua Soule, "Pastoral Address," *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South Vol. I, 1846* (Nashville, TN: A. H. Redford, 1846), 104-118.

<sup>152</sup> "Thoughts on the True Position of the Methodist Episcopal Church, North and South," *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South*, 1, no. 4 (October 1847): 610-623.

<sup>153</sup> *The History of the Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church South: Comprehending all the official proceedings of the General Conference, The Southern Annual Conferences, and The General Convention, with such other matters as are necessary to a right understanding of the case* (Nashville, TN: William Cameron, 1845).

opposite course of policy.”<sup>154</sup>

In effect, the authors of the history accused the Northern Methodist Church of departing from the true spirit of the early church and abandoning the historical qualities that made Methodism such a powerful force in the country.<sup>155</sup> This view was echoed by Henry Bascom, later to become a Bishop of the Southern Methodist Church, who narrated his version of events in his book, *Methodism and Slavery*, in which he argued that, while anti-slavery sentiment had existed in early Methodism, the wisdom of the church had come to a compromise. Slavery was an issue over which Methodists could disagree and pro-slavery Methodism was a legitimate expression of the tradition. The Northern Methodists were then accused of breaking with the conservative spirit of the compromise and pressing an issue they should have left alone.<sup>156</sup>

With the split taking place, the Southern Methodists attempted to build up a historical consciousness for themselves that linked Methodist identity to Southern identity. The *Annals of Southern Methodism* was one such enterprise. Compiled by Rev Charles F. Deems of North Carolina, it primarily consisted of facts, figures, and statistics of the various conferences and churches. Deems believed himself to be collating the information for future historians rather than writing history himself.<sup>157</sup> But the volume included notices of dead ministers, a slow building up of an impression of the church in the specific locality of the South, and a reinforcing of the feeling that the activity of God in this denomination was a particular work quite apart from that which was taking place in the North. The *Annals* also included a historical sketch of Methodism in Charleston, penned by Rev. F. A. Mood, initially for the *Southern Christian Advocate*, now expanded and later published as its own work.<sup>158</sup> It began by narrating the visits of John Wesley and George Whitfield, the two most famous pioneers of

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, V.

<sup>155</sup> The Northern Methodist Episcopal Church decided, at their general convention in 1848, to pursue a similar line of action in writing their own version of a history, which took slightly longer to publish and came out in 1855. The result was Rev. Charles Elliott's account, which was tellingly entitled *History of the Great Secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1845*. He, too, saw slavery as the deciding issue upon which the church disagreed, so to fulfill his mandate of a history of the split began by publishing a work on the sinfulness of slavery as necessary to understand the course of action taken by the Northern States. Charles Elliott, *History of the Great Secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Year 1845, Eventuating in the Organization of the New Church, Entitled the Methodist Episcopal Church South* (Cincinnati, OH: Swormstedt & Poe, 1855).

<sup>156</sup> Henry Bidleman Bascom, *Methodism and Slavery: With Other Matters in Controversy Between North and South; Being a Review of the Manifesto of the Majority, IN Reply to the Protest of the Minority, of the Late General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the Case of Bishop Andrew* (Frankfort, KY: Hodges, Todd & Pruit, 1845), 5, 10.

<sup>157</sup> Charles F. Deems ed., *Annals of Southern Methodism for the Year 1855* (New York: J. A. Grays, 1855), V.

<sup>158</sup> F. A. Mood, *Methodism in Charleston: A Narrative of the Chief Events Relating to the Rise and the Progress of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., With Brief Notices of the Early Ministers who Labored in that City* (Nashville, TN: E. Stevenson, 1856).



Methodism, to Charleston. It is with palpable excitement that Mood relates this information and places the Southern states at the center of the activity of the very founders of Methodism, stopping only short of calling it a Southern religion. The Course of Methodism was then charted in minute detail with evident affection and belief in the correctness, soundness, and courage of those involved in its spreading.<sup>159</sup>

As in other traditions, biography was considered best suited for building up the Methodist Episcopal Church South's historical identity. The very first volume of the *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* presented some *Thoughts as to Biography as a Grounds for the History of the Church*, believing that such a project would have clear and describable benefits to the church asking "it is well worth while to inquire, ...whether we may not profit occasionally by becoming students of the past? - in times of doctrinal or moral strife, individuals it is who God uses."<sup>160</sup> Yet, for the author, the past was an age to look back to with gratefulness and slight sadness as "in many respects, it would be well for the church to have such a ministry as she had forty or fifty years ago." The author desired that "their history should be recovered and preserved."<sup>161</sup> The example of these lives could then be what spurred readers on to faithful service in their day.

This was the charge taken up by the prolific English-born author and editor Thomas O. Summers, who in 1858 published his *Biographical Sketches of Eminent Itinerant Ministers, Within the Bounds of the Methodist Episcopal Church South*. In a similar vein to those we have seen from the Episcopal and Baptist pens, Summers was convinced that "going back to the heroic age of American Methodism and tracing its rise and progress, as connected with the operations of its venerable pioneers in the South...[would] be of no small value."<sup>162</sup> His reference to the past as a golden age did not mean that the time in which he wrote was considered lost and degenerate. Rather, it had the potential to recover the status of former years and become a resurgent age of glories like the past had been. He, too, wished to set up the future historian with the elements and pieces with which to construct the edifice of an entire history of the Methodist Episcopal Church South that would accurately reflect its piety, holiness, zeal, and Godly character of its ministers. One such Minister was Joseph Travers. His autobiography appeared at the presses in 1855. The work had the subtitle *Embracing a Succinct History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South: Particularly in Part of Western Virginia, The Carolinas,*

<sup>159</sup> Deems *Annals*, 235-236.

<sup>160</sup> "Thoughts as to Biography as a ground of history of the Church," *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* 1, no. 3 (October 1847): 420.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, 421.

<sup>162</sup> Thomas O. Summers, *Biographical Sketches of Eminent Itinerant Ministers, Within the Bounds of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* (Nashville, TN: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1859), viii.

*Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi*, and it also contained memoirs of *Several Local Preachers*. Travers's view of the history of Southern Methodism can be illustrated by his narrative of the progress of Methodism in Georgetown in SC, where he says, "Methodism had to struggle hard to get a foothold in Georgetown. The opposition originated from the plain and pointed truths which generally marked our ministry."<sup>163</sup> In doing so, he lay claim to the old cry of persecution while, at the same time, stating that when the Methodist Church progressed in an area, it was due to the simplicity the purity of the gospel preached, affecting the resident population. If it did not progress or take a foothold in a particular region, it was because people did not like the pure and sincere preaching of the gospel. In effect, progress and hardship in the church both became a sign of the correctness of its message and thus vindicated the church's existence.

### *Scotch-Irish Presbyterians in the Anglo-Saxon South*

The course of Episcopalian, Baptist, and Methodist history primarily ran through the English experience. Presbyterianism, however, had originated in the Scottish Reformation, where the existing church had been reformed to a greater extent than the Church of England. The Presbyterian form of church government had then spread its influence over the Northern counties of Ireland in the seventeenth century. Thus, when Presbyterians looked back to their history, it was inextricably linked to ideas about the Scotch-Irish people. Often categories of religion, ethnicity, and politics were melded together interchangeably to form an identity that was at once Presbyterian, Scotch-Irish, and fiercely republican. This positive image of Scotch-Irish heritage emerged at a time when Anglo-Saxonism dominated American and Southern culture, which was occasionally further complicated by a distinction between Norman and Saxon or a linking to Cavalier and Puritan differences. In this climate, Presbyterian historians asserted Scotch-Irish as a historical ethnic identity that they claimed contained the elements and characteristics for all that was good in the American political system and were ultimately responsible for the settlement of the American continent. The traits necessary for this contribution to America originated in Scottish and Scotch-Irish historical, religious, and political experiences. For Presbyterian historians, the category of Scotch-Irish in particular, and the constituent parts of Irish and Scottish, were identities to be honored, praised, and claimed as truly embodying the

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<sup>163</sup> Tomas O Summers ed., *Autobiography of the Rev. Joseph Travis, A.M. A member of the Methodist Annual Conference, Embracing a Succinct History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South: Particularly in Part of Western Virginia, The Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. With Short Memoirs of Several Local Preachers and an Address to His Friends* (Nashville, TN: E. Stevenson, 1855), 87.

spirit of Godly religion and republican freedom, in effect rehabilitating Irish, Scottish, and Scotch-Irish as racial categories.

However, the most extensive works of Presbyterian history were not penned by someone of Scotch-Irish descent. Originally from Connecticut, Henry Foote spent his entire career in Virginia in various pastoral positions, and his history is an extended glorification of the Scotch-Irish people. His work as an agent for Hampden and Sydney College required extensive travel in North Carolina, where he spent time in Presbyterian congregations gathering information and inspiration for his *Sketches of North Carolina* (1846). It was warmly reviewed in the pages of the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, where the reviewer found the chief importance of the work to be “the consideration given to the Scotch Irish element in the original population in this country.” It was intended to be more than an ecclesiastical history, yet the book was effectively a chronicle of the Presbyterianism of North Carolina told through accounts of various presbyteries, synods, and congregations. Foote conceived of the history of North Carolina as entwined with that of Presbyterianism, so he viewed the history of Scotland and Ireland as the prequels to North Carolinian history. He devoted multiple chapters to the history of Presbyterianism in Ireland and the establishment of colonies in Ulster before subsequent Scotch-Irish emigration to North Carolina. It was part of his overall intention of showing that the freedoms enjoyed by citizens of North Carolina in his day grew out of the experiences and beliefs of the Scotch-Irish of centuries past, for whom religious and political ideas were in constant dialogue. He stated of the Scotch-Irish, "Their religious principles swayed their political opinions; and in maintaining their forms of worship, and their creed, they learned the rudiments of republicanism before they emigrated to America."

Foote also narrated the ministry of some of the first Presbyterians to preach in Ulster, commenting that in those early years, "the church in Ireland became as famous for a spirit of revival, as the emigration had been for indifference to all religious concerns." He referred to this revival of the 1620s as "one of the most signal on record in the Protestant church." His narrative of the growth of Irish Presbyterianism set up the character of the Scotch-Irish as one of fervent religiosity and deep piety that would later be important in their impact on North Carolina. Foote considered that the years of persecution and spiritual blessing in Ulster were integral to the development of the Scotch Irish as a people so they could, in the fullness of time, bring their principles to fruition in the new world. He recalled, "These people had advanced far in the knowledge of human rights...They were already republicans." Then went on to recount how “Strict discipline in morals, were connected with the

Presbyterian body in Scotland; were transplanted to Ireland, there cherished, and were the foundation principles on which their society was built; were taken to America by the emigrants, and have been characteristic of the Scotch-Irish settlements throughout the land."

Foote was pleased to retell how not only had the Scotch-Irish come to North Carolina but also the proud "harassed Highlanders," the most beloved of "races" in the early nineteenth century thanks to the overwhelming popularity of Walter Scot's Novels. This allowed him to opine upon the nature of the republicanism of those immigrants which he so admired; he was at pains to state that

"The Scotch, never, in the land of their fathers, or in the United States of America, have been inclined to radicalism, or the prostration of all law. They have held that tyranny and usurpation may be set aside by force; that, in extreme cases, revolution by force is the natural right of man; not a revolution to throw down authority, and give license to passion, but a revolution to first principles, and to the unalienable rights of man. On these principles, they formed their various Covenants."

This was a re-reading of Southern concerns back into the Scottish past in order to glorify and bolster present attitudes. Foote linked his narrative of the past to the present reader by concluding, "These great principles the Scotch brought with them to America; they are still held by their descendants."

Foote followed up his success with a second volume dedicated to Sketches of Virginia. Which was warmly reviewed for The Southern Literary Messenger by fellow Presbyterian and historian John Boccock who suggested that since it was primarily "A sketch of the rise and progress of religious liberty in Virginia, as connected with the instrumentality of the Presbyterians," that is what, "it might as well have been called." Many of the same themes from his earlier work can be found in this history, although, considering the different historical settlement patterns of Virginia, Foote had to carve out a place for the Scotch Irish in a way that factored in the English, Anglo-Saxon elements already at play in the colony. He wrote that the immigrants from Northern Ireland filled Virginia with a "Peculiar race," and it was the influence of that race that made "Virginia what she is." He argued that

"The civil liberty of the English scion was the liberty of Englishmen, of the national Church, in England, — the liberty of King, Lords and Commons, ... The Scotch Irish man thought freedom of person, — the right of possession of property in fee simple, — and an open road to civil honors, secured to the poorest and feeblest member of society, constituted civil liberty."

Foote admitted that he had missed some of the most formative experiences the Scotch-Irish

underwent in his first volume on North Carolina, so he included them in his work on Virginia. In particular, he described the siege of Derry in 1689, which he recalled with details of the heroic defiance shown by the Presbyterian members of that city, the exacting deprivations they endured, and the fortitude shown throughout. He saw this as a testing ground for later success in America, stating, "The principles in exercise at Derry, were the principles to fit men for subduing a wilderness, and building a State, where there should be no king, no state religion." Foote valorized the religion of the Scottish-Irish, hardiness was prized, and manliness was promoted. A decade before the Civil War commenced, Foote was fusing militarism with piety. It was a masculine vision of Christianity derived from racial categories proven in historical circumstances that he was encouraging his contemporary Presbyterians to live up to.

Foote brought his history up to the current day by narrating the controversies which led to the Old School New School split within the Presbyterian Church. It was not a direct regional split as the Methodists and Baptists would later undergo, but the New School was a majority Northern party, and the Old School enjoyed a majority in the South. Foote located the causes of the controversy in errors originating in Northern presbyteries, a view supported by narratives of the heresy trials of Northern ministers such as Albert Barnes and Nathaniel Taylor. The geographical divisions were also shown by the fact that many Presbyterians in Virginia wanted and expected the split to take place along North-South lines. The division itself was also argued in historical terms, with controversy being described as comparable to the Reformation and errant Northern theories regarding original sin compared to those advanced in the early church by Pelagius and occurring throughout the church's history from Cassian onward. The very names Old School and New School indicate how history and historic identity functioned during the debate. Foote regarded the Old School as the traditional party and the one most fitting for Southern men, whereas the New School was presented as peddlers of innovation and infidelity to Presbyterian principles. The theological and ecclesiastical error were the main reasons given for the split, but Foote mentioned slavery as another crucial factor, which underlined the regional differences felt by the parties and continued up until the Civil War when the Old School would split along North-South lines.

In 1849 the Synod of South Carolina commissioned George Howe, professor of biblical languages at Columbia Theological Seminary, to write a history of Presbyterianism in the state of South Carolina. The final results of his research would not be published until after the Civil War in the form of the extensive *History of the Presbyterian Church In South Carolina* (1867). However, the first fruits

of this endeavor appeared as an article in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, *The Early History of Presbyterianism in South Carolina*, followed by a more detailed lecture delivered at the General Assembly in New Orleans in 1858. These early forays evinced all the glorifying of the Scotch-Irish as Foote's work had done, which would only be intensified in Howe's second address, *The Scotch Irish*, delivered in 1861 to the Nazareth Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and published separately and in the pages of the *Southern Presbyterian Review*. He pushed the pre-history of South Carolinian Presbyterianism back further past the settlements of Ulster to the Reformation in Scotland but also had praise for the Huguenots, who were responsible for the first to attempt a settlement in the Carolinas as far back as the 1500s and arrived in significant numbers during the convulsions following the repealing of the edict of Nantes in the 1680s. For Howe, the key fact of the history he wished to tell was that Presbyterianism had been handed down from the apostles themselves, and from whichever stream it flowed into South Carolina, all shared an “instinct, with love of freedom and hatred of oppression, and disciplined in the school of persecution and suffering.”

Howe believed that the Presbyterian church and the Scotch-Irish, in particular, were the source of the principles of American liberty, commenting that, “Her traducers are indebted to her more than they know, for constitutional law, representative government and freedom from oppression.” He linked the religious principles held by Presbyterians to those they held regarding politics by declaring of the Presbyterian church that “if she learned, on European shores, the idea of 'a Church without a Bishop,' she has finished her lesson on these shores in the idea of 'a State without a King.’” This view of Presbyterian history very quickly became a very militant version of Christianity; for example, he commented that “our own has been pre-eminently a witnessing and a wrestling church,” and “has watered the soil of many lands with the blood of her sons and daughters.” He gloried in the contention Presbyterians made for “Christ's covenant and crown” and the martyrs that were made for that cause. He believed contemplating these episodes of persecution and struggle in history was necessary for his contemporary time. Regarding the history of Presbyterianism prior to its arrival on the North American continent, he commented, “Our own history cannot be truly understood till we understand theirs.” He wanted his audience to “cherish their memories, and to strengthen [themselves] in our love of truth and hatred of wrong by their example.” It is not hard to extrapolate who he felt was espousing the wrong that he wished his fellow Southern Presbyterians to hate from such statements. In a prescient passage, he envisioned the potential of oncoming conflict in the country, stating, “Whether our own country continues to present the spectacle of a united, prospering people which - may God grant! - or is divided

into many and rival nations, there will still be a holy seed.” It was clear from his history where that holy seed would be found.

### *Conclusion*

In the antebellum period, Southern ministers were producing histories for the consumption of their various denominations. They told stories of their origins, their arrival in America, the opposition they faced, the growth they experienced, and the faithfulness they displayed. These works emphasized God's guiding hand, providence, and ability to overcome obstacles to extend his kingdom. In doing so, forebears were valorized and turned into heroes of the faith; even the plain and lowly uneducated ministers of Methodism or Baptist traditions grew in stature to unassailable giants of piety and holiness. This was not necessarily unique to the South but has frequently been a mainstay of Christian historiography. Yet, in the context of growing regional consciousness and increased North-South antagonism, the attitudes and values promoted in these histories tended towards reinforcing a conservative Southern identity. When the Civil War broke out, it was a simple rhetorical trick to turn narratives about the bravery and the faithfulness of one set of group identities based on a shared history and expand that to the country as a whole.

Each denomination had different emphases, although common themes emerged. All highlighted faithfulness to the gospel; all claimed to be the first and most important adherents to the cause for liberty in the American Revolution, all claiming themselves to be those directly responsible for the beliefs and principles behind it. All sought to show they had experienced oppression or opposition and had struggled to exercise their religion despite this fact. This shared set of values made the identities shaped more easily transferable or expandable. For instance, constructing Northern interference in the expansion of slavery as "opposition" or "oppression," especially when Northern ministers were arguing for the sinfulness of slavery, resonated with all four – Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and even Episcopalian – because each one of them had made the experience of persecution central to their historic religious identity. Yet, despite this, differences emerged. Methodists were concerned with showing the historicity of their denomination and maintaining the correctness of their split from the Northern churches. Baptists were concerned with tracing the trail of blood and the simplicity of the Baptist doctrine through the ages wherever it occurred. Presbyterians sought to offer the racially

charged South a new category of decedents to aspire to, that of the Scotch-Irish, truly Protestant, reformed, liberty-loving, and demonstrably apostolic all in one. Finally, the Episcopal Church attempted to place itself within acceptable evangelical piety. It freed itself from misconceptions and untruths about its status as an established church during the colonial period. It was enjoying the blessing of recent growth, just as the other denominations were. Each of these priorities offers us a window into Christians' self-consciousness in the antebellum period, and while they are not of necessity identities that were constructed in opposition to the North expressly, although occasionally this is in the background, each narrative requires an "other," each identity requires an actor against which to be contrasted, against which to resist, against which to be proven pure, faithful and righteous. This position of the "other" could and would be filled by "The North" when the time came.



## Chapter Two: Church History in Southern Seminaries

In his extensive account of *Religion in America*, the Northern Presbyterian minister Robert Baird recorded that eight seminaries were operating in the Southern States of America in 1840 in contrast to twenty-eight in the Northern States. He also reported that the largest seminaries were located in the North, with Andover boasting 153 students and Princeton 111. In comparison, Virginia Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, the South's most well-attended seminary, had 67 students. In the end, this seminary proved to be a short-lived institution. It became a liberal arts college not long after Baird's survey, as did two other theological seminaries he listed. The remaining Southern seminaries ranged between 8 and 43 pupils.<sup>164</sup> This difference between the North and South with regard to theological education is reflected in scholarship, which generally gives little or no attention to Southern seminaries in the antebellum period. Classic works on theological education in nineteenth-century America, such as the seminal work by Glenn Miller, *Piety, and Intellect*, skim over the Southern institutions with little comment, and recent scholarship, which has globalized the experience of theological education, focuses solely on Northern seminaries.<sup>165</sup> The literature on Southern seminaries is restricted to a handful of institutional histories and biographies, which, useful as they are, lack an attempt to integrate the work and life of the seminary into larger themes and topics important to the historian of Southern history or American church history as expressed in its Southern context.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Originally intended to aid European Christians on the continent to understand the state of the Church in America, Baird's work was also published in England and then in America after some revision. Robert Baird, *Religion in America, or an Account of, the Origin, Progress, Relation to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1844), 164-165.

<sup>165</sup> Glenn Miller *Piety and Intellect: The Purposes and Aims of Ante-Bellum Theological Education* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990); Robert L. Kelly, *Theological Education in America: A Study of One Hundred and Sixty-One Schools in the United States and Canada* (New York: Doran, 1924); also the classic bibliographic work Heather Day, *Protestant Theological Education in America: A Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985) reflects this reality, as does Natalie A. Naylor, "The Theological Seminary in the Configuration of American Higher Education: The Ante-Bellum Years," *History of Education Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1977): 17-30. For work placing American Theological education in international contexts, see especially Annette G. Aubert, *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and Zachary Purvis, "Transatlantic Textbooks: Karl Hagenbach, Shared Interests, and German Academic Theology in Nineteenth-Century America." *Church History* 83, no. 3 (September 2014): 650-83; Joshua Bennett, "August Neander and the Religion of History in the Nineteenth-Century 'Priesthood of Letters,'" *The Historical Journal* 63, no. 3 (February 2020): 633-59.

<sup>166</sup> See William Sweester, *A Copious Fountain: A History of Union Presbyterian Seminary, 1812-2012* (Louisville MO: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), and "Biblical Interpretation, Race, and Union Presbyterian Seminary," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 75, no. 1 (January 2021): 44-55. Erskine Clark, *To Count Our Days: A History of Columbia Theological Seminary* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2019); David B. Calhoun, *Our Southern Zion: Old Columbia Seminary (1828-1929)* (Philadelphia: Banner of Truth, 2012); Louis Cossitte LaMotte, *Colored Light: The Story of the Influence of Columbia Theological Seminary, 1828-1936* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publishing, 1937); Gregory A. Willis, *Southern Baptist Seminary 1859-2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) William Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* (Nashville, TN:

Scholarship on the discipline of church history, more specifically within theological education, tends to revolve around three figures active in the North, each innovative in their historical method and influential in importing new historical ideas into the American mainstream, Philip Schaff, Henry Boynton Smith, and W.G.T. Shedd.<sup>167</sup> The most in-depth treatment of the study and teaching of church history in the antebellum period, *Founding the Fathers*, by Elizabeth Clark, charts the establishment of church history as an academic discipline within theological seminaries, yet she focuses entirely on Northern institutions, which means that the diversity that emerges when Southern seminaries are considered is overlooked.<sup>168</sup> Similarly, Paul Gutacker, Zachary Purvis, and Joshua Bennett have emphasized the use by seminaries in the United States of the most recent international scholarship as textbooks yet exclusively focus on Northern seminaries.<sup>169</sup> However, seminaries in the South were arguably quicker than some in the North to enshrine the teaching of church history in their curricula.<sup>170</sup> A closer look at these seminaries shows that teachers and professors of church history interacted with the scholarship of Schaff, Boynton, and Shedd, used the same textbooks as they did, and were also shaped by intellectual currents from Germany and the United Kingdom. However, this interaction was filtered through Southern Conservative confessionalism and primitivist biblicism, meaning that the historical thinking in Southern seminaries was less innovative, and new ideas were received only sporadically and with qualification and reservation.<sup>171</sup>

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Broadman Press, 1959); William A. R. Goodwin, *History of the Virginia Theological Seminary in Virginia and its Historical Background* (New York: DuBoise Press, 1923); John E. Booty, *Mission and Ministry: A History of the Virginia Theological Seminary* (Alexandria: Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1995); and Joseph Constant, *No Turning Back: A History of the Virginia Theological Seminary* (Alexandria, VA: Evergreen Press, 2009).

<sup>167</sup> George Shriver, *Philip Schaff: Christian Scholar and Ecumenical Prophet* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007); Gary K. Pranger, *Philip Schaff (1819–1893): Portrait of an Immigrant Theologian* (Swiss American Historical Society Publications, 1997); Stephen R. Graham, *Cosmos in the Chaos: Philip Schaff's Interpretation of Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (Michigan, MI: Eerdmans, 1995); George H. Shriver, "Philip Schaff and Teacher of Church History," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985) 47, no. 1 (1969): 74–92. Thomas Albert, "Philip Schaff: Religion, Politics, and the Transatlantic World," *Journal of Church and State* 49, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 191–210. For Smith, see especially Annette G. Aubert, "Henry Boynton Smith and Church History in Nineteenth-Century America," *Church History* 85, no. 2 (2016): 302–27. For Shedd, see Cushing Strout's "Faith and History: The Mind of William G. T. Shedd," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 15, no. 1 (January 1954): 153–62. and Henry Warner Bowden, "W. G. T. Shedd and A. C. McGiffert on the Development of Doctrine," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985) 49, no. 3 (1971): 246–65.

<sup>168</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

<sup>169</sup> Gutacker, *Old Faith in the New Nation*.

<sup>170</sup> Elizabeth Clark quotes Philip Schaff as saying that as late as 1889, regarding church history, "Some seminaries still have no professor of the subject." *Founding the Fathers*, 10. See Walter Conser, *God and the Natural World: Religion and Science in Antebellum America* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 38 for the slow emergence of church history professorships in the North. In contrast, the institutions surveyed here in the South each provided for the teaching of church history with a professorship early and consistently, notwithstanding a handful of years of gaps for time to fill absent positions.

<sup>171</sup> An excellent exploration of the role of religious history in developing the practice of history and liberalism in the United

Walter Conser has compared confessional theologians from America, Britain, and Germany in the early nineteenth century and argued that in each case, changing socioeconomic and cultural forces in the surrounding society fueled the desire of conservative Christians to create emotionally steady ties to the past and emphasize continuity through confessionalism.<sup>172</sup> His American examples are taken from the North, but the same can be said of Southern church historians. The rapid expansion of the slave economy, when experienced in tandem with the growing antipathy towards slavery, resulted in uncertainty and temporal discomfort, which catalyzed conservative historical interest. The inclusion of church history on the curriculum of Southern seminaries underlines the fact that the Southern churches considered knowledge of church history necessary to preserve orthodoxy as it had been handed on through time. It was felt to be of utmost necessity for the ministers of the gospel, men who would be leading their congregations, denominations, and communities, to be well versed in the church's past generally and especially their particular tradition within it. Southern clergy felt that this knowledge would aid in combating heresy, maintaining orthodoxy, and ensuring that error and change did not creep into the church or permeate society. Each of these uses of history had particular manifestations in the slaveholding South with its growing sense of alienation from the North.<sup>173</sup>

The seminaries presented their students with particular narratives of history, which placed Southern denominations in direct continuity with the past. However, for a church culture that placed a

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Kingdom. See Joshua Bennett, *God and Progress: Religion and History in British Intellectual Culture, 1845–1914*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). Although covering a later period, the early discussion of the influences from the mid-nineteenth century is also very helpful Peter Hinchcliffe, *God and History: Aspects of British Theology 1875–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). The same is true of Kirby, *Historians and The Church of England*, Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuett to Newman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957). For the relationship between German theology, church history, and the development of the practice of history, see Thomas Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W.M.L De Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>172</sup> Walter H. Conser, *Church and Confession: Conservative Theologians in Germany, England and America, 1815-1866* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984)

<sup>173</sup> The founding of the Southern Seminaries must also be seen as taking place against the backdrop of ongoing educational debates in the United States; ideas of denominational education and the proper place for ministerial training were rampant in the antebellum years in both the North and the South. Brian Robinson, *The Popular Education Question in Antebellum South Carolina, 1800-1860* Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia, University of South Carolina, 2018. Also, Joe L. Kincheloe, “The Battle for the Antebellum Southern Colleges: The Evangelicals vs. The Calvinists in Tennessee,” *Journal of Thought* 18, no. 3 (Fall, 1983): 119–33. David Komline, *The Common School Awakening: Religion and the Transatlantic Roots of American Public Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Terry Stoops *Engrossing the Education of the Country: John Holt Rice, Presbyterianism and Educational Competition in the South, 1777-1831* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 2010) The southern denominations set up multiple universities, female seminaries and even oversaw high-schools as well. This focus on education as universal need not be seen as a repudiation of tradition, history, and hierarchy. Instead, the education of well-informed elite members of society could be firmly rooted in conservative principles, as was the case with the Southern denominations. Specifically, in the case of the seminaries, in order to produce the gentlemen theologians that moved in the elite circles of Southern society, it was requisite that they have a high level of historical knowledge in order to command full respect and intellectual dominance in the public sphere.

high premium on such continuity, the study of church history presented problems. The decades of the antebellum period saw increased debates over the "development of doctrine" as an increased historical consciousness among scholars forced Christians to grapple with the reality that the teaching of the church had changed significantly over the past nineteen-hundred years. Teachers of church history in the South attempted to address this issue while maintaining the ultimate authority of scripture and, as a result, forged a view of church history whereby innovations, which they observed in the North, were considered evidence of the development of error. Other trends in the practice of history also affected the thought of the Southern seminary professors, such as the twin advances emanating mainly from Germany but also, to a lesser extent, Britain, romanticism, and historicism.<sup>174</sup> Southern church history professors, particularly Presbyterians, rejected and accepted parts of these new ideas without systematic coherence. The organic metaphor for time, central to Romantic thought, as opposed to Enlightenment mechanical metaphors, found ready reception, as did the idea that nations or people groups contain characteristics or essential traits that contribute to history's progress. However, the insight of historicism that each period must be understood in its historical context as a time distinct and different from others had two controversial implications which Southern ministers could not accept. First, if the insights of historicism were applied consistently and coherently, then historical eras could only be judged by their own standards, and second, the ability to draw lessons from them would be severely limited.<sup>175</sup> However, Southern church historians wanted to pass judgment on the past and learn from it, so they rejected and argued against these tendencies in the new historical learning.

Underlying this response to new historical learning was the Southern theologian's commitment to primitivist biblicism. They had high regard for history but only when subordinated to the primacy of the Bible in all matters of doctrine, belief, and practice. It could not be countenanced to believe that there had been any development in the church that was contrary to the plain meaning of scripture. It

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<sup>174</sup> For some of the developments in the practice of history during the nineteenth century, see the helpful overview in Paul Hamilton *Historicism* (London: Routledge, 1996) and its relation to Christian thought in David Bebbington, *Patterns in History: A Christian View* (Illinois: Inter-varsity Press, 1979). Older but still valuable for grasping the subtlety of the changes from historian to historian within the movement are Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism, The Rise of a New Historical Outlook* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) and R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1946).

<sup>175</sup> Chris R. Vanden Bossche sums up the issue well: "Enlightenment historians tended to single out as superior eras in which progress toward reason (defined in eighteenth-century terms) was most manifest. Eras that did not appear to progress toward reason were ignored or condemned. The new German, or romantic, philosophy of history sought a way to understand these past eras without judging them by its own standard of rationality. It contended that reason, too, had a history and that past cultural practices and beliefs must be evaluated not by the standards of the present but by the standards of the eras that produced them. History was still philosophy, but in a way different from what it had been for the Enlightenment historians. Rather than a contrast between a reasonable present and an irrational past, history would show the unfolding of reason over time and its evolution towards and beyond the present." *Thomas Carlyle: Historical Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), xx-xxi.

was held that the Bible had been given as God's final and authoritative revelation in a pure and accessible form. Eras of the church that deviated from this or obscured the simplicity of the gospel, such as the Roman Catholic Church of Medieval Europe, were, therefore, interpreted as in error, incorrect, and criticized. The idea of the pure original faith of the New Testament church meant that there was little actual acknowledgment of a development of doctrine but rather a development of understanding the riches of scripture. The development of doctrine, in reality, was described as the development of error and corruption. These views directly impacted, and indeed were reinforced by, the social structures of Southern slavery. Defending slavery required a plain reading of scripture and a refusal to accept any argument based on a development in Christian responsibility to enslaved peoples. Anti-slavery arguments, when resting upon an enlarged view of the spirit of the Bible's trajectory towards freedom or liberty, were quickly viewed as another example of the development of corruption in the church, for which Southern church historians found ample historical precedent.

The importance of these discussions in the institutions of the South is derived from the impact that the leading figures of these seminaries had on Southern culture. Multiple teachers at Southern seminaries could rightly be described as public intellectuals.<sup>176</sup> The view of history which underlay the Christian view of the Confederacy and the Civil War developed out of ideas and notions that were fully visible and under discussion in seminary classrooms around the South by men who enjoyed public voices. Moreover, the teaching of history shaped the minds that went to war and contributed to the war effort from the pulpit through the training in rhetoric and polemics received at these institutions. Church history was widely deployed to enhance one's appreciation for one's own position; debates over church polity, government, worship, and theological positions were all debated and hotly contended with historical examples and an overarching view of the concept of history that placed that particular construction of Christianity on center stage. It was no significant jump when the war commenced to translate much of these techniques and even some of their views into polemic and historical arguments for the Confederacy against the Union. The polemic could be expanded from narrow denominational differences or theological arguments to differences over national character and destiny.

I will examine church history as taught at the Presbyterian seminaries of Columbia and Union, the Episcopal Virginia Theological Seminary, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.<sup>177</sup> By

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<sup>176</sup> Erskine Clark, "Southern Nationalism and Columbia Theological Seminary," *American Presbyterians* 66, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 123–33.

<sup>177</sup> Methodists did not set up a seminary in the South during the antebellum period. This has more to do with ideas of the ministry and need not be seen as a rejection of history, tradition, or the need for historical knowledge and specific use of history. Methodists did engage in forming historical identities and were prolific in setting up schools and universities in the antebellum period. See the article by Methodists William Jacob Sasnett and Thomas Osmond Summers, *Progress*:

appreciating the role the teaching of history had at these institutions, the sort of history that was taught, and what theories regarding history were held by church history professors, a clear picture of the use of history in the Southern church emerges. Seminaries attempted to position themselves as the heirs to a long tradition of scholarship and education in the church, reinforced their belief in a pure deposit of faith in the scriptures that could not be added to or contradicted, and in placing this in the flow of history were able to conceive of their own time as one of utmost importance. They used history for instruction, argument, and self-definition but also to provide meaning in a changing world and a place of stability in the midst of social turmoil.

### *Presbyterians Part I: Union Theological Seminary, Virginia*

The Presbyterians were the first to found a seminary in the Southern States.<sup>178</sup> Rev. John Holt Rice of Hampden-Sydney College had envisioned a seminary to supply the specific needs of Southern churches.<sup>179</sup> Under his guidance, Union Theological Seminary began its first classes in 1823-24 and grew from 3 students in that initial year to 50 in 1830-31. From the beginning ecclesiastical history was to be a core of the curriculum, and Rice intended the teaching in this area to be given as "the history of theological doctrine, and its influence on religion, morals, literature, and civil religious liberty, from the Christian era to the present."<sup>180</sup> Rice declared the seminary home to no "ism but biblicism," which was reflected in the seminary's approach to church history. The course covered Old Testament and New

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*Considered with Particular Reference to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville, TN: E. Stevenson & F.A. Owen, 1856).

<sup>178</sup> It was felt to be part of the heritage of the Presbyterian church to value a highly educated ministry that praised knowledge of the Bible and doctrinal orthodoxy. In the early history of Presbyterianism in North America, many ministers came from Scotland or Northern Ireland after being educated in those countries. As it became more impracticable after the Revolution to send native-born candidates for the ministry to these institutions, new patterns of ministerial training developed, with rough informal attempts like John Witherspoon's famous "log college." Alternatively, ministers apprenticed with an existing preacher for several years before being called to their own position. See Thompson *Presbyterians in the South, Volume One*, 274-287. The early decades of the nineteenth century saw an intensifying debate among Presbyterians over the best way to educate its clergy, which were, in their minds, severely lacking in meeting the needs of the new congregations that were springing up across the country. Out of this came the idea of dedicated seminaries separate from existing colleges which could devote an entire course of study specific to the education of men for the ministry. In 1812 Princeton Theological Seminary was founded in New Jersey, which had ecclesiastical history in its course of study. For the Early history of Princeton Seminary, see David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: Faith & Learning, 1812-1868* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994) and James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Michigan, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

<sup>179</sup> Sweester, *A Copious Fountain*, 64.

<sup>180</sup> William Maxwell, *A Memoir of the Rev. John H. Rice, D.D., First Professor in Christian Theology in Union Theological Seminary, Virginia* (Philadelphia: Whetham, 1835), 346. Writing to his friend Knowles Taylor Rice expressed himself to be "Very Desirous to Get someone who will answer for a professor of ecclesiastical history" and asked for recommendations on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1828.

Testament as part of church history, and at a later date, Robert Lewis Dabney commented that his main textbook for the history of the church was the Old Testament and the Book of Acts.<sup>181</sup> This practice was replicated in the other seminaries of the South. The Bible was afforded a central role in interpreting history and supplying the criteria for what was to be received as true and what was to be rejected as wrong. This centrality of the Bible for understanding history was reinforced by the use of the eighteenth-century Anglican Humphrey Prideaux's *Connection of the Old and New Testament Completed* (1741) as a textbook which was an Enlightenment attempt to harmonize and chronologize the Old Testament rather than historicize it.<sup>182</sup> The other tendency in the teaching of church history, also replicated in all other seminaries of the South, was the addition of church polity to the teaching duties of the professor of church history. The coupling of these roles, by no means exclusive to the South, emphasized the belief that one of the primary purposes of history was to prove or disprove the age of current methods and practices of church life.<sup>183</sup>

By the 1830s, Union was an established seminary with a respectable number of students going on to pastor in many highly respected pulpits around the South, and it had also endowed a full-time professor of ecclesiastical history and church polity. Over the antebellum period, four professors of ecclesiastical history at Union had their inaugural lectures printed. These form a valuable resource for understanding the idea of history taught at the seminary. In 1835 the position was filled by Rev. Stephen Taylor, a native of Massachusetts who had been pastor of several churches in Virginia over the preceding decade.<sup>184</sup> His tenure came prior to John Henry Newman's *Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (1845), Philip Schaff's move to America, and the publication of many German textbooks that would dominate the subject later in this period. Therefore, his inaugural lecture was a standard

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<sup>181</sup> Thomas Cary Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Robert Lewis Dabney* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee on Publication, 1903), 141.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 141; Humphrey Prideaux, *Connection of the Old and New Testament Completed: Or, The Sacred History of the Jewish and Christian Church, From the Creation of the World, Till the Martyrdom of Polycarp*. (London: 1741).

<sup>183</sup> The library at Union was well-stocked with historical books and biographies. The type and subject matter of the history books are in keeping with a solidly Protestant and even reformed American bias. According to one count of the books available in the 1830s, there were 25 post-Reformation volumes of church history and only two early church, yet there were a further 14 that covered the whole scope of the church's history. The ratio for secular histories is slightly less stark, 19 post-Reformation histories to 5 secular pre-Reformation histories. There were also plenty of works of theology from previous generations and places, much material devoted to historical figures of interest, and more specifically, history books. *Catalog of the Library Belonging to the Union Theological Seminary in Prince Edward, VA*. (Richmond, VA: J. MacFarlane, 1833). The authors were likely British or American, with some Germans making up the most significant minority. However, as time progressed into the 1840s and 50s, German historians were consulted, used, and well-received in the seminary. Dabney recommended Geiseler and Neander, while Mosheim, the German Lutheran of the eighteenth century, was the staple for post-biblical history as he was for the majority of seminaries in North America. See Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Robert Lewis Dabney*, 141-142.

<sup>184</sup> William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit; Vol IV, Presbyterian* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1855), 673.

exposition of a classic reformed Protestant view of history, displaying none of the attempts to discuss "philosophies of history," which would become the hallmark of such addresses. Taylor subordinated church history to the authority of scripture. To mitigate against the temptation to set the authority of tradition against the Bible, Taylor said, "We go not to ecclesiastical History to learn our doctrines, nor are we dependent upon its authority for the defense of our order."<sup>185</sup> The Bible was a source of doctrine; history could not prove nor confirm doctrine. Instead, his primary use of history was for illustrations to demonstrate or clarify biblical precepts. He even cast aspersions over the reliability of so much historical knowledge that tradition was rendered utterly unreliable.<sup>186</sup>

Taylor's conception of history was that the church had been given an essential gospel in the pages of the Bible, a pure deposit of doctrine. History is then read as a catalog of how the church has either preserved or deviated from that pure deposit. Taylor saw this as having happened very early in the church's history, and he believed the early church to have "sought out many inventions...she compromised her principles - she changed her terms of communion until she lost all the characteristics of the true church of Christ." In his opinion, guarding against this doctrinal slide was a task of the teacher of ecclesiastical history. Rev. William Hall, who gave the charge after the inaugural lecture, agreed, telling Taylor, "You will appeal to history and show that their predecessors, who once loved and maintained the truth like them, did afterward abandon and then assail it."<sup>187</sup> This fear of decline and deviation runs through the works published by Southern teachers of church history. Ideas of organic progress would always be juxtaposed with the possibility of corruption. This attitude required ministers to take firm lines on any issue which they felt was either stemming from or would lead to innovation or error.

Ultimately Taylor would leave Union when, under the Presidency of Rev. George Baxter, it sided firmly with the Old School in the controversies which split Presbyterians in 1837. At this point, Union became, as William Sweetster has termed it, a truly "southern institution" serving only Virginia

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<sup>185</sup> The full quote is, "In the course of the studies of this seminary, the study of Ecclesiastical History falls in its appropriate place. When the sacred text has been thoroughly explored, when the system of theology has been drawn out and established, we then inquire in the light of Ecclesiastical History, what illustrations of divine truth are to be found in the providence of God over the church, and in the developments of the human character which have been exhibited in connection with its alternations." Stephen Taylor, *Address of the Revd. Stephen Taylor, Upon his Inauguration as Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government, in The Union Theological Seminary, Virginia*. (Richmond, VA: Thomas White, 1835), 9.

<sup>186</sup> Speaking of giving tradition authority in the life of the church, he said, "The providence of God seems to admonish us against this, by the fact that so large a portion of the early fathers and historians of the church have been irrecoverably destroyed, leaving us only fragments, and the authority of even these is weakened by the uncertainty which hangs over their genuineness." Ibid, 9.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 12-14.



and North Carolina.<sup>188</sup> The seminary began to shrink in number from 47 in Rev Rice's last year to just 19 in 1838, and at the same time, the student body became more exclusively Southern.<sup>189</sup> Rev. Samuel Lyle Graham took up the position of Professor of Ecclesiastical History in 1838. He was a native Virginian, hailing from Bedford County, and had studied theology at Princeton.<sup>190</sup> One year later, he relinquished the post to take up the Professorship of Oriental Languages but returned to his old position in 1849.<sup>191</sup> Graham's 1850 inaugural lecture for his second tenure as Professor of Ecclesiastical History displays the changes that had occurred in historical thought since Taylor's 15 years before. Graham is conscious of his historical method believing that the assertion of historical facts was a laborious task requiring objectivity and the eschewing of party spirit. He furthermore understood the effect that language has had on the formulation of doctrine over the course of church history.<sup>192</sup> Graham had also adopted the language of the "philosophy of history," by which he meant "to trace effects up to their causes, to generalize the facts of history and to draw from them...just conclusions," which he saw as happening through the application of the "inductive philosophy." Graham conceived of his task as to show the influence of doctrine on "religion, morals, literature, and civil liberty" throughout history. He attempted to demonstrate how this was to be done by examining the adaptation of doctrines and their effects on civil liberty in the cases of the Puritans and the Roman Catholic Church. He argued that the ideas of personal liberty of conscience held by the Puritans led to religious liberty and toleration, whereas the monarchical authority of the Papacy had led to religious tyranny and intolerance. In arguing this, he avoided the error he saw in holding to a "gradual development in Christian truth" because such a position "does not acknowledge the absolute perfection and sufficiency of the inspired volume." Despite this, he praised the work of popular German historians August Neander and Johann Gieseler, who both held to the internal organic development of Christian doctrine in the life of the church. At the same time, he also desired that there be books more suited to the American "standpoint," which he saw as differing from the German. Nevertheless, in secular history, he lauded the work of "Schlegel, Hallem, Guizot, Arnold and Smith" as representing the rigorous approach he would have liked to have seen applied to ecclesiastical history.<sup>193</sup> Therefore Graham can be seen as attempting a

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<sup>188</sup> Sweetster, *A Copious Fountain*.

<sup>189</sup> Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 501.

<sup>190</sup> Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 622-628.

<sup>191</sup> Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 796.

<sup>192</sup> Rev. S. L. Graham and Rev. F. S. Sampson, *Addresses of Rev. S. L. Graham D.D., and of Rev. F. S. Sampson D.D., At their Inauguration, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1850, The Former as Professor of Ecclesiastical History, The Later as Professor of Oriental Literature, In the Union Theological Seminary, Prince Edward County, V.A.* (New York: Robert Carter & Bros, 1850), 3.

<sup>193</sup> The first translations of Gieseler's Church history were completed by Rev. Francis Cunningham and published in the

more scientific view of history while rejecting the more radical implications of such an endeavor as practiced by contemporary German historians and still arriving at very expected conclusions regarding the development of doctrine throughout church history.

Graham resigned from his position in 1851, believing that the seminary might experience growth with someone more highly qualified in the role.<sup>194</sup> Robert Lewis Dabney met that requirement and became Professor of Ecclesiastical History in 1853. A giant of the Southern Presbyterian church, he went on to become Professor of Systematic Theology and an influential voice of the church during the Civil War and Reconstruction. His inaugural address has been called the most interesting document to come out of Union Theological Seminary during this period, while others have seen little originality in his work as a historian.<sup>195</sup> His contemporaries viewed him as a first-rate historian, and he saw his job as central to the work of theological education. He was convinced of the necessity for the historian to go to the primary sources and attempt to get back to the closest accounts of events, telling his students that texts like Mosheim's were an introduction to those sources, not a substitute for them. He also saw the value of nondocumentary evidence such as coins and buildings and valued the work of reconstructing the everyday life of a period in order to get a sense of the "spirit of the age."<sup>196</sup> However, he was skeptical of the claims made by many of new "philosophies of history" and saw Neander, while still

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1830s; thus, it is these to which Graham would have been referring. A few years after his address, Rev. Henry Boynton Smith published a revised translation from 1855-1879. Carl Ludwig Gieseler *Text Book of Ecclesiastical History Vol I.*, trans. Francis Cunningham (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1836), 2, sums up Gieseler's view of history "The object of ecclesiastical history should be to trace the successive steps in the progress of the Christian church carefully; and in such a way as not only to show the actual posture of affairs at each particular period but also to explain how the various changes have been brought about. The situation of the church at any period depends on its internal and external relations. To the former belongs, first of all, the religious faith, considered as well in its theoretical development as in its practical influence; then the character of the public religious exercises; and, lastly, the constitution of the church-government. The external relations of the church are its spread and its relation to the state. Though these various relations are by no means independent of each other but are developed by constant mutual action, they can yet be treated separately." Neander's influential work had already gone through six editions by 1853; Neander dedicated his first volume to the philosopher Schelling saying, "in striving to apprehend the history of the church, not as a mere juxtaposition of outward facts, but as a development proceeding from within, and presenting an image and reflex of internal history, "I trust that I am serving a spirit which may claim some relationship to your philosophy. " The other element picked up by Graham and others is his view of church history as development, "Looking back on the period of eighteen centuries, we would survey a process of development in which we ourselves are included; a process moving steadily onward, though not in a direct line, but through various windings, yet in the end furthered by whatever has attempted to arrest its course; a process having its issue in eternity, but constantly following the same laws, so that in the past, as it unfolds itself to our view, we may see the germ of the future, which is coming to meet us." August Neander *A General History of the Christian Religion and Church, Vol I.*, trans. Joseph Torrey (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1851), 1.

<sup>194</sup> Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 625.

<sup>195</sup> Sean Michael Lewis, *Robert Lewis Dabney: A Southern Presbyterian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 70. Moses Drury Hoge wrote to his friend B.M. Smith that Dabney was "Just about the noblest fellow in our church in VA." Hoge to B. M. Smith, London, Oct 27<sup>th</sup>, 1854.

<sup>196</sup> Robert L. Dabney, "Uses and Results of Church History," in *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological Vol, II.*, ed. C. R. Vaughn (Southampton: The Camelot Press, 1987), 6, 8, 10. and "Notes on Mosheim" *Dabney Papers*.

useful, as too “Germanisch” and warned that “He tries to make out that all the fathers, especially Greek thought ala Schleiermacher.” His own view on teaching at the seminary was that the Bible was “a textbook for every professor.”<sup>197</sup> His lectures on the New Testament church, the substance of which can be found in a later article published in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, make this clear. In them, he defended his view that Presbyterianism was the form of the early church and argued that prelacy was an errant development that had grown up as a deviation from the biblical system of church Government.<sup>198</sup> He was ultimately wary of the idea of doctrinal development and argued against it in an 1860 article published in *The North Carolina Presbyterian*. He conceived of the church's historical development of what it teaches and believes as like a tree that expands in "fair outgrowth." Dabney's position was that since there are no longer "inspired men to guide the process of change," any development of doctrine is simply a process of the church deepening in understanding of what it already has received.<sup>199</sup>

His inaugural address was given on May 8th, 1854, as "Proper Uses and Results of the Study of Church History."<sup>200</sup> Dabney offered a prolonged argument for using history as a didactic tool for the church and the state and told his audience that the "best arguments against bad institutions are drawn from their histories."<sup>201</sup> He believed history to be especially important in combating heresy, claiming the New England theology that adapted the Calvinism of Johnathon Edwards could easily be refuted from the pages of Jerome and Augustine and their dealings with the fourth-century heretic Pelagius.<sup>202</sup> Dabney described history as “but the evolution of the eternal purpose of [God]” and stated, "Revelation gives us the keys to unlock the meaning of many parts, and it has told us what is to be the final result." Despite acknowledging “the whole cannot be fully understood until it is completed” Dabney was still sufficiently confident to look back over history to observe the hand of God in events. Thus, he saw divine providence in General Wolfe's capturing of Quebec to keep Catholicism out of North America at the same that Robert Clive's defeat of the French in India achieved the same for Asia. Dabney claimed, "In all these instances, we see that the means are gradually prepared to install the messiah as the king of kings."<sup>203</sup> These uses of history, as outlined in his inaugural, were precisely those which would be readily deployed by ministers attempting to discern the lessons from history and the meaning of the

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<sup>197</sup> Cary, *Life and Letters of Robert Dabney*, 140-41.

<sup>198</sup> Cary, *Life, and Letters of Robert Dabney*, 141. Robert L. Dabney, “Prelacy a Blunder,” in *Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney Vol II.*, ed. C. R. Vaughn (Richmond: Presbyterian committee of publication, 1890), 218-260.

<sup>199</sup> Robert L. Dabney, “Theories of Eldership,” in *Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney Vol II.*, ed. C. R. Vaughn (Richmond: Presbyterian committee of publication, 1890), 126.

<sup>200</sup> Dabney. “Uses and Results of Church History,” 6.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, 12,13.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

workings of God in the secession of the states of the Confederacy, the preservation of slavery, and the Civil War.

Rev. Thomas Peck assumed the responsibilities of Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Polity from R. L. Dabney in 1860 and was inaugurated as professor in 1861.<sup>204</sup> His inauguration is the most mature discussion of the question of development in church history at Union Theological Seminary during the antebellum and Civil War years.<sup>205</sup> The frequency with which the development of doctrine was discussed in this period arose from two streams. Firstly, from Britain, the desire arising from the Oxford movement to explain practices and beliefs of the Catholic Church which were not clearly present in the early centuries of the church. Secondly, from Germany, a desire to reconcile rationalism and piety through the insights of Romanticism by focusing on the individual's experience of God and the organic growth of the principle of that experience over time. This second stream arrived in the United States primarily through the publication of August Neander's work *The General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, the arrival in America of German-born church historian Philip Schaff, and the work of Congregationalist historian Henry Boynton Smith.<sup>206</sup> Both Schaff and Smith studied at Halle and Berlin under the mediating theologians Neander and August Tholuck and imbibed their concerns and insights. Neander had claimed his life's work was to "Exhibit the history of the Church of Christ, as a living witness of the divine power of Christianity; as a school of Christian experience." Neander used the metaphor of leaven in bread to describe the church's growth as an internal principle

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<sup>204</sup> See Thomas Cary Johnson, *The Miscellanies of Rev. Thomas E. Peck, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Theology in the Union Theological Seminary Virginia: In Three Volumes* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian committee of publication, 1895), particularly Vol. III for the brief life of Peck by C. R. Vaughn.,7-28.

<sup>205</sup> "The Inaugural Discourse into the Professorship of Church History." in *Miscellanies of Rev. Thomas E. Peck, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Theology in the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia Vol II*, ed. Thomas C. Johnson (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1896), 131. The work he is drawing on is W. G. T. Shedd's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (Andover: W. F. Draper, 1856), where he states, "The third characteristic of development is the organic connection of the parts. In this, we reach the summit of the series and arrive at the most significant and fruitful property. The connection between two things may be both necessary and natural, and yet not organic. The mechanical connection is such. Take, for example, two cog wheels in a machine. Here the parts are necessarily connected; that is, they have no value except in relation to each other. And they are naturally connected; that is, they are adapted by their construction to play into each other. But there is no higher bond than this merely external and mechanic one. There is a connection, but no interconnection. The term " organic," consequently, merits 'fuller examination than either of the others that have been employed in the analysis." 119-20.

<sup>206</sup> The first volume of Neander's *General History of the Christian Religion and Church* was translated by Joseph Torrey of the University of Vermont in 1847. See also Bennett, "August Neander and the Religion of History. and Purvis, "Transatlantic Textbooks." The *Southern Presbyterian Review* had this to say about the second volume of his work "He is eminently a philosophical historian...he admits most fully, the difference between the spiritual and invisible church, and the outwards body of professed believers, and conscious that there is an inward life in religion, he is ever tracing its developments in the visible church. His own inward experience is to him, a reality, and he carries out his own subjective views and feelings over the whole field which he is exploring till they even color and tinge the objects he describes...[he] errs, as we often feel, from too great a spirit of liberality towards those who diverge from the truth." "Critical Notices" in *Southern Presbyterian Review* 2, no. 1 (January 1848): 146.

of this experience of the power of Christianity spreading across and through history. Philip Schaff promoted this idea in his controversial inaugural lecture as Professor of Church History at the German Reformed Theological Seminary at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania in 1844, where he contended that the development of the church consisted of an “apprehension always more and more profound of the life and doctrine of Christ and his apostles.” Similarly, Smith saw the history of the church as an outworking of an internal principle; the “reconciliation of God and mankind in Jesus Christ.”<sup>207</sup>

Peck was concerned by these tendencies as they appeared to imply that the church developed according to an “internal law, without the direction or control of any presiding intelligence.” Peck feared this line of thinking would mean, “The historian of the church, interpreting its phases according to this theory, sees in all its changes, external and internal, in doctrine, in worship, in government, in life, only successive stages in the process of development, all equally necessary, and, of course, equally normal.” Peck accused Schaff of falling into the trap of this view when he “[apologized] for the church of the middle ages.” For Peck, this was unacceptable; he worried that making “Reformation under Luther...a stage in the same line of development with the changes which took place in the church under Hildebrand” was “absurd” and “It might as reasonably be asserted that a serpent was developed into an eagle, or the egg of a hawk into a dove.”<sup>208</sup> For Peck, the development of the church does have a vital principle, the Holy Spirit, but this is seen in conjunction with the form of the church, which is the Word of God, and external conditions, which are “all the means by which the Word is kept in contact with the mind and heart of the church.”<sup>209</sup> In his view, the development of the church and its doctrine is, in fact, simply an increase in knowledge of the scriptures. His formulation of this idea is taken mainly from the Anglican Bishop of Dublin, Dean Trench's 1845 Hulsean Lectures, which he quotes extensively. It is not an internal principle unfolding, but rather scripture itself reveals more and more of its “treasures.”<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Neander *A General History of the Christian Religion and Church, Vol I.*, 1. See Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman* and Carl R. Trueman, “Classical Calvinism and the Problem of Development: William Cunningham's Critique of John Henry Newman,” *The Oxford Handbook of Calvin and Calvinism*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Carl R. Trueman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 475-490. For Philip Schaff, see *The Principle of Protestantism*, trans. John W. Nevin (Boston: United Church Press, 1845), 51 where he states, “In other words, all historical development in the Church, theoretical and practical, consists in an apprehension always more and more profound of the life and doctrine of Christ and his apostles, an appropriation, more full and transforming always of their distinctive spirit, both as to its contents and its form” as well as Philip Schaff, *What is Church History? A Vindication of the Idea of Historical Development* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co, 1846), 93. Which states, “The development of the church is carried forward, by means of dialectic opposites and extremes. This is a very weighty point, which is indispensable to a right understanding of Church History.” For Boytin Smyth, see Conser, *God and the Natural World*, 47-58 and Henry Boynton Smith, *Nature and Worth of the Science of Church History an Inaugural Address Delivered Before the Directors of the Union Theological Seminary, New York, Feb. 12., 1851.* (Andover, MA: Warren Draper, 1851).

<sup>208</sup> Peck, “The Inaugural Discourse into the Professorship of Church History,” 117, 130.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*, 119.

<sup>210</sup> Richard Chenevix Trench, *The Hulsean Lectures for 1845 and 1846* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1847).

Crucially this left Peck able to judge each age of the church for its fidelity to the Bible and avoid seeing each stage as equally valid. Instead, he viewed much of church history as the development of corruption and error that needed "reformation" to return to the purity of Biblical faith and practice. Peck's address is significant for two reasons; it is an example of a Southern theologian attempting to appropriate the language of organicist historical philosophy while rejecting many of its implications and aiming to maintain a confessional and biblical conservatism. Secondly, it is helpful to see how his view could inform the South's view of Northern anti-slavery sentiment. Since the argument for slavery had been so biblically based in the South, attacks on it were easily portrayed as corruption and evidence of the development of error within Northern churches.

### *Presbyterians Part II: Columbia Seminary, South Carolina*

After several aborted projects and attempts to furnish themselves with a sufficiently educated ministry, the synods of Georgia and South Carolina founded Columbia Seminary in 1830.<sup>211</sup> The seminary underwent fluctuations in attendance and financial stability; however, by the 1850s, it had gained a reputation and influence wider than the Presbyterian church or the individual students who graduated. Erskine Clark has argued that the extent of this influence came primarily through the editorship and participation in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, the most prestigious theological journal of the South.<sup>212</sup> The textbook for post-biblical history was Johann Lorenz von Mosheim's *An Ecclesiastical History*, originally published in 1726 and translated into English in 1765. Mosheim, sometimes referred to as the "father of church history," was an Enlightenment thinker concerned with bringing a level of rationalism and scientific objectivity to the study of church history. His work was widely used in the United States as a textbook and was approved of for its clear presentation of the facts of church history. His view of a general decline in the post-apostolic church reassured orthodox Protestants, yet no history teacher was completely satisfied with him.<sup>213</sup> Johan Kurtz's *Manual of Sacred History* (1855) served as the first-year textbook on biblical history, and the distinctive of the course at Columbia was that third-

<sup>211</sup> LaMotte, *Colored Light*, 78, and George Howe, *An Appeal to the Young Men of the Presbyterian Church in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia* (Unknown: 1836), 6, 48. Due to his consistency at the institution Rev George Howe became associated with Columbia more than any other figure during this period. He reached the status of a grandfatherly mentor to many who had passed through the seminary, see for example, the eulogy to him in *Memorial Volume of the Semi-Centennial of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina* (Columbia: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1884).

<sup>212</sup> Clarke, *Southern Nationalism, and Columbia Theological Seminary*, 127.

<sup>213</sup> Purvis, *Transatlantic Textbooks*, 659-60. Clark, *Founding the Fathers*, 170-71. E. P. Meijering "Mosheim on the Philosophy of the Church Fathers," *Dutch Review of Church History* 56, no. 1 (1975): 367-383. Jaroslav Pelikan "The Historian as Polyglot," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 137, no. 4 (December 1993): 659-661.

year students learned church polity with the aid of Calvin's *Institutes*.<sup>214</sup>

Rev. Thomas Goulding, who enjoyed recounting that he was the first native of Georgia to be ordained into the Presbyterian Church in the United States, was the first teacher of ecclesiastical history at Columbia. He began as a professor of theology and taught in his house before the seminary moved to its permanent location.<sup>215</sup> His only output was an address delivered in defense of infant baptism which worked as a selection of proof texts from earlier theologians on the topic.<sup>216</sup> Charles Colcock Jones was the first professor of ecclesiastical history of note, and he held the position on two separate occasions, 1836-1838 and 1848-1850. In the interim, he was engaging in the work for which he is more often known; his evangelistic mission to the slaves of liberty county Georgia. His lectures and notes were all destroyed by the fire that ravaged Columbia and burned much of that city in 1849. However, his *History of the Church of God*, the first volume of which he was able to complete before he died in 1867, was a reconstruction and enlargement of the lectures he delivered to his students.<sup>217</sup> It is a history of the church of God in the Old Testament, and Jones was adamant that was the correct and only way to relate church history. He lamented, "With scarcely a notable exception, our leading ecclesiastical historians, ancient and modern, begin the history of the church of God in the middle, if the expression may be allowed." Jones, in contrast, wished to elucidate the development of the church of God as it progressed in the revelation of scripture to "show...what was the final and perfect state in which our Lord and His Apostles left the church when the canon of Scripture closed."<sup>218</sup> Jones was prepared to see progressive development in the word of God, but not since the close of the canon. He commented unfavorably on the fad of "philosophies of history" and the idea of preceding the arrangement of facts with the postulation of a theory. His view of post-biblical history was that it "establishes nothing which enters into the being, and faith, and order of the church. Its evidences and proofs are not primary but subsidiary." He rigorously adhered to an idea of orthodoxy which admitted little room for growth or development, commenting, "We follow down the tide of history, and mark the church, in some periods rejoicing in her purity and glory, and in others oppressed by corruption which invaded her bounds and

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<sup>214</sup> See *Catalog of the Officers and Students of the Theological Seminary at Columbia South Carolina, March 1858* (Columbia: Letter Press of I. C. Morgan, 1858). The version used was most likely to have been John Calvin, *institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. John Allen (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1813)

<sup>215</sup> Sprague, *Annals of the America Pulpit*, 491-5. Also, LaMotte, *Colored Light*, 35-6.

<sup>216</sup> Thomas Goulding, *An Essay on the Mode and Subjects of Christian Baptism* (Columbia: Time & Gazette Office, 1833), 12.

<sup>217</sup> Charles Colcock Jones, *The History of the Church of God During the Period of Revelation* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1867), 5-6.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

impeded her progress, and even destroyed portions of her altogether.”<sup>219</sup>

Somewhat juxtaposed to Jones was the figure of Benjamin Morgan Palmer, initially instructor in ecclesiastical history 1853-1854, then full professor 1854-56 while being minister of Columbia's First Presbyterian Church. His biographer commented that Morgan Palmer was a philosophical historian and thinker, and this is the key to understanding him as a theologian, preacher, and historian.<sup>220</sup> His sermons and published addresses resound with the forward movement of history and theories regarding the role of nations in the march of progress. He enjoyed his teaching, and others believed that was his calling in life, but he felt himself to be a preacher, and his emotive preaching would be renowned in the Civil War period. It was heavily imbued with philosophies of history, and Palmer should be seen as a romantic figure; flights of fancy, emotive language and dark, brooding performances of preaching were his bread and butter in the pulpit. His biographer said of him, "he was above all things a wonderful word painter, a past-master in the art of description, and a magician in dealing with the sentiments of the human heart, particularly the pathetic."<sup>221</sup>

Seeing himself as a preacher rather than a historian, he did not publish a historical work. However, his published sermons are replete with historical schemes and romantic versions of human progress, which allow us to recreate his historical mind. In particular, he did publish one essay in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* of April 1856, which is purported to be based upon his lectures.<sup>222</sup> The subject was “The Import of the History of the Hebrew Race.”<sup>223</sup> The Hebrew race is the historical race par excellence to him, and its pre-Christ history is an "envelope of the Hebrew church" which "burst open to emancipate the church it so long enclosed."<sup>224</sup> Palmer declared the history of the Hebrews to “possesses great attractions for the philosophic historian.”<sup>225</sup> He saw the government of the Hebrews as a foreshadowing of the eventual realization of constitutional liberty and a restricted monarchy, preempting "England and its magna-charter" by a few millennia. More importantly for Palmer, Hebrew

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>220</sup> Thomas Cary Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1906), 155.

<sup>221</sup> Johnson, *Life of Palmer*, 155.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 155.

<sup>223</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer, “The Import of the History of the Hebrew Race,” *Southern Presbyterian Review*, 9, no. 4 (April 1856): 582-610. Palmer lays out his conception of historic peoples in, *Our Historic Mission: An Address Delivered Before the Eunomian and Phi-Mu Societies of La Grange Synodical College, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1858* (New Orleans, LA: True Witness office, 1859) where in his introduction he quotes Schlegel “as the individuals who can be termed historical form but rare exceptions among mankind, so in the whole circumference of the globe there are only certain nations that occupy a historical and really important place in the annals of civilization.” from Frederick Von Schlegel *The Philosophy of History: In a Course of Lectures Delivered at Vienna* trans, James Burton Robinson (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848), 108.

<sup>224</sup> Palmer, *Import of History*, 590

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 610, 595.



history shows how the original basis of patriarchal society developed into a monarchy. Palmer was the definitive advocate for patriarchalism as a basis for slavery. For him, the significance of the Patriarchal Age was that it held the kernel of much of subsequent human development.<sup>226</sup> This was how he unified philosophic theories of history with the Christian account. To his mind, the drama of history was a grand outplaying of the principles he found in the dealings of God with a man after the fall and the development of God's self-revelation and covenant promises to the Hebrew people. In this way, Palmer adopts the language of philosophy of history, yet he is not concerned with the particulars of doctrinal development, nor is he a systematic or precise thinker. His theory of history is on the grand scale, describing architectonic movements of eras and epochs; for him, there is a march of progress in history that would become the basis for much speculation concerning the Confederacy during the Civil War period.

John Bailey Adger, a graduate of Princeton and former missionary to Armenia, was next to fill the chair of ecclesiastical history and polity at Columbia Seminary.<sup>227</sup> He claimed to have learned all he knew about church history through the practice of teaching. When he began, he used Mosheim but, despite finding value in it, opted to use Johann Heinrich Kurtz's *Manual of Sacred History*. The reasons cited for this decision were twofold. First, he believed, as was often commented upon by teachers, the artificial dividing of church history into centuries was unhelpful to the student. Secondly, he felt it was incorrect to begin church history at the ascension of Christ but rather at the beginning of the Hebrew scriptures. Thus, he favored Kurtz, whose book covered the biblical narrative until the ascension of Christ, which was then complimented by Kurtz's *Text Book of Church History*, which carried on the narrative until past the Reformation.<sup>228</sup> Although Adger believed Kurtz to be helpful, he did point out

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 589.

<sup>227</sup> Adger had not published much history prior to this position, but his work as a missionary and his translation work had exposed him to church traditions beyond Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. John Bailey Adger "Foreign Churches," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 1, no. 4 (May 1847):1-33.

<sup>228</sup> Johann Heinrich Kurtz, *A Manual of Sacred History: A Guide to Understanding the Divine Plan of Salvation According to its Historical Development*, Trans, Charles Frederick Schaeffer (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blackiston, 1855), 84. contains his view of sacred history. "Sacred History commences with the creation of the world, that is, of the earth and man, its inhabitant, and terminates with the establishment of man in his most perfect state and abode, through the resurrection and the judgment. It comprehends a double development: the original, commenced at the creation, and disturbed by the fall — and that development which was renewed through the counsel of redemption, and which, sustained by an abiding divine revelation, is in the course of being consummated. The latter is contemplated by that salvation in Christ for which the way was opened, or preparation was made, in the old covenant, and which was accomplished and is appropriated in the new covenant." Johann Kurtz, *History of the Christian Church to the Reformation*, trans, Alfred Edersheim (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 186), 25-26 "As the church has originated in time, and has passed through a certain development, it has also a History. But its course is not one of continual progress. For, side by side with the holy government of its Divine Head, and the same influences of the Paraclete, we also descry in its administration a merely human agency" and "it is the task of Church history to exhibit not only the proper developments in the church, but also all obstructions and aberrations, — at least so long as they have remained in some relation to the

that he was a Lutheran and, therefore, would not be satisfactory on all points to a Calvinistic thinker. In order to counter this, Adger found the Irish historian William Killen's *Ancient Church* (1859) particularly helpful, and Adger praised Killen's stout defense of the Presbyterian polity of the primitive church.<sup>229</sup>

Adger's 1859 inaugural address displays an attempt to recon with the most pressing questions of his day regarding historical method.<sup>230</sup> Adger argued that the value of history, rather conventionally, was to inculcate humility, thankfulness, faith, and hope in its student. In addition, he considered history useful in understanding the contemporary church, illustrating the truth of dogmatic theology, and rebuking the rashness of innovation. Over the course of history, he saw a re-occurrence of the same fundamental conflicts and doctrinal errors in different eras. Adger argued that Old School Presbyterians were in the best position, as those whose form of Christianity was most biblical, to teach history correctly. He viewed his primary job as "[transmitting] unimpaired our old school Presbyterian testimony to the generation that is to follow."<sup>231</sup> In defense of this position, he quoted Neander and Guericke as stating that the church historian will always have in mind a principle by which he arranges his history. He further went on to quote W.G.T. Shedd and Lord Bacon in arguing that each historian will have their own standpoint from which they view history, and, while they must not succumb to party spirit or prejudice, it is incumbent upon them to have an *a priori* idea of the principle in history they wish to demonstrate. Adger also borrowed from Coleridge, saying, "To make your facts speak truth, you must know what the truth is which ought to be proved."<sup>232</sup> The question is, from where does this *a priori* conception come? For Adger, it is the scriptures. He saw church history as a process of double development, the development of the church's understanding of what is contained in the scriptures on the one hand and of man's introduction of an error on the other. He believed that "nothing developed in the life and to the consciousness of the real church of God which could not be traced back directly to the scriptures." For Adger, the Bible was a simple yardstick to measure the purity of all ages of the church. He argued against the Roman Catholic doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary on these grounds and criticized the Chevalier Bunson, who had written of the foolishness of judging previous eras of the church by our contemporary doctrinal standards. Since the Bible was the source of

Church."

<sup>229</sup> Adger, *My Life and Times*, 231. William Killen, *The Ancient Church: Its History, Doctrine, Worship and Constitution, Traced for the First Three Hundred Years* (London: James Nisbett, 1859), and John Bailey Adger "The Divine Right of Presbyterian Church Government," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 13, no. 1 (April 1860): 122-59.

<sup>230</sup> Rev. J. B. Adger "Inaugural Discourse on Church History and Church Polity," *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 12, no. 1 (April 1859): 142.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid*, 147.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*, 151-2.

all true development in the church, Adger saw it as perfectly permissible, indeed desirable, to assess how close certain epochs were to the truths of scripture in each age.<sup>233</sup> Adger's view of history is one, therefore, which operates in tandem with a strict biblicism and easily framed movements against slavery within the church as illegitimate developments.

### *Episcopalians: Virginia Theological Seminary*

As part of the general renewal of organizational energy experienced in the Episcopal Church during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, the General Convention proposed that a denominational seminary be founded in New York. The General Theological Seminary opened in 1822 and was considered to have a high churchmanship. Virginians, however, remained keen to have their own more committed low church and evangelical institution, and with this in view, founded the education society of Maryland and Virginia in 1818.<sup>234</sup> Through its auspices, a professorship was endowed at the College of William and Mary, which was eventually abandoned in order to found Virginia Theological Seminary in 1823. This move was considered a necessity on account of the continual growth of the denomination despite the poor state of the churches and the lack of qualified men to preach and pastor.<sup>235</sup> From its inception, the course of study at the seminary placed a high premium on historical theology, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the textbooks used were mainly of English origin.<sup>236</sup> The course of ecclesiastical history paid particular attention to the history of the Church of England, for which Gilbert Burnet's *History of the Reformation (1679-1715)* was used. Burnett was the Bishop of Salisbury, and his history had initially been written to defend the lawful and Protestant status of the Church of England against the backdrop of the Prince of Wales' public promotion of Catholicism. Burnet's text became the standard account of the English Reformation in England for at least the next century.<sup>237</sup> The Oxford scholar, Tory, and later Bishop of Asaph, Thomas Vowler Short's *A Sketch of the*

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<sup>233</sup> Adger, "Inaugural Address," 156-157.

<sup>234</sup> See William A. R. Goodwin, *The Right Reverend Richard Channing More, D.D., and the Beginnings of the Theological Seminary in Virginia* (Virginia Theological Seminary Alumni Meeting: 1914), 13-17. John Johns, *A Memoir of the Life of The Right Rev. William Meade, D.D., Bishop of the Protestant Church in The Diocese of Virginia* (Baltimore, MD: Innes & Co., 1867), 50-51. David L. Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church* (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1993), 61-62. Robert Prichard, *A History of the Episcopal Church* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), 118. *Booty Mission and Ministry*, 5.

<sup>235</sup> Goodwin, *History of the Virginia Theological Seminary*, 140-49, and *More and the Beginnings of the Theological Seminary in Virginia*, 32-33.

<sup>236</sup> *A Catalog of the Officers, Students, and Alumni of the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia* (Fairfax: Southern Churchman office, 1844).

<sup>237</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (New York: D. Appleton, 1843); Tony Claydon, "Latitudinarianism and Apocalyptic History in the Worldview of Gilbert Burnet, 1643-1715," *The Historical*

*History of the Church of England* (1832), was also used.<sup>238</sup> For the first time, an American author appeared on a Southern seminary's history course, Bishop of Pennsylvania, and moderate evangelical William White's *Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (1820).<sup>239</sup> These textbooks reflect a historical conservatism in the Episcopal Church in the Southern States; they are standard older accounts that emphasize legality, continuity, robust Protestantism, and orthodoxy. Professor William Sparrow, who taught ecclesiastical history for a year in 1841, thought that the main textbook, still Mosheim, was "dry chaff" and supplemented it with Joseph Milner's *The History of the Church of Christ* (1794), which became a standard reference book at the seminary.<sup>240</sup> Milner wrote his history as an antidote to histories that he saw as overly fixated on the conflicts and heresies of church history; he instead sought to provide an alternative narrative that would highlight the movement of the holy spirit and the positive gospel elements of each epoch of church history.<sup>241</sup> Thus, it became a favorite of evangelicals, and its inclusion reflects the tone and tenor of the seminary self-consciously cultivated in opposition to General Theological Seminary in New York at this time, which was felt to be under the sway of the high church party and the effects of the Oxford movement.<sup>242</sup>

Sparrow believed that to know and understand church history, a solid grasp of the rest of history was required. In this respect, he found Gibbon's classic *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) to be a worthwhile read and did not feel he posed a significant threat to the serious student of history. He also recommended Abel Stevens's *History of Methodism* (1858-1861), showing that he felt it necessary to know the history of other denominations.<sup>243</sup> The seminaries' theology and church polity

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*Journal* 51, no. 3 (September 2008): 577-597; John Drabble, "Gilbert Burnet and the History of the English Reformation: The Historian and his milieu," *The Journal of Religious History* 12, no. 4 (December 1983): 351-460.

<sup>238</sup> Thomas Vowler Short, *Sketches of the History of the Church of England to the Revolution 1668 in II Volumes* (Oxford: Collingwood, 1832), for Short, see, R. A. Soloway, *Prelates, and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England, 1783-1852* (London: Routledge, 1969), 120-141.

<sup>239</sup> William White, *Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church in The United States of America, From its Organization to the Present Day* (New York: Swords Stanford, 1836).

<sup>240</sup> Rev. Cornelius Walker, *The Life and Correspondence of Rev. William Sparrow D.D., Professor of Church History and Cannon Law* (Philadelphia: James Hammond, 1876).

<sup>241</sup> Joseph Milner *The History of the Church of Christ III Volumes* (London: T. Cadell, 1824); J. D. Walsh, "Joseph Milner's Evangelical Church History," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 10, no. 2 (1959): 174-87.

<sup>242</sup> See Peter B. Nockles, "The Oxford Movement and the United States," in *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World 1830-1930*, ed. Stewart Brown and Peter Nockles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 133-152. Peter Nockles has demonstrated the influence that Milner had on those who would eventually leave the evangelical fold, especially John Henry Newman and also H. P. Liddon, high church stalwarts of the Oxford movement Peter Nockles *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 321. Also, Butler, *Standing against the Whirlwind*, 110, 117, and 225. For the high church nature of the General Theological Seminary, see Clarence A. Woolworth, *The Oxford Movement in America, or, Glimpses of Life in an Anglican Seminary* (New York: Catholic Book Exchange, 1895) and Scott MacDougall "Hidden Jesuits? "Romanizing" and Inquest at the General Theological Seminary, 1845," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 76, no. 1 (March 2007): 89-118.

<sup>243</sup> Walker, *The Life of Sparrow*, 218, 232.

classes were also taught from historical works. Virginia Theological Seminary favored Gilbert Burnet's *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles* (1699), John Pearson's *Exposition of the Creed* (1659), and Thomas Stackhouse's *A Complete Body of Divinity* (1729) as a reference book.<sup>244</sup> This last was drawn mainly from historical sources and past authoritative thinkers and theologians of the church. Similarly, in church polity, the textbooks display a historic denominational consciousness, Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1597), Charles Wheatly *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer* (1710), Archbishop John Potter's *Discourse on Church Government* (1707), and again an American author Bishop Henry Onderdonk's *Episcopacy Tested by Scripture* (1831).<sup>245</sup> The inclusion of Wheatly displays something not found as clearly in the Presbyterian seminaries, an interaction with the history of forms of worship. These choices of books were unsurprising as Joseph Packard, made professor at the seminary in 1837, was described by John Booty as "A staunch and sometimes rather conservative Evangelical" who reportedly said that "the old is better."<sup>246</sup>

Rev. Edward Lippett had been performing the duties of teaching ecclesiastical history. However, he left in 1842 to take over the editorship of the *Southern Churchman*, and he left little evidence of his teaching behind him. However, his tenure as editor of that magazine continued the priorities of Virginia Theological Seminary. It was marked by an interest in historical matters and a staunch defense of the Reformation doctrines of the Church of England and the Episcopal Church against Tractarianism. Rev. James May took over from him as Professor of Ecclesiastical History and continued until the outbreak of the war. May came from Pennsylvania, and while he acclimatized to life in the South, he sided with the Unionist cause and subsequently left the seminary in an emotional episode that was very painful to him.<sup>247</sup> His views of slavery, too, were ultimately out of sync with those of his Southern brethren; in 1863, after having moved North, he published his *Remarks on Bishop Hopkins Letter on the Bible View of Slavery*, in which he argued that the spirit of Christianity would result in the institution of slavery drying up like a stone.<sup>248</sup>

May left behind him two published sermons. One was delivered at the convention of the Diocese of Virginia. He was chosen to perform the task of giving this address by virtue of being

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<sup>244</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *An Exposition of the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1831), John Pearson *an Exposition of the Creed in Two Volumes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1843), Thomas Stackhouse, *A Complete Body of Divinity* (London: J. Batley, 1729).

<sup>245</sup> Charles Wheatley, *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1829), John Potter, *A Discourse of Church Government* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1839) Henry Onderdonk *Episcopacy Tested by Scripture* (New York: Protestant Episcopal Tract Society, 1831).

<sup>246</sup> Booty, *Mission and Ministry*, 70-71.

<sup>247</sup> Alexander Shiras, *Life and Letters of Rev. James May, D.D.* (Philadelphia: Protestant Episcopal Book Society, 1865).

<sup>248</sup> James May, *Remarks on Bishop Hopkins Letter on the Bible View of Slavery* (Unknown, 1863).

Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the seminary.<sup>249</sup> He chose for his subject the advantages of church membership, which he explicated with "reference to some errors historically viewed." The discourse consisted of a prolonged exposition of the errors that result from treating membership of the visible church and participation in the sacraments as identical to a membership of the invisible church. He plotted out the development of the conflation of the two ideas historically. He accounted for this by arguing that the apostles did not expect a pure and perfect church but rather one which would bring forth and develop errors. Following the close of the New Testament, May argued that the church neglected its "first love." However, he believed that doctrinal articulation in the form of creeds and councils was not development but the clarification of points that needed to be settled due to the appearance of errors.<sup>250</sup> He presented a view of the course of church history whereby particular churches emerged forth onto the historical stage with specific characteristics to contribute to the progress of church history only then to subside and either be removed from history, enter a sort of unhistorical stasis, or be mired in error to the point of barely being recognizable as a church at all. This he illustrates with the example of the Greek church being given the providential task of correctly defining the person of Christ and its relation to the scheme of salvation before fulfilling their purpose and being overrun in the Arab Conquests. Rome, similarly, May sees as having fulfilled its role in the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius before being mired in error and eventually giving birth to the Reformation.<sup>251</sup>

The entire discourse is a rebuke to the creeping influence, as he sees it, of the Oxford movement within the Episcopal Church. To this issue, May argues that the insistence on the necessity of apostolic succession in the Church of England was unhistorical and is a new error, not something agreed upon by the great Anglican divines of the past. He gloried in the Reformation heritage of his denomination and liberally relied on authors in Virginia Seminary's courses. He quoted Bishop White and Richard Hooker in defense of his position. He declared, "We delight to honor in the 'noble army of martyrs,' in doctrine we are Protestants, as distinguished from Rome; in order and discipline, Episcopalians, as distinguished from other Protestant churches." The difference as he saw it with Rome stemmed from "questions of evangelical truth."<sup>252</sup> The University's Evangelical Knowledge Society also clearly displayed this

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<sup>249</sup> James May, *The Advantages of Church Membership with Reference to Some Errors, Historically Viewed* (Philadelphia: Staveland and Macalla, 1847). Very similar views were expressed in James May, *The Proper Office and Spirit of the Ministry: A Sermon Preached Before the Society of the Alumni of the Theological Seminary of Virginia* (Washington: WM. Q. Force, 1844)

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, 11-12.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, 35-37.

attachment to the Reformation. On the eve of the Civil War, the Northern minister of Trinity Church Washington, C. M. Butler, celebrating the societies anniversary, declared,

“Its origin was not in a spirit of aggression and contention, but of conservatism and self-defense. It stands upon the old ways. It keeps within the old land-marks. It rests upon the Reformation. It appeals to the standards. Setting forth no system of speculative theology, it unites all who, with various views on the scientific explanation of certain life- giving and saving truths, cordially agree upon the truths themselves. It rallies the Protestant sentiment and feeling of the church. It unites brethren in heart, in counsel, and in action. Its instrument is truth; its spirit, peace; its power, prayer.”<sup>253</sup>

This attitude should not be overlooked; despite the preacher's impeccable Northern credentials, the glorification of a contentious past, the rejection of error, and the appeal to “old ways” were easily and readily applicable to the situation that unfolded in section controversy and the oncoming of the Civil War in which these sentiments could be applied to secular events, imbued with religious resonance. The issue was that these sentiments, as shown by James May, could be taken in diametrically opposed ways. James May evidently held to the "old ways" and despised innovation, yet he took that to mean his loyalty must lie with the North and the ultimate ending of slavery; many of his students and fellow Episcopalians in the South took it to require the exact opposite outcome.

### *Baptists: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*

Basil Manly Sr had called for the founding of a Baptist seminary in the South to educate men for the ministry as early as 1835.<sup>254</sup> However, John A Broadus, one of the founding professors of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote that its true origins lay in the 1845 split between the Northern and Southern Baptists.<sup>255</sup> Prior to the seminary's founding, students wishing to receive a theological education had one of two options; first, they could receive classes in theology at one of the colleges founded by Baptists, such as Furman in South Carolina or Mercer in Georgia; secondly, they could travel to a Northern seminary. Following the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Northern theological seminaries became ever more suspect in the mind of Southern Baptists. As the

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<sup>253</sup> C. M. Butler, *The Road to Rome: A Sermon Preached at the Anniversary of the Auxiliary Evangelical Knowledge Society of the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Fairfax Virginia, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1860* (Alexandria, VA: Auxiliary EKS, 1860), 21.

<sup>254</sup> Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist*, 2.

<sup>255</sup> John R. Samper, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: The First Thirty Years. 1859-1889*. (Baltimore, MD: Warton, Barrow & Co. 1890), 5. Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist*, 16.

historian Gregory Willis has written, Southern Baptists “worried that Southern ministerial students who studied in the North would come under the influence of Yankee values, habits, and manners.”<sup>256</sup> James Pettigrew Boyce, another founding faculty member, calculated that in 1857 there were 60 Southern Baptists in training for the ministry, 45 of which were in the North or Southern Presbyterian seminaries, the remaining 15 were in Southern colleges with theological faculties, yet these colleges, he claimed, taught more liberal arts than theology.<sup>257</sup> The supporters of these colleges were to present the most significant obstacle to the founding of a dedicated Southern Baptist seminary. Therefore in 1849 and 1856, meetings of delegates to discuss the idea of a denominational seminary were abortive.<sup>258</sup> Nevertheless, a movement to found a seminary continued to make its presence known within the Southern Baptist Convention, spearheaded by a growing number of elite educated ministers. Their success reflects the fact that Baptists had become a genuinely respectable, established part of Southern society in the decades before the war.<sup>259</sup>

While multiple voices expressed a desire to see a Southern Baptist seminary, such as the Nashville Pastor R.B.C. Howell, the organization and impetus to harness the willpower within the Southern Baptist Convention to create a seminary has primarily been seen as the work of one man, James Petigru Boyce. Boyce came from one of the wealthiest families in the South and, after being educated at Princeton Theological Seminary, received a call to pastor the prestigious First Baptist Church in Columbia, South Carolina. After just a year there, he was inaugurated as a Professor of Theology at Furman University. In this position, he began his drive towards organizing a seminary for Southern Baptists.<sup>260</sup> In fact, he took his inaugural address before the faculty and trustees of the Furman as an opportunity to present his vision for Southern Baptist theological training. Timothy George has called it a “manifesto.”<sup>261</sup> His address proposed three changes to theological education that Boyce felt should be adopted by the southern Baptists for any future seminary. First, he argued that there should be different elective streams in which students may enroll depending on their competence in classical languages. Thus, those who had not learned Greek or Latin in expensive educational institutions could

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<sup>256</sup> Willis *Southern Baptist Seminary*, 6.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid*, 9, 15.

<sup>259</sup> The lives of the founding faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary exhibit this point. In particular, the Manly and Boyce families can be seen as elite Baptist families.

<sup>260</sup> The best overview of Boyce's life is to be found in the memoir written by fellow Southern Baptist Theological Seminary founding faculty member John Albert Broadus, *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce, D.D., LL.D., Late President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son. 1893) as well as Tom Nettles, *James Petigru Boyce: A Southern Baptist Statesman* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009).

<sup>261</sup> Timothy George, *James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1989), 19.



still learn from English textbooks and the English Bible. Second, he recommended that the seminary be rigorously academic, striving for excellence parallel to any other theological institution in the world, engaging with and refuting, if necessary, the most recent and most well-respected works from Germany, the North, or Britain. Thirdly he envisioned theological education that was confessional and subscribed to a doctrinal standard. Each of these three recommendations reveals Boyce's commitment to history in the education of Baptist ministers.<sup>262</sup>

His first recommendation to provide study for students with different levels of prior education and therefore cater to a broader range of socioeconomic backgrounds could be construed as a radical proposition that shows a disregard for the past. This need not be the case; Boyce is clear from the start of his lecture that "Baptists have ever been the friends of an educated ministry." The desire to include lower-class students is not to reject or overthrow the elite learning of the privileged but to open the riches of the church's theological past and history to all. He cites as examples of educated men from church history, Augustine, Beza, Calvin, and Edwards, hoping to stand in the line of such luminaries in contemplating and learning from the great thinkers of Christian history.<sup>263</sup> He also went on to lament that the colleges were not fulfilling their role of truly educating the candidates for ministry and that, in particular, lack of knowledge of the church fathers was leading to ministers being embarrassed by inconsistencies in the Bible, which had been reconciled in the early church. Indeed, the place of the church fathers and Christian authorities of the past was given significant attention at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Boyce's colleague John Broadus would later say one of the significant benefits of the different learning tracks offered to students was that they could read the fathers in Greek or Latin depending on their level of learning.<sup>264</sup>

Boyce's second recommendation, to aim for high academic excellence and respectability, also contained a plan for using Baptist history in the church's life. Boyce accused recent theological literature coming out of Germany of being anti-biblical and leveled an accusation against church historians "who have professed to write the history of the church [but] have either utterly ignored the presence of those of our faith or classed them among fanatics and heretics." He went as far as to declare that "the history of religious literature and Christian scholarship has been a history of Baptist wrongs." His vision for an excellent Baptist seminary would be a corrective to this tendency; with "a library

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<sup>262</sup> James Petigru Boyce *Three Changes in Theological Institutions: An Inaugural Address Delivered Before the Board of Trustees of the Furman University, The Night Before the Annual Commencement, July 31, 1856* (Greenville: C. G. Elford, 1856).

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*, 9, 15.

<sup>264</sup> Archibald Thomas Robertson *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus* (Philadelphia: Baptist Publication Society, 1901), 176.

filled with the gathered lore of the past," Students would be able to reorient church history to include and glorify Baptists and bring their reputation in from the cold. He claims that Baptists have been too ready to simply rest on their view of scripture and not engage with this view of history that leaves them out or vilifies them. He presented Baptists as "the successors of a glorious spiritual ancestry illustrated by heroic martyrdom, by the profession of noble principles, by the maintenance of true doctrine," in Boyce's opinion, Baptist education and scholarship should be conducted consciously in light of this history.<sup>265</sup> Boyce's third recommendation was also argued from history. He advocated for a doctrinal standard because "ecclesiastical history [is] a catalog of heresies brought in by individual men." A doctrinal statement was felt to keep these errors at bay and fence out those seeking to deviate from the true faith.<sup>266</sup> Therefore, the inception of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary should be seen as thoroughly historically minded and fundamentally concerned with the creation and maintenance of Baptist life as in continuity with Christians of the past.

This desire to place the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in a historical continuum is abundantly clear in its second commencement address. This was given by Rev. Edwin T. Winkler, Minister in Charleston and editor of *The Southern Baptist*, who had originally been elected as Professor of Ecclesiastical History but declined the position.<sup>267</sup> His oration on the dignity and importance of the ministry and its training begins with an appreciation of the history of theological education. He opined, "It would be of deep interest...to trace the links which bind our institution to the general history of learning. It would be pleasant to enumerate those convocations and those saintly spirits who, age after age, have devoted themselves to instruction because of their great love to Christ." He then launched into a history of theological education that praised the school at Alexandria, the instructions of Patrick in Ireland, and Alcuin in the court of Charlemagne, among others. After comparing the founding of the seminary to the founding of Oxford and Cambridge and other ancient universities such as Edinburgh, Tubingen, Lyden, and Salamanca, he concluded, "The Seminary whose commencement we now celebrate, is but one of the expressions of that antique alliance between intellect and religion. It belongs to that series of radiant ensigns which has led the progress of the ages."<sup>268</sup>

The seminary opened for its first year of classes in 1859 with 26 Students. Rev. William Williams, Professor at Mercer University in Georgia, was elected to the chair of Ecclesiastical History

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<sup>265</sup> Boyce, *Three Changes*, 29-30.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid, 36, 42-43.

<sup>267</sup> Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist*, 14. Broadus, *Memoir of Boyce*, 94.

<sup>268</sup> Edwin T. Winkler *Anniversary Address Delivered on the Second Commencement of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, At Greenville S.C. Monday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1861*. (Charleston: Steam Power Press, 1861),4,13,6.

and Church Polity.<sup>269</sup> His course description claimed that students would receive lectures "embracing ...the history of religious opinions, the relation between ancient and modern heresies, and the progress of corruption and error, in doctrine and in practice, in the early centuries. Special reference is made to those subjects particularly interesting to the Baptist denomination." This was all in addition to "instruction in immediate connection with the textbooks," which were to be Heinrich Guericke's *Manual of Church History* for the early periods and Mosheim for the later.<sup>270</sup> Here is seen a self-defensive tone in the study of history, keen to write the Baptist wrongs that Boyce had spoken of in the historical record; the course of study followed by the students would place Baptists in the historical narrative of the church as victims, heroically defending the truth against error. There is little evidence of discussion of doctrinal development or the progress of knowledge in the church, rather the more traditional idea of corruption and decline from an early age. However, this attitude did not preclude the possibility of seeing good in the later ages or using them rhetorically, as we have already seen.

Williams left little by way of published works. However, he did publish a pamphlet in 1874. Despite lying outside our time of consideration, it is worthy of note as it constitutes our only articulation of Williams's view of history that he would have taught at the seminary. The pamphlet is a short treatise on the Baptist polity of the New Testament church. He argues against the idea that apostolic succession resides in the office of Bishop. He proved this by referencing the early church, showing that there was no distinction between officeholders for the first century following the close of the New Testament. This he buttressed with reference to ancient authors, citing the "writings of the Apostolic Fathers," specifically Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr, as well as later church fathers Jerome, Theodoret, and Chrysostom. Also, bringing in sources of authority from opposing

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<sup>269</sup> Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist*, 15

<sup>270</sup> *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Catalog for 1859-1860*, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Archive 49. Heinrich Guericke was a Professor at the University of Halle in Germany and a committed Old Lutheran who opposed the unification of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Prussia. Unlike Mosheim, he does not divide his history into centuries but rather larger epochs, "Church History divides into certain ages and periods corresponding with certain great sections in the historical development itself, and, in each period, follows a natural distribution of the materials, made with constant reference to the general problem of the science itself. Thus, Church History divides into three principal divisions, corresponding to the three principal modifications of the Christian life. The first six centuries, embracing the time during which Christianity was in its bloom upon the old classic soil, constitute the foundation of ecclesiastical history in its entire scope, both external and internal. The nine centuries following exhibit, in an equally connected sequence, the erection upon this foundation of a superstructure of totally different character and proportions. The remaining three centuries include the history of the purifying and purified the rejuvenating and rejuvenated church. Hence the denominations of the eras of the church, having reference to time merely, would be the Ancient, the Mediaeval, and the Modern; or denominating with reference to nationalities, the Graeco-Roman, the Romano-German, and the Germano-European." 4. He was translated from the 1833 German edition into English by W.G.T. Shedd in 1857. Shedd claimed his value was in being shorter than other works; it could group and generate information for the student. Viii. Guericke is evenhanded on the question of infant baptism and the practice of immersion, Heinrich E. F. Guericke, *A Manuel of Church History*, trans, W. G. T. Shedd. (Andover, MA: Warren Draper), 1875.

denominational traditions, he cites in *The Church of Christ* (1859) a work by Edward Litton, a clergyman of the Church of England. Seeking to also defend against the Presbyterian view of the plurality of elders, he finds Dr. Cunningham of New College Edinburgh to validate his interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:8. To argue for the election of elders and deacons by the body of the church, he brings in Cyprian, Clement of Rome, and the Roman Catholic author Ignaz von Döllinger on his side. He claimed that Mosheim, Neander, and Gieseler would also provide evidence that the churches of the early years after the new testament were “independent.”<sup>271</sup> Throughout his article, Williams articulated a theory of the development of error. He says, "Ecclesiastical history teaches us, that the first errors that infected the early church, leading it farthest astray, and exerting the widest influence in causing it's departure from apostolic simplicity and purity, were not errors in doctrine, but in church government and discipline."<sup>272</sup> Thus, for Williams, a conservative Baptist view of church polity and history went hand in hand. History was used to defend, argue, and reassure existing beliefs. In this mode, the emotional power of denominational church history could easily be redirected to other errors developing in the North.

### *Conclusion*

The seminaries active in the South during the antebellum period show that Southern Protestantism had a central role for the study of history in the theological education of its ministers. Each institution saw to it that their students studied history at the highest level available, using up-to-date textbooks and either using or refuting recent ideas about the discipline of history. History was seen as so necessary primarily for its utility. It was considered a subject that provided particular insights into the sorts of issues ministers would have to deal with daily in their ministry. History was used in standard ways it had been used over the history of the church in order to refute heresies and errors. History was presented as a catalog of errors that had challenged the church and which the church had defeated. The student was then expected to learn how to handle such events in their contemporary culture and society from those historical controversies. History was used to provide examples of good Christians, heroes to be emulated, and heretics, the villains to be avoided and rooted out. Each denomination taught history to reinforce their own version of events, to show how their tradition was the oldest and most true to scripture. It was intended that the study of history would help students understand the church as they

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<sup>271</sup> William Williams, *Apostolical Church Polity* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1874).

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid*, 51,61, 62.

found it, to know where certain practices had arisen and why Christians believed and worshiped as they did.

This traditional way of using history for Christians shows that Christian education in the South was a deeply conservative project. Connection to the past was highlighted, the preservation of orthodoxy throughout the ages was praised, and the role of correct doctrine, practice, and piety were continual concerns for these institutions. Behind this lay the belief that the church had experienced a growth of error in each stage of its existence. The faithful Christian was, therefore, to be on the lookout for innovation, change, and development of doctrine or ideas. This meant that new approaches to history emanating from Germany and Britain and being introduced through Northern seminaries were suspect and used with caution. Some aspects of language and terminology were used, and recent books were consulted, but everything was filtered through the lens of conservative confessional orthodoxy. This had broader implications than just for the narrow world of academic church history. This view of history informed the conflict with the North over abolitionism and the rising separation between Southern and Northern identities. For Southern Christians, maintenance was more important than progress, development was negative, and continuity was positive; slavery, hierarchy, and social structures found in the South, therefore, became flashpoints of conservative versus progressive friction when biblically defended. The change was not accepted, and deviation was not an option. However, when understood as a deepening appreciation of existing truths found in scripture, the idea of organic growth of the church did become a way to account for slow change over time. This view enabled Southern ministers to cast Northern abolitionism as an aberration and error, not part of an organic development because of its recent invention and seeming lack of regard for biblical precedent. As will be seen in chapter four, it would become a mainstay of Southern preaching during the Civil War to present the South as part of the natural organic development of God's outworking of essential truths. In contrast, the North could be cast as the antithetical development of error and corruption.

### Chapter Three: History and Slavery

Southern ministers built up historic identities over the antebellum period that were largely denominational. These identities are reflected in polemical pamphlets, sermons, and lectures on denominational distinctives regarding any number of theological topics, including baptism, preaching, theological education, predestination, and others. In this literature, history was a key weapon, and each denomination attempted to prove historical precedent for their particular beliefs and practices. Yet, these polemics were primarily aimed at one another: Baptists defending their view of baptism against Presbyterians, Presbyterians asserting the biblical warrant for elder-led congregations against Episcopacy, and Methodists insisting on the freedom of man's will in accepting the gospel call against Calvinists.<sup>273</sup> Southern Protestantism needed a common denominator to transition historic identities

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<sup>273</sup> The examples for this genre of literature are vast, as a selective sample on church government alone see E. J. Hamill, *A Discussion of Methodist Episcopacy* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1856); Thomas Curtis, *Bible Episcopacy: A Bible constituency of the Church and Bible Church Ordinances exhibited. Eight Lectures Delivered During the Spring of 1844, in the Wentworth Street Baptist Meeting House, Charleston S.C.* (Charleston, SC: Burges, 1844); P. D. S. *The Ministry of the Church of Christ Proved to have Always Consisted of Various Orders* (Charleston, SC: publishers, 1842); and Thomas Smyth, "Presbytery and not Prelacy the Scriptural and Primitive Polity, Proved from the Testimonies of Scripture; the Fathers; the Schoolmen; the Reformers; and the English and Oriental Churches. Also, The Antiquity of Presbytery; including an Account of the Ancient Culdees, and of St. Patrick," *Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth D.D. VOL II*; ed. J. W.M. Flinn (Columbia, SC: R.L. Breyers 1908).

from denominational into broader regional Christian ones, which would then, more concretely, reinforce Southern identity and Southern nationalism leading up to and during the Civil War. The Southern institution of racial slavery was the common denominator that fulfilled this role. In defense of this institution, Southern ministers shifted their debate from being aimed at one another to engaging anti-slavery and abolitionists in the North. They perceived Northern abolitionism as a threat external to their region and one whose differences were magnitudes of order more significant than those that distinguished pro-slavery Southern Protestants from one another.

The literature on pro-slavery ideology is a vast and growing corpus. Since the publication of William Jenkins' seminal work *Pro-slavery Thought in the Old South* (1935), historians have taken seriously the intellectual content of Southern justifications of slavery. Scholars have sought to understand and explain why Southerners developed a consistent defense of slavery in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>274</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century, Eugene Genovese was central in locating pro-slavery thought in its cultural context as an ideological phenomenon reinforced by a distinctly Southern worldview and intellectual commitments.<sup>275</sup> Historians have also considered specifically Christian and biblical defenses of slavery as a central component of pro-slavery ideology. Larry Tice, for instance, focused his extensive review of pro-slavery arguments exclusively on ministers and argued that they embodied the genre in a more representative fashion than any other section of society.<sup>276</sup> More recent works such as John Daly's *When Slavery Was Called Freedom* (2002) and Charles Iron's *Origins of Proslavery Ideology* (2009) have kept evangelicalism at the forefront of scholarship on pro-slavery literature and have highlighted the reactionary, self-interested, and pragmatic impulses of Southern defenders of slavery.<sup>277</sup> Molly Oshatz, however, has situated the debates over slavery in a theological context and argued that the anti-slavery argument rested on appeals to the 'spirit' of the Bible that were unacceptable to White evangelicals in the South.<sup>278</sup> Regardless of Southern Christians' concerns about the liberalizing tendencies of Northern abolitionism, both pro- and anti-slavery theologians sought to rest their arguments on an indisputable reading of

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<sup>274</sup> William Sumner Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1935).

<sup>275</sup> A discussion on his impact on the historiography is found in Jeffery Robert Young ed., *Proslavery and Sectional Thought in the Early South, 1740-1829* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 1-10.

<sup>276</sup> Larry Tice, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

<sup>277</sup> Irons, *Origins of Pro-slavery*; and John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Pro-slavery and the Origins of the Civil War* (Lexington, KY: Kentucky University Press, 2002).

<sup>278</sup> Molly Oshatz, *Slavery, and Sin: The Fight Against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

critical Scripture texts. These biblical arguments ultimately proved to be a flawed exercise because, as Seth Perry has observed, the Bible merely functioned as a site of contested authority in the culture of nineteenth-century America and thus settled no arguments over the sinfulness of slavery.<sup>279</sup> In practice, therefore, pro-slavery advocates needed something in addition to biblical arguments. Recent scholarship has shown that Christians also turned to church history to find examples for and against slavery from previous epochs of the church. Alongside proof texts from the Bible, pro- and anti-slavery thinkers assembled judgments from church fathers and pronouncements on the morality of slavery from a host of Christian authorities from the past.<sup>280</sup> However, as Mark Noll has recently argued, appeals to history in defense of slavery did little to avoid the proof-texting deadlock, and pro- and anti-slavery appeals to history largely canceled each other out in the same way as appeals to biblical texts.<sup>281</sup>

Citing the views and pronouncements of specific figures and councils from church history about slavery, however, was not the only way Southern Protestant clergy used history. Historical narratives regarding slavery in North America underpinned southern ministers' pro-slavery arguments. Clergy fostered and perpetuated tropes about the origins of American slavery, its progress, the successes of slave missions, slavery's relation to the ideas of human rights, and the growth of abolitionism, to name a few. These narratives allowed the Southern clergy to address several problems that plagued Christian defenses of slavery, such as its racial nature, anti-slavery sentiment in the South during the early republic, and the historical role played by Southern Christians in the slave trade. Thus, the Southern clergy used history to obscure contradictions in their defense of slavery and paper over the weaknesses in some of their arguments. Ministers placed the blame for slavery on the North and presented themselves as innocent victims who now had to deal with the reality of a system of slavery inflicted on them as a result of Northern greed. They flipped the accusations of cruelty and lack of humanity back onto Northerners, who they depicted as responsible for the slave trade. In distinction to the North, they presented themselves as concerned for the religiosity of their enslaved population and integrated narratives of the success of slave missions into their self-conception as a society blessed with growth in piety and the extension of the kingdom of God.

These narratives constituted a re-writing of history to obfuscate any Southern culpability for slavery in the past. Additionally, Southern ministers, especially Methodists and Baptists, ignored the

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<sup>279</sup> Seth Perry, *Bible Culture and Authority in the Early United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>280</sup> Paul Gutacker, "Seventeen Centuries of Sin: The Christian Past in Antebellum Slavery Debates," *Church History* 89, no. 2 (October 2020): 307–32.

<sup>281</sup> Mark A. Noll, "The War before the War," *America's Book: The Rise and Decline of a Bible Civilization, 1794-1911* (New York, 2022; online edn, Oxford Academic, 21 Apr. 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197623466.003.0020>, accessed 18 Apr. 2023.



anti-slavery traditions within their denominations in the South and wrote them out of history. Any anti-slavery sentiment in these denominations historically became described as disruptive and unhelpful anomalies, if mentioned at all. Recycling these tropes made the increase of abolitionist sentiment in the North appear radical, fanatical, and hypocritical. Thus, Southern ministers created a mythical past, where the South had always been a place of correct biblical understandings of slavery and free from the accusation of cruelty in the slave trade itself. The deployment of this usable past went hand in hand with Southern religious identities also being formed at the time. The emphasis on piety, conservation, orthodoxy, and maintenance in the face of opposition dovetailed with historical narratives of slavery that highlighted these virtues in distinction to the North, who were presented as embodying the opposite vices.

This chapter will examine how Southern ministers' reassessment of the history of American slavery and their relations to it began to meld their denominational identities with the defense of slavery and opposition to Northern abolitionism. I will take three areas in which this was the case and show that Southern ministers relied on racist assumptions about the history of slavery and how they made it part of the story they were narrating about their piety, innocence, and orthodoxy. First, in standard tropes and arguments regarding the arrival of slavery in the South, ministers turned the tables of culpability on the abolitionist North. They focused on charges of hypocrisy to delegitimize anti-slavery arguments by offering a moral critique of abolitionists' sincerity. Second, Southern ministers integrated the history of missions to their enslaved people within the history of Southern Christianity. Slave missions became a marker of piety, signifying a heroic yet sentimental religion and a distinctive which separated the South and North. Third, Southern ministers reinterpreted the history of rights in a way that undermined the Declaration of Independence and enshrined inherited rights and regulated liberty as guiding doctrines for the South. Both these principles were described as coming through historical processes, not from nature, and their benefits were to be enjoyed only by Whites. Finally, I argue that all this required an explanation for the racial quality of Southern slavery. Some theologians took this quality for granted. Others asserted its legitimacy in deeply demeaning and harmful ways. However, discussions emanating mainly from the North over recent developments in racial science enabled Southern ministers to walk a tightrope of supporting biblical monogenesis while laying a foundation of support for racial slavery.

The sum argument of these four stages is that assumptions and discussions about slavery and race made in the South during the antebellum period reinforced the historical identities of Southern

Protestants. Southern Christians shifted from emphasizing denominational distinctives to adopting a regional Protestant identity. They saw themselves as the innocent party who was acted against, not the originator of change. Southern ministers narrated their histories of the slave trade and slavery in the United States and aided the cause of maintaining and furthering it in the face of opposition through a constant revision of the past to suit their purposes. Southern ministers avoided tensions, dismissed dissent, smoothed contradictions, and ignored inaccuracies. This led to a sense of separation from the North and a feeling of difference and only served to advance an existing regional Southern identity. Thus, by uncovering Southern ministers' use of history in this way, we better understand how historical identity informed the Southern clergy's defense of slavery. Ministers did not objectively assess the literal meaning of scriptures, nor did they simply turn to Christian history to circumvent exegetical deadlocks. Instead, Southern clergy drew upon a set of historical narratives regarding the presence of slavery in the United States and the success of missions to the enslaved population. These narratives connected to their sense of themselves as conservative, orthodox, and pious, allowing them to believe they had preserved their innocence and moral superiority over the increasingly radical and uncompromising North.

### *Slavery in American History*

Writing in 1844, the Georgia Baptist minister and future President of the Southern Baptist Convention, Patrick H. Mell, lamented that, "For the last fifteen years, or more, the system of domestic servitude at the South has been assailed with the most bitter and systematic denunciation by the abolitionists...the Northern Abolitionists have avowed their determination to abolish slavery at the South" and "have not scrupled in the use of means."<sup>282</sup> Mell argued that the enslaved population in the South was better off than free Blacks in Africa or the North and that recent examples of emancipation in St. Domingo and the British West Indies proved that Black populations were not suited to freedom.<sup>283</sup> Mell's treatise, designed to show that slavery was "neither a moral, political, nor social evil," overlooked the multiple examples of Baptist opposition to the institution of slavery in the South on precisely those grounds. For instance, in 1796, the Portsmouth Baptist Association in Virginia declared slavery was "contrary to the laws of God and nature."<sup>284</sup> Instead, Mell's argument asserted that anti-slavery beliefs were recent and

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<sup>282</sup> Patrick H. Mell, *Slavery. A Treatise, showing that Slavery is Neither a Moral, Political, Nor Social Evil* (Penfield, GA: Benj. Bradley, 1844), 5.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid*, 38-39.

<sup>284</sup> Quoted in Paul Harvey, *Christianity and Race in the American South*, 53. For the history of Baptists and slavery, see

Northern. The South, in contrast, had always been the consistent party, taken aback by unchristian attacks from the North. The overall impression given in the treatise was of a foreign-aided Northern conspiracy against the South. Narratives such as these were repeated and regurgitated in sermons, journals, articles, and pamphlets time and time again, ensuring that a sense of righteous indignation at the anti-Southern actions of the North became ingrained in Southern minds. These narratives played into a specific self-conception of Southern Protestants, one that ministers had been cultivating throughout the antebellum period, where Southern Protestants were faithful Christians who maintained the faith amid opposition. By narrating the growth and godliness of Southern Christianity at the very same time that they were describing the parallel development and increase of resistance to slavery in the North, Southern clergy placed both in a providential scheme and implied that the two were linked.

Rev. Richard Fuller, a Baptist minister in Beaufort, South Carolina, made a similarly selective and highly curated use of history in his celebrated exchange with the Northern President of Brown University, Dr. Francis Wayland. In a widely read series of letters, which have been called one of the last one-on-one debates over slavery conducted with "reasonable restraint," Fuller passed over Southern involvement in early slavery in the Americas, instead pointing the finger of blame for the current system of Southern slavery directly at the North and Britain.<sup>285</sup> Fuller wished to lay the ground for his arguments about the nature of slavery and its morality by reminding Dr. Wayland of some historical facts.

Let it be borne in mind, then, (1) that it was the mother country that devised and prosecuted the system of supplying her colonies with laborers from Africa ; (2) that these importations were made, not only without consulting the colonies supplied, but despite frequent protests from them; (3) that in this commerce the importations were all, with I believe not a single exception, in English and Northern bottoms, and by English and Northern speculators.<sup>286</sup>

Fuller aimed to absolve the South from the blame for originating American slavery. By doing this, he could argue that the South had been encumbered with this system, but now that it was responsible for an enslaved population, Southerners were obligated to manage and steward the institution well. As it

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Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 98-116, and Glen Jeansonne, "Baptist Attitudes Towards Slavery, 1845-1861," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 4, (Winter 1971): 510-522.

<sup>285</sup> See Noll, *The Civil War as Theological Crisis*, 37.

<sup>286</sup> Rev. Richard Fuller and Rev. Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence Between the Rev. Richard Fuller, of Beaufort S.C., and The Rev. Francis Wayland, of Providence R.I.*, (New York: Colby & Co. 1847), 131.

was the English and Northerners, the two hotbeds for abolitionism, that had brought slavery to the South, any debate on the relative morality of slavery must begin with the North admitting deep hypocrisy, which would inevitably, for the Southerner, undermine all they had to say on the subject. Yet this was neither a biblical argument nor directly from church history.

When George Howe took up the pen in 1860 to respond to John Brown's 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry, he could draw upon decades of mistrust, agitation, and anger fostered by the kind of narratives Mell and Fuller had perpetuated. His Southern Christian audience was primed to see itself as morally blameless but unfairly criticized by hypocritical radical Northerners. Brown's failed attempt to instigate a slave rebellion sent shock waves around the slaveholding South. Many slaveholders believed their deepest fears were coming to life and, to add insult to injury, Northerners appeared to condone and celebrate the fact. Howe chose to make sense of this event for his readers with a highly polemical account of the history of abolitionism in America. Writing to his friend Charles Colcock Jones, Howe explained that he "wrote on that subject just because I had to write something, and that was the easiest." He did not expand upon why it was so easy, but one can speculate that the anti-abolitionist arguments were so well-worn and the feelings behind them so entrenched that to compose a piece against the infidelity and hypocrisy of abolitionists came as second nature.<sup>287</sup>

Howe wanted to highlight the hypocrisy of Northern opposition to slavery. He anticipated readerly objections and undercut them by reminding his readers, "Slavery existed at an early period in all the thirteen states which resisted the Mother Country."<sup>288</sup> He listed the numbers and costs of various Northern states' slave populations, clearly stating that no single part of the country could claim to be innocent of slavery. Northern states were not just implicated in slavery as a system, but Northerners were cruel slaveholders, argued Howe. He observed that "the Puritans of New England and the citizens of New York were [not] any more tolerant and gentle to their slaves than the severest masters of the South."<sup>289</sup> Anticipating the obvious objection that the Northern states had eventually ended slavery, Howe presented a specific interpretation of the Northern experience of emancipation. He argued against the idea that the Northern states had freed their slaves from a spirit of benevolence and a commitment to the principles of liberty. This common perception, Howe argued, was a

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<sup>287</sup> Howe admitted he was "indebted to [Colcock Jones] for some things in the scripture argument for slavery." This gives us an insight into the ways in which information was used and recycled, and ideas, narratives, and arguments could be reinforced through repetition. Robert Manson Meyers, *The Children of Pride A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 559.

<sup>288</sup> George Howe "John Brown, and the Rise of Abolitionism" in *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 12, no. 3 (January 1860), 785.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid*, 785.

misunderstanding of American history. Rather, he countered, the Northern states' decision to end slavery was purely pragmatic. "There was no room for domestic slavery in the North," he wrote. "The climate was unfriendly to the negro, the institution itself was unprofitable. A portion of those who were in bondage were sold and removed to the South, and the remainder were held in nominal slavery or soon passed away."<sup>290</sup> Slavery in the North simply petered out in his view, undermining Northern claims to moral superiority. In the South, by contrast, slavery was necessary, and the conditions were apt for the enslaved population to thrive.

In Howe's historical narrative, after the gradual dissipation and collapse of slavery in the North, a generation grew up without firsthand knowledge of the institution and, therefore, was led astray by "the literature of England" and an "aversion to the system of slavery" was intensified "by the horrid tales which were told of the cruelties of the slave trade and West Indian servitude." But, he saw a radical juncture in William Lloyd Garrison's founding of the "anti-slavery press." Howe labeled the abolition movement "an unprecedented increase, a secret poison...diffusing itself throughout the state." Howe argued that abolitionism was based on infidelity and an impure gospel and was sowing "notes of discord and untruth."<sup>291</sup> Howe believed the abolitionists caused the ailments of society, and they were responsible for upsetting the harmony between the races. Howe depicted abolitionists as having a profound amnesia about their nation's history of slavery and its place in society. Indeed, Howe contended the founders of the United States regarded slavery as part of the fabric of society, embraced and protected in the Constitution. In Howe's national history, America was a slave nation from its inception, and this was not something that Northern abolitionists could blame on the South.<sup>292</sup> Thus, the

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid, 789

<sup>291</sup> Ibid. 790, 784.

<sup>292</sup> The idea that Southerners had not sought slavery but had almost heroically accepted it once it had been foisted upon them led many ministers to argue that it was a providential charge brought to the South by God for a specific reason. Thornton Stringfellow, a fiery Baptist preacher from Culpepper in Virginia, wrote influential pamphlets on the biblical defense of slavery and believed that as an institution, slavery was characterized primarily by its mercy, arguing that "it has brought within the range of Gospel influence, millions of Ham's descendants among ourselves, who, but for this institution, would have sunk down to eternal ruin; knowing not God, and strangers to the Gospel." George Dod Armstrong, a Presbyterian minister in Norfolk Virginia, published, in 1857, *The Christian Doctrine of Slavery* and thought that "in the history of nations, it would be difficult to find an instance in which a people have made more rapid progress upward and onward than the African race has made under the operation of American slavery." It was a benevolent force on the Black population; in this way, it could be seen to be good, to be in the process of being used by God. William Meade took up this idea in his address to the clergy of Virginia in 1834, stating that the South did not initially desire slavery. He asked, "Can we find no token of good in this mysterious dispensation of providence?" the answer in his mind was yes, and the good that was to come was the Christianization of the African population. This work can be found in two of Stringfellow's pieces on slavery, *A Brief Examination of Scripture Testimony on the Institution of Slavery* (Washington D.C. Congressional Globe office, 1850),16, and *Scriptural and Statistical Views in Favor of Slavery* (Richmond, VA: J.W. Randolph, 1856), 55, George Dod Armstrong, *The Christian Doctrine of Slavery* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1857), 113; Bishop. William Meade *The Pastoral Letter of the Right Rev. William Meade, Assistant Bishop of Virginia, To the Ministers, Members, and Friends, of the Protestant Episcopal Church in The*

febrile atmosphere in the nation, which could ferment such an event as John Brown's raid, was portrayed as unjustly anti-Southern. The South was presented as the victim of history itself and what was thought of as a willful historical ignorance on the part of the North.

Southern ministers were, therefore, constructing a history of American slavery that removed themselves from immediate blame for its origins in the hopes of avoiding the scorn of being involved in the slave trade. Yet, the problem was not solved; the early modern slave trade had been brutal and cruel even by the moral standards of most Southerners. This fact needed an explanation if the resulting system of slavery was to be considered morally acceptable. To make matters more pressing, the only reference in the New Testament conclusively linking slavery and sin was St. Paul's inclusion of man-stealers in a list of sinners in 1 Timothy 1:10. Northern abolitionists could score an easy point against slave owners by pointing out that if the ownership of enslaved people originated in a sinful act, then it would follow that the ownership itself must be sinful. This was a charge that Southern ministers had stock answers to refute. President of Union Theological Seminary George Baxter engaged in a protracted defense of slavery where he argued that the Norman conquest of England had been sinful, but the resultant system of government was legitimate and to be obeyed. He then drove the knife into the abolitionist position and pointed out that New Englanders were happy to own land that had become theirs in a sinful act of taking it through force of legal trickery from the Native Americans.<sup>293</sup>

The writings and sermons of Southern ministers point to a consensus in the antebellum period that the slave trade had been sinful but that this did not affect the sinfulness of the current system of slavery.<sup>294</sup> When, in 1859, a motion was placed before the South Carolina assembly to re-open the slave

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*Diocese of Virginia, on the Duty of Affording Religious Instruction to Those in Bondage* (Alexandria, VA: Gazette Office 1834), 6.

<sup>293</sup> George Baxter *An Essay on The Abolition of Slavery* (Richmond: T.W. White, 1836) p.11

<sup>294</sup> One of the most extensive histories of the Slave trade produced in the Antebellum period by a pro-slavery clergyman was authored by the former missionary to West Africa, John Leighton Wilson. Upon returning to the United States, he published his learned tome *West Africa Considered* (1850). It was not intended to be simply history but rather a geographical, social, and cultural exposition of the region of West Africa, and it was written to encourage missions to this part of the world. It was received rapturously by the Southern intelligentsia, warranting two reviews expounding upon its virtues in the *Southern Quarterly Review* alone. Wilson was a slave owner but manumitted his slaves, and had an ambiguous relationship with the institution, yet, he was a Southerner, sided with the Confederacy, and often found himself falling foul of anti-slavery Northerners. His view of the inhabitants of West Africa and their need for Christianity and civilization played neatly into the hands of Southern slaveholders. *West Africa* included a protracted history of the slave trade, in which he highlighted the sin and avarice involved in the first perpetrators of that iniquity. He wrote, "Those who pretend to say that the African slave trade has not been an immense injury, have very little conception either of the nature or the extent of the evils that have been endured by this ill-fated continent. God may, and no doubt will overrule and convert it to good, but man must ever stand convicted of having inflicted upon that unhappy people the greatest calamity in his power." The British, as coming last to the trade, receive minor criticism, the most blame being reserved for the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch, and arguing that, concerning England "there is abundant reason to believe that the nation at large was utterly averse to this iniquitous proceeding, and was not a little scandalized at the shameless conduct of the Portuguese in this matter." Yet even though they did join and then dominate the trade they are

trade, the opposition, and condemnation from Southern churchmen was swift and nearly ubiquitous. Ministers of all denominations looked back to the history of the slave trade and opposition to it and recounted the errors and sins involved in that enterprise. Writing on the subject in the October 1859 edition of the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, Rev. John Leighton Wilson rejected any idea of re-opening the slave trade, saying, "Still there are good and patriotic men who, through ignorance or forgetfulness of the actual character of this traffic, or from a perverted view of its moral bearings, are liable to be drawn over to the other side of the question."<sup>295</sup> He felt it was a history that was needed to counter this ignorance and forgetfulness, highlighting the "actual character" of the traffic in enslaved people and Christian opposition to it. In the 1859 edition of the same journal John Bailey Adger published his thoughts on re-opening the slave trade. He began with a history of the opposition to the slave trade, showing that good, evangelical, orthodox Christians such as John Wesley, Richard Baxter, and George Whitefield were opposed to it. Yet, Adger argued the history of this opposition was "remarkable" for two reasons. First, he found it noteworthy that something that had been morally acceptable – the slave trade - seems to have become unacceptable in a relatively short amount of time. Second, he argued this historic development produced two different outcomes in different regions. In the North and England, opposition to the slave trade gave birth to an even more ardent denunciation of slavery in the abstract. But in the South, it turned a fearful people unsure of the rightness of slavery into a persuaded group of committed biblical slaveholders. According to Adger, once the slave trade was removed, Southern slavery could and did become a genuinely moral system, which benefited the South, the enslaved person, and the enslaver.<sup>296</sup> The inconsistency in the thinking of proslavery Southern ministers was revealed by this attempt to agree with the general change in Christian opinion regarding the sinfulness of the slave trade but disagreed with a change of opinion on the morality of slavery.<sup>297</sup>

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lauded for leading "the way in opposing and crushing this wicked practice." "Christian Missions and African Colonization," *The Southern Quarterly Review* 2, no. 1 (November 1856), 160-176; and the following issue, "Christian Missions and African Colonization," *The Southern Quarterly Review* 2, no. 2 (February 1857), 278-314; Hampden C. DuBose *The Memoirs of Rev. John Leighton Wilson, D.D., Missionary to Africa and Secretary of Foreign Missions* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1895), 97; and Rev. John Leighton Wilson *Western Africa: It's History, Condition and Prospects* (New York: Harper & Bros. 1856), 34, 42, 56.

<sup>295</sup> John Leighton Wilson, "The Revival of the Slave Trade," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 12, no. 3 (October 1859), 491.

<sup>296</sup> John Bailey Adger, "Review of the Reports of the Legislature of South Carolina On the Revival of the Slave Trade," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 11 no. 1 (April 1858): 100-136.

<sup>297</sup> *The author of an Editorial Comment in The Southern Episcopalian*, writing in 1859, regarding the re-opening of the slave trade avoided the issue by simply stating that opinion had always held that the slave trade was wrong and he asked the rhetorical question, "Why should that which up to 1858 was considered wrong – after 1858 be considered right? ... were our fathers wrong and we right?" The idea of a change of opinion on morality appears to be out of the question for this author; the consistency of the truth of morality is a matter beyond discussion. Yet he fell into confusion when he then went on to argue that on the issue of slavery, it used to be held to be evil, but after reflection in the South, it was determined that it was permissible in scripture and, therefore, not evil. This appears to be an acceptable change of

Another common trope of Southern ministers' history of slavery in North America was the claim that emancipation attempts had been a universal failure. When Benjamin Morgan Palmer preached his famous Thanksgiving Day sermon to thousands of attentive Southerners on the eve of secession, one of the reasons he pressed for such a drastic step to be made by Southern states was to protect the enslaved population of the South, who, if free, would not survive, but be crushed by the weight of having to compete against racially superior Saxons. This argument was reinforced through appeals to the history of emancipation movements. Southern ministers were quick to narrate in salacious detail how idyllic, industrious societies such as Haiti or Jamaica had been upended and sent to ruin. Such narratives called to mind biblical punishments on nations and conjured a sense of what might happen if correct and "natural" orders of social arrangements were challenged. Palmer threatened the South with the history of St. Domingo, declaring that emancipation would be an "inheritance of woe."<sup>298</sup> George Howe similarly provided statistics to show that St. Domingo had gone from producing 672,000,000 lbs. of sugar in 1789 to none in 1832. George Baxter looked closer to home, narrating how 50,000 enslaved people emancipated in Virginia had been a complete disaster.<sup>299</sup> These histories, designed to instill fear in the minds of Southerners more than protect the enslaved population, reinforced the felt need to civilize and develop their slaves through Christian missions before any plan of gradual emancipation could be countenanced.<sup>300</sup>

### *Slavery and the History of Missions*

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opinion on an issue of morality for him. "The African Slave-Trade: Is it to be Re-Opened," *The Southern Episcopalian* 53 no. 12 (March 1859): 654-661.

<sup>298</sup> Rev. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *Thanksgiving Day Sermon* (New York: George F. Nesbitt, 1861), 8-9, 19.

<sup>299</sup> Howe, *John Brown*, 791; Baxter, *An Essay on the Abolition of Slavery*, 6; Bledsoe saw that the British experience in Jamaica should serve as a dire warning to the South of the dangers of abolition. Albert Taylor Bledsoe, *An Essay of Slavery and Liberty* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1856), 229.

<sup>300</sup> Emancipation was not the only solution that whites had tried to address the "issue" of the Black population of the United States; there was also colonization. This had its history, usually negatively associated in the South with abolitionism and seen as a complete failure, just like emancipation had been. For example, William A. Smith, in his lectures on the Philosophy and Practice of Slavery, paints a bleak picture of colonization. However, it had earlier been supported by churchmen, especially in Virginia and the border states, and some still maintained their connection to and belief in colonization, such as the episcopal minister Rev. Philip Slaughter. As we have already seen, he was a historian and turned to his skills in that area to make a case for colonization; the result was the publication in 1855 of *The Virginian History of African Colonization*. It was an extended attempt to show that orthodox southern Christians could be involved in the colonization movement, that it was a legitimate way to deal with the "problem" of a free Black population, and that there was no link between colonization and abolitionism. He argued fervently that colonization was a pro-slavery movement and believed that colonization could be the way to Christianize the continent of Africa, a crucial goal of Southern Christians caught up in the missionary movement and the air of post-millennial optimism that covered American Christianity of the time. Thomas O. Summers, ed. William A. Smith *Lectures on the Philosophy and Practice of Slavery, as Exhibited in the Institution of Domestic Slavery in the United States: With the Duties of Masters to Slaves* (Nashville, TN: Stevenson and Evans, 1856), 192; Rev. Philip Slaughter *The Virginian History of African Colonization* (Richmond, VA: McFarlane & Fergusson, 1855), 27, 106.



Therefore, Southern ministers had convinced themselves that slavery was a Northern imposition on the South, but that did not mean they were in any hurry to relieve themselves of the burden. Instead, clergy took the line that since slavery had been thrust upon them; the South must rise to the challenge and perfect the system it had received. In the antebellum period, this system perfecting was expected to be achieved through attempts to convert and Christianize the enslaved population of the South. Retelling the history of various missions to enslaved people and attempts to convert them fulfilled several functions for Southern ministers. By focusing on spiritual freedom rather than temporal benefits for the enslaved people, Southern ministers could retain the image of their churches as pious and concerned with extending the Kingdom of God. This also allowed clergy to integrate the presence of a large Black population into their predominantly White story of Southern Protestantism. In conjunction with the emergence of a thoroughly Southern conservative self-consciousness in the various Protestant churches, there arose, therefore, a self-perception among ministers that Southern Christians were particularly benevolent masters to their slaves. Sermons and articles emerged discussing the history of missions to the slaves, and heroic narratives of benevolent Whites further assured White Southern Protestants of their righteousness and fidelity to the Great Commission. These narratives simultaneously allowed them to depict the North as stifling the work of God by opposing slavery. Thus, the tropes, narratives, and images of slave missions that became part of the Southern White Protestant identity were key in fostering and fermenting the feeling of alienation from the North.<sup>301</sup>

Charles Colcock Jones was one of the most outspoken advocates for the religious instruction of

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<sup>301</sup> In an older strand of historiography on Christianity in the South, missionaries to enslaved people have occupied a place of prominence due to an unwarranted perception that they were less morally compromised regarding slavery. Thus, a figure such as Charles Colcock Jones has been, and even in some circles still is, held up as an example of a more enlightened slave owner who is more acceptable due to their concern for the welfare of the enslaved populations. Slave missions have traditionally been seen as taking the offensive edge off of the practice of slavery by descendants of various denominations deeply involved in the institution. While it may well be true that churchmen did care for the souls of their and their congregants' enslaved people, literature on the religious instruction of the enslaved population should be seen squarely within the framework of pro-slavery arguments and Christian defenses of slavery. The emphasis on educating enslaved people with the gospel contained the implicit assumption that slavery was acceptable and potentially ordained for the very purpose of this religious instruction.

Furthermore, it was explicitly argued time and time again by pro-slavery southern ministers that Christianizing enslaved people would make them better at their work, less likely to rebel, and in effect, be a "bulwark" for the institution against the growing tide of abolitionism. See Wayne C. Tyner, "Charles Colcock Jones: Mission to Slaves," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 55, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 363–80; Donald G. Mathews, "Charles Colcock Jones and the Southern Evangelical Crusade to Form a Biracial Community," *The Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 3 (August 1975): 299–320; Donald G. Mathews, "The Methodist Mission to the Slaves, 1829-1844," *The Journal of American History* 51, no. 4 (March 1965): 615–31; Erskine Clarke *Wrestlin Jacob: A portrait of Religion in The Old South* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1979). Charles Colcock Jones's fame only increased after the publication of Meyers, *The Children of Pride*. For a recent example of praising Colcock Jones in popular history, see Ian H. Murray, *Heroes* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009).

the enslaved populations of the Southern States. Born into a wealthy slaveholding family in Liberty County, Jones gave up his position as a pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Savannah in 1832 to pursue his passion: missions among the enslaved populations. From his home plantation in Georgia, he began his work in 1833 by traveling around the local plantations, relying on the goodwill and support of landowners and men of prominence. He regularly wrote reports of his work and gave multiple lectures and sermons, many of which were published. In his writings, he argued for Presbyterians to make a concerted effort to provide every enslaved person for which they were directly responsible with regular access to gospel preaching. As well as multiple sermons on the subject, he also penned a catechism and program for the education of enslaved people. But his principal work was a complete and exhaustive argument entitled *The Religious Instruction of the Colored Population in the United States* (1842).<sup>302</sup> Jones's efforts were not without their opposition. Slave missions like his were still viewed with suspicion by many Southerners. Especially after the religiously inspired rebellions of Denmark Vesey in 1822 and Nat Turner in 1831, Southern slaveholders regarded religious education for enslaved persons as controversial and potentially dangerous. Jones sought to alleviate these fears with his narrative and attempted to counter every conceivable objection against his project. Summarizing the work of several years of his missions, Jones's book presented a barrage of reasons for the reader's moral obligation to provide religious instruction to enslaved people. The book began with a historical overview of the attempts to offer enslaved people the gospel. Jones faced a challenge with his historical narrative if he wished it to produce the desired effect on his reader. He needed to show that there was historical precedent for the mission to slaves without implying enough had been done already. He had to demonstrate that other denominations were involved to stoke Presbyterians' pride without making them feel it was not their work to be done.

Jones's narrative went back to the earliest arrival of enslaved people in America, where he was critical of the colonial church for neglecting slave missions for a considerable time, lamenting that "We

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<sup>302</sup> Charles Colcock Jones published several works, all on the same theme, for example, *Religious Instruction of the Negroes. A Sermon, Delivered Before Associations of Planters in Liberty and McIntosh Counties, Georgia* (Princeton, NJ: D. Hart & Connelly, 1832); *Annual Report of the Missionary to the Negroes, in Liberty Country, (G.A.) Presented to the Association, November 1833* (Charleston, SC: Observer Office Press, 1834); *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States* (Savannah, GA: Thomas Purse, 1842); *Suggestions on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the Southern States; Together with an Appendix Containing Forms of Church Registers, Form of a Constitution, and Plans of Different Denominations of Christians* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publishing, 1847); *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Association for the Religious Instruction of the Negroes, In Liberty County Georgia*. (Savannah, GA: Edward J. Purse, 1848); *Religious Instruction of the Negroes. An Address Delivered Before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, at Augusta, Ga., December 10, 1861*. (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1862). His catechism was published as, *A Catechism of Scripture Doctrine and Practice for Families and Sabbath-Schools Designed Also for the Oral Instruction of Colored Persons* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publishing 1852).

have no record of missions or of missionary stations established by or in any of the Colonies, on behalf, exclusively, of the Negroes, up to the year 1738."<sup>303</sup> Jones identified the Revolutionary War and the ongoing slave trade as reasons why missions to the enslaved people were hindered during the later eighteenth century. For Jones, the slave trade significantly hampered the development of slave missions because it necessarily dehumanized enslaved people. This, he suggested, had the effect of hardening slaveholders' hearts against those who were enslaved "while their [enslaved peoples'] degraded and miserable appearance and character, their stupidity, their uncouth languages and gross superstitions, and their constant occupation, operated as so many checks to benevolent efforts for their conversion to Christianity."<sup>304</sup> However, Jones related the small signs of hope and the progress made after the international slave trade's end, and passing over the internal slave trade in silence, argued that interest in the enslaved people's souls was kindled and grew even despite the parallel growth of the abolitionist movement. Jones contextualized an increase of attention to the religious instruction of the enslaved population against large-scale growth in the number of enslaved people in the South. His discussion of population growth was an attempt to show that providence had increased the number of enslaved people in the South to coincide with a growing attention on missions and the extension of the kingdom of God. Eventually, he presented the recent decades before his writing as a revival, about which he wrote,

"Nor was there any opposition of moment to the work, conducted by responsible individuals, identified in feeling and interest with the country. Some portions of the South were in advance of others concerning the acknowledgment and performance of the great duty, but the light was gradually diffusing itself everywhere."<sup>305</sup>

The movement to convert the enslaved population was presented as a foregone conclusion, swelling in size and gaining pace at each step. Objections and controversy were minimized, and the onus was placed on the reader to join the success.

While Jones was engaging in his missions on the plantations of Georgia, the Rev. Paul Trapier of the Episcopal Church took up the cause of the enslaved and free Black population in Charleston, South Carolina. He operated out of Trinity Church which was founded to be a Black congregation with White clerical oversight.<sup>306</sup> Trapier was an ardent advocate of slavery and a slaveholder himself. He

<sup>303</sup> Jones, *Religious Instruction of the Negroes*, 30.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid*, 97.

<sup>306</sup> For a helpful narrative of the success of Episcopal work among the Black population, see J. Carlton Hayden, "Conversion and Control: Dilemma of Episcopalians in Providing for the Religious Instructions of Slaves, Charleston,

presented his decision to go into mission work among the Black population as a means to provide for himself and his family. He found himself in this position after being forced to resign as Rector of Charleston's historic and prestigious St Michael's after insisting his parishioners only receive communion after they had been confirmed according to the rubrics of the Episcopal Church. However, evidence suggests he had a genuine interest in evangelizing the enslaved population prior to this.<sup>307</sup> He spent much of his time, as did Colcock Jones, advocating for his work and publishing annual sermons in favor of Gospel work for the Black population.<sup>308</sup> In 1854 he published a short account of the history of the Episcopal Church's efforts in *The Southern Episcopalian*. In this short piece, he presented the colonial Church of England as particularly interested in missions to the Black populations. He asks his Episcopalian readers to take pride in a missionary heritage: after all, in the story of White American missions to the enslaved and free Black populations, Episcopalians were involved early, remained committed consistently, and frequently appeared at the forefront of mission activities. In Trapier's narrative, the Revolution caused these missionary efforts to falter as money, men, and time were expended elsewhere. But, in recent decades, interest in the project had returned. It was time to renew the Christian – but specifically Episcopalian - desire to convert enslaved people.<sup>309</sup> Trapier's claim that Episcopal congregants had a special responsibility to proselytize enslaved and free Black populations was not new. William Meade had previously argued in 1834 that the Episcopal Church had a powerful obligation to the enslaved people because its members had so many of them under their ownership. And as early as 1835, Bishop Bowen of South Carolina had been preaching that historic providence brought slaves to South Carolina to Christianize them.<sup>310</sup> In contrast to the picture of the colonial church presented by Charles Colcock Jones, Trapier created a historical memory for the Episcopal Church as

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South Carolina 1845-1860," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 40, no. 2 (June 1971): 143-171. and "After the War: The Mission and Growth of the Episcopal Church Among Blacks in the South, 1865-1877," *The Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 42, no. 4 (December 1973): 403-427.

<sup>307</sup> George W. William ed., *Incidents in My Life: The Autobiography of The Rev. Paul Trapier, S.T.D. With Some of His Letters* (Charleston, SC: Dalcho Historical Society, 1954), 27, 40.

<sup>308</sup> See, for example, Rev. Paul Trapier, *The Gospel to be Given to our Servants: A Sermon Preached in Several Of the Protestant Episcopal Churches in Charleston On Sundays in July 1847* (Charleston, SC: Miller & Browne, 1847); *A Plan for Giving the Gospel to Our Servants: A Sermon Preached in Several of the Protestant Episcopal Churches in Charleston, On Sundays, In February 1849* (Charleston, SC: Miller & Browne, 1848); and *The Spirit to be Poured Out on Our Servants: A Sermon Preached in Several of the Protestant Episcopal Churches in Charleston, In Nov. & Dec. 1849* (Charleston, SC: Miler & Browne, 1849).

<sup>309</sup> "Religious Instruction of Our Slaves," *The Southern Episcopalian* (August 1856): 235-238.

<sup>310</sup> Meade, *The Pastoral Letter*; 5. and Bishop Nathaniel Bowen, *A Pastoral Letter on the Religious Instruction of the Slaves of Members of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of South Carolina* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1835), another Good example of Episcopal history of missions to the enslaved population is George W. Freeman *The Rights and Duties of Slaveholders: Two Discourses Delivered on Sunday, November 27, 1836, In Christ Church, Raleigh, North Carolina* (Charleston, SC: A. E. Miller, 1837).

the natural church of the Black population of the South because the denomination had a history of religious instruction of its enslaved people.

Clergy of all four of the largest Protestant denominations used missions to the enslaved populations as an apologetic, and each attempted to stake their claim to being the most ardent supporter of this cause. The Methodist Church felt that it was particularly adept at providing such initiatives. In July 1847, an article in the *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* attempted to place missions to the Black populations within the tradition of revivalist accounts of early Methodism and the heroism of the foreign missionary movement. The author of this work integrally linked Methodism and missions. He argued in his opening that "missions are the barometer of a denominations' piety," then related how the Methodists were, from the start, the most ardent supporters of slave missions. The author does not mention that early Methodism had a distinctively anti-slavery culture and that even its founding figure, John Wesley was outspokenly anti-slavery, as was the first Methodist Bishop Thomas Coke. The author focuses on the spiritual implications of missions to the slaves and completely neglects to mention that first-generation Methodists in the South and the North had perceived clear political implications of the gospel message – implications which led them to abolitionist positions.<sup>311</sup> Southern Methodists were aware of these historical realities and either chose to ignore them, as does this article, or downplay them as divisive opinions settled in later conferences.<sup>312</sup> In this article, the author's historical narrative highlighted that the Methodist Episcopal Church had earnestly supported missions to the enslaved population for the reform of their character and the salvation of their souls rather than for their freedom.<sup>313</sup> Then the author could underline that there was still work to be done, observing that, at the present day, ... the most deplorable ignorance prevails; and as a matter of course, their moral condition is bad enough. Idleness, intemperance, lying, stealing, dissoluteness are the dark shades in the character of the neglected African."<sup>314</sup> This language represented the enslaved population, which had been in the American South for some time, as a foreign mission field and a place where the kingdom of God must be advanced.

This article borrowed imagery from narratives of circuit riders and foreign missionaries and described missionaries to the enslaved population as equally pious, worthy of admiration, and just as

<sup>311</sup> For Methodism and slavery, see Donald Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965); and Lewis M. Purifoy, "The Southern Methodist Church and the Proslavery Argument," *The Journal of Southern History* 32, no. 3 (August 1966): 325-341.

<sup>312</sup> See Bascom, *Methodism and Slavery*, and *History of the Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church South*, both treated in more detail in Chapter 1.

<sup>313</sup> "Religious Instruction of the Negroes," *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* 1, no. 3 (July 1847): 323-324.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

Methodist as other acknowledged heroes of the tradition. He described ministers to the Black population as,

“devoting to the care of the Black man's soul, time and strength; daring health and life itself; teaching the children the rudiments of religious truth; praying by the bed-side of the sick and dying; walking miles together on rice-field banks, beneath a cloudless sun; braving the malaria of river-swamps, that they might preach Jesus and the resurrection to the slave.”

He then compared this to what he saw in the North.

“While the South Carolina missionaries were engaged in these great and exhausting labors... a set of pseudo-philanthropists, at a very safe distance from the plantations, and all possibility of danger and damage, had gone bravely to work to bring about the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery. The frenzy worked itself into the churches of the North.”<sup>315</sup>

In this case, history undermines Northern claims to benevolent piety and instead locates genuine pious enthusiasm for the souls of the Black population firmly in the Southern states. The text places a widening gap between the Northern and the Southern church. It implies that Northern attempts to meddle in slavery would inevitably come to be seen as attempts to stifle the progress of true religion. This would then trigger Southerners' historic Christian identities, exacerbating the sense of oppression and opposition of which they so regularly complained, and would propel the South towards self-defense, self-justification, and a doubling down on the regional "Christian" culture they had been creating, complete with the central role played by racial slavery.

### *The Origin of Rights*

In these narratives of the history of slavery in North America and the history of missions to the slaves, the explanation for the racial nature of Southern slavery rested primarily on outright racism and the belief that the enslaved Black population was unfit to be free. This assumption worked for a home audience, but refuting the charges of abolitionists required a higher order of argument. When addressing the awkward question of why the White race had the right to enslave the Black race but not vice versa, America's history and the meaning of its founding came under discussion. Much of this

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid, 330.

theorizing was around the history of human rights and whether they were innate, unchangeable, inherited, or historically contingent. Despite being written by a slaveholder, America's foundational document, the Declaration of Independence, contained a potential challenge to advocates of slavery in its doctrine of natural rights. The idea of the equality of men - and, at this point, only men - stood at odds with the concept of enslavement. Pro-slavery advocates had their ideas regarding rights and the correct interpretation of the meaning of America's insistence on equality. These ideas, which emphasized inherited rights, were readily adopted by Southern ministers and theologians. Their writings took on a historical form as the argument in favor of inherited rights and its partner, "regulated liberty," looked back to the past to assert that rights were not natural or inalienable but rooted in biblical and historical precedent. Clergy were keenly aware of the novelty of the very idea of equality and natural rights, which were presented as anti-biblical and a gateway to infidelity.<sup>316</sup>

One simple, although not universally accepted, way around the issue was to argue that the Declaration of Independence was wrong and influenced by infidelity. This was the method chosen by Alabama Minister F. A. Ross in his letter to the anti-slavery Northern Presbyterian Albert Barnes. Ross asserted that the affirmations in the Declaration of Independence were "contrary to the bible" and stated,

“God gives no sanction to the affirmation that he has created all men equal — that this is self-evident — and that he has given them unalienable rights — that he has made government to derive its power solely from their consent — and that he has given them the right to change that government in their mere pleasure. All this — every word of it — every jot and tittle, is the liberty and equality claimed by infidelity.”<sup>317</sup>

In taking this view, Ross recognized the threat to slavery represented by the Declaration of Independence and, rather than attempt to reconcile the two; he simply accused the Declaration of being

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<sup>316</sup> Adam I. P. Smith, *The Stormy Present: The Problem of Slavery in Northern Politics, 1846-1865* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017). Also, regarding awareness of historical distance based on knowledge about the Constitution and its composition, see Watkins, *Slavery and the Sacred Texts*.

<sup>317</sup> F. A. Ross, *Position of the Southern Church in Relation to Slavery, As Illustrated in a Letter of Dr. F. A. Ross to Rev Albert Barnes, With an Introduction, By A Constitutional Presbyterian* (New York: John Gray, 1857), 16. For a slightly different interpretation of Natural rights, see Albert Taylor Bledsoe, *An Essay on Slavery and Liberty* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1856). Bledsoe was initially an Episcopal minister, then later in life, a Methodist. In between those positions, when lecturing as a professor of Mathematics at the University of Virginia, he published *An Essay on Slavery and Liberty* which also dealt with the issue of Human rights. Still, he strongly opposed the Jeffersonian view, stating, "There are inalienable rights, we admit — inalienable both because the individual cannot transfer them, and because society can never rightfully deprive any man of their enjoyment. But life and liberty are not 'among these.' There are inalienable rights, we admit, but then such abstractions are the edge-tools of political science, with which it is dangerous for either men or children to play. They may inflict deep wounds on the cause of humanity; they can throw no light on the great problem of slavery." 37.

suffused with infidelity. Such an attitude made the foundational philosophy of the country a force of evil requiring resistance in the eyes of Southern ministers who took this view. Such a narrative resonated with people who believed themselves to be conserving orthodoxy in the face of religious and philosophical deviance.

If rights were not inalienable, as Ross asserted, from whence came the rights that the South was so vocal in defending for herself? And why were these rights different from the rights of enslaved people? Southern ministers did their best to answer these questions and flatten out the inconsistent usage of "rights." In 1850, Charleston's Second Presbyterian Church opened a church for the Black population of Charleston overseen by White elders. This new initiative was unpopular in Charleston as it stoked the widespread Southern fears about gatherings of Black people and reminded the White population of the Denmark Vesey plot twenty-eight years prior.<sup>318</sup> Second Presbyterian brought in the most famous theologian, orator, and public intellectual in the South: James Henley Thornwell, to celebrate the opening and allay White fears. The sermon that he delivered on that day became one of the most important and influential defenses of Southern slavery and was printed as a pamphlet as well as reproduced in full in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*.<sup>319</sup> To assuage the fears of those who felt such a church would be a threat to social stability and ferment dissent and rebellion, Thornwell assured them that it would instead be a bulwark to duty and that the Christian faith taught to the Black population would counter "insubordination and rebellion."<sup>320</sup>

His discourse was entitled *The Rights and Duties of Masters*. He argued that the North was engaging in "speculative rights of man" and the "subversion of the cherished institutions of our fathers and the hopes of the Human race."<sup>321</sup> There was a dichotomy in his mind: the new-fangled idea of human rights on the one hand and the idea of rights that had been bequeathed by those who had gone before on the other. The crescendo of his argument was the claim that duties and rights emerge from particular social relations and stations, not from eternity or nature. He declared that not all rights applied to enslaved people because "they are not essential, but contingent; they do not spring from

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<sup>318</sup> See anonymous, most likely James Henley Thornwell or James B. Adger, "The Religious Instruction of the Black Population" in *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 1, no. 3 (December 1847), 89. Also John Bailey Adger, *My Life and Times: 1810-1899* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee for Publications, 1899), 170.

<sup>319</sup> James Henley Thornwell, *The Rights and Duties of Masters: A Sermon Preached at the Dedication of A Church Erected in Charleston, S.C., For the Benefit and Instruction of the Coloured Population*. (Charleston, SC: Steam Press of Walker & James, 1850) and published as "Slavery and the Religious Instruction of the Colored Population," *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 4, no. 1 (July 1850): 105-141.

<sup>320</sup> Thornwell, *Rights and Duties*, 7

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid*, 9.



humanity simply considered."<sup>322</sup> For Thornwell, rights emerged in a historical context and were passed down through time through inheritance. No one was owed them by virtue of existing. Instead, rights were given to humans according to God's decree regarding where each human being should be born.

For Southern ministers, rights were not found in nature and certainly not back in an unknown state of nature in the dim and distant past. Thornwell's influential address offered one solution to the "problem" of natural rights, deriving them from providence and sociability. But the very idea of natural rights, coming as it did from the rationalist, deist, and Enlightenment intellectual traditions, presented many problems and concerns for orthodox theologians. In his *Lectures of the Philosophy and Practice of Slavery* (1856), the Tennessee Methodist minister and President of Randolph-Macon College, William A. Smith, argued against the Lockean idea that Man entered into forms of social contract from a state of pure freedom. Smith wrote that the natural state of Man "is not known to history, any more than to us, that any set of men ever existed in this way. This, then, is a merely hypothetical state."<sup>323</sup> He claimed that no time of natural freedom had existed since the creation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Eden, so Locke's "state of nature" was considered a-historical. Such a speculative idea could form no basis for human rights and social relations. Rather, Smith postulated that inequality was the actual state of nature; "inequality is the law of heaven. He who complains of this is not less unwise than the prisoner who frets at his condition and chafes himself against the bars and bolts of the prison which securely confines him!"<sup>324</sup> For Smith, social relations were inherently hierarchical. Like Thornwell, Smith argued that rights were defined only by the relative positions that people found themselves in - including those of slave and master - and rights brought with them duties, responsibilities, and the imperative of preservation.

In 1849, John Bailey Adger, fresh back from serving as a missionary in Armenia, argued against an ascendant view of human rights, deriving from nature, which he feared was significantly threatening both slavery and the system of racial hierarchy that would provide him with his new field of mission work among the Black population of Charleston. He wrote that he indeed believed there were such things as rights, which "belong to man as such" to the extent that "without them, he could not be a *man*." However, he did not define these rights specifically but argued that the more prescient issue was inherited rights. He saw them as "[accruing] in the progress of society, and ... appertain not to man as such, but to man in particular providential circumstances and relations." However, this argument did

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>323</sup> Smith, *Lectures on the Philosophy and Practice of Slavery*, 68.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid, 64.

not mean that they were not natural rights. Inherited rights were precisely what Adger considered to be natural rights. Going on, he explained, "These rights are natural as others because society and civilization which develop them are natural, but they cannot be separated from the circumstances and relations which determine them; and hence, men in other circumstances and other relations can lay no claim to them." In his mind, then, an enslaved person could only have "the rights of a slave."<sup>325</sup>

Those rights that developed during history could and should be inherited, which is what Adger identified as the great principle at stake in both the English Civil War and the American Revolution. He devoted multiple pages to cataloging how inherited rights were developed, defended, and maintained across the centuries, particularly in the Anglophone world. For him, God's providence lay behind these rights, and they were not to be gained by revolution or violence but could be maintained against the threat of removal by those who already had them. Interestingly, Adger stated, "We would not deny that there had been in the affairs of men, under providential guidance, a progress of liberty." And "This progress of liberty it may well be the will of the almighty ruler to extend until free institutions become universal."<sup>326</sup> Thus he left open the possibility that one day formerly enslaved people might be entitled to the same inherited rights that he enjoyed. Yet, it was not through rebellion or violence that this could be allowed to happen, but through slow providential means. He remarked, "It is curious indeed, as a question of historical philosophy, to see how exceedingly *gradual* was the process by which Christianity operated in the abolition of slavery."<sup>327</sup> He believed, therefore, that if slavery was to be abolished, it should again be through a gradual and slow process. Indeed, it would not be through the agitations of Northern abolitionists who entangled suspect theology with errant political philosophy in their doctrines of equality and human rights. Slavery, in Adger's view, was perfectly compatible with natural rights as, properly understood, inherited rights could be described as natural. And to him, history proved this to be a fact.

Southerners felt great unease with the language of natural and human rights because of the challenge these concepts presented to the doctrine of Original Sin. To many theologians, the idea of an inalienable right to liberty appeared to imply an overly optimistic view of humanity's ability for goodness and an ordered society. Furthermore, it also had the potential to challenge a traditional view of the purpose of government and social relations as regulating human sinfulness. The doctrine of Original Sin was contended in many theological battles in the early republic and antebellum periods.

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<sup>325</sup> John Bailey Adger, "The Christian Doctrine of Human Rights and Slavery," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 2, no. 4 (March 1849): 572-573.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid*, 577.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid*, 578.

For example, the New Divinity School, self-proclaimed heirs to Jonathon Edwards, who included Samuel Hopkins, Joseph Bellamy, and Timothy Dwight, were perceived by Some Southerners, Presbyterians in particular, as undermining the effects of Original Sin by focusing on the distinction between an individual's moral and natural ability to avoid sin. In addition, the New Divinity School was viewed as promoting an overly optimistic conception of society through theories about the moral government of God. Southern suspicions of theological innovation in the North only heightened in the next generation after the New Divinity School. Northern minister Nathaniel Taylor further eroded confessional orthodoxy in the 1820s by rejecting the imputation of Adams's sin to all humanity. In addition, the Presbyterian ministers George Duffield and Albert Barnes were tried for heresy over their teaching on Original Sin but exonerated. These cases in the North contributed to the division of the Presbyterian denomination.<sup>328</sup> The weight of the doctrine of Original Sin was not a theological nicety. Southern ministers saw it as impacting rights, duties, human government, and social relations. Thornwell, who proclaimed that he "love[d] the Westminster standards," taught extensively on the Fall of Man and its results. He took an orthodox Calvinist position, insisting on the total depravity of people and a complete inability to avoid sinning apart from grace, imputed from Adam to his posterity.<sup>329</sup> Thornwell maintained a strict distinction between the freedom a Christian could enjoy in Christ on the one hand and social and political freedom on the other. This view was not unique to the South, but attacks on it came predominantly from the North.

Thomas Smyth, native of Northern Ireland and minister of Charleston's Second Presbyterian Church from 1834 to 1873, shared Thornwell's doctrine of Original Sin and argued that government, as instituted in scripture, resulted from the fall. He wrote that the purpose of government was,

"Obviously to mitigate the social miseries of man; to lay restraints upon social outrage; to secure to the industrious and well disposed, the quiet possession of their life and property, and to afford, at least, some degree of peaceful opportunity for the diffusion of that restorative, by which alone the apostate children of men can be brought back to the God that made them."<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> See Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South Vol. I*, 364, and Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience*, 152. Also helpful are Bruce Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathon Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), and Holifield, *Theology in America*. See Jonathan Sassi *Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>329</sup> See Thornwell, *Discourse Delivered by Dr. Thornwell Upon Being Inaugurated as Professor of Theology*, as well as "Lecture XIII: Original Sin," *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell, D.D., LL.D. Vol. I - Theological*, ed. John Bailey Adger (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee on Publication, 1870): 301-351.

<sup>330</sup> Thomas Smyth, "National Righteousness," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 12, no. 1 (April 1859): 26.

Thus, government was to restrain, curtail, and remove evil, which in the minds of Southerners necessitated the maintenance of slavery. But more than this, Smyth's article was an argument for the spirituality of the church and the fact that it is not the role of the church to use government to provide an ever more expanded liberty for all its subjects. He wrote, "These expedients have been tried, and what has been the result? The history of mankind is but the history of crime and misery."<sup>331</sup> He went on to catalog all the ways history is full of sin and wrongdoing despite the attempts of humanity to avoid it. In doing this, he highlighted the need for Southern ministers to look back to root their ideas of doctrine and politics in the past. Smyth recommended a rejection of that which was new in the world and that which re-conceived the origins of humanity's social condition. Slavery and racial difference, for him, could be historically proven from the earliest accounts of human origins in the Bible, but they were also explicable in the development of rights and human government. Rights were seen, therefore, as historically developed and claimed by White men. Black men were not to be the recipients of these rights under the auspices of natural rights, nor on account of a positive assessment of man's ability to live freely. Ultimately this became yet another argument for conserving what existed, resisting change, and seeing attempts to broach the question of Black rights as infidelity and innovation.

### *Race and the Origins of Humanity*

The issue of race still posed a problem to Southern ministers concerned with defending slavery. Their narratives of slavery in America, the history of slave missions, and their discussion of rights all had their functions, but none entirely explained why there were different races in the first place. For this, Southern ministers had to reach further back to examine the history of the earliest periods of humanity. In doing so, they continued to position themselves as those maintaining orthodoxy in the face of theological innovation in the North. In debates over the origins and nature of racial difference and distinction, Southern ministers spied an opportunity to present themselves as both biblically conservative and invested in the religious life of their enslaved populations. In this way, they could integrate the specifically racial nature of slavery into their view of history in a way that complimented their historic Southern Christian identity.

During the antebellum years, a full scientific racism developed under the pioneering work of scientists such as the Pennsylvanian Samuel George Morton, whose research into skull shapes and sizes, *Crania Americana* (1839), inspired many of the works by Southern ministers written in defense

<sup>331</sup> Smyth, *National Righteousness*, 35.

of monogenesis.<sup>332</sup> Intellectuals willing to accept the implications of new theories regarding the age and origins of humanity, including the idea that there may be multiple human origins, saw an easy connection to the practice of race slavery. If it could be proven that the different races of humanity were different species with separate sources, then it would potentially give an immediate boost to any argument that White people not only could but should enslave Black people. This endpoint may have been one of which Southern ministers were perfectly accepting. However, the arguments made to arrive at this conclusion horrified them because they were committed to maintaining a traditional reading of the Genesis account. Southern churchmen represented themselves as having an ultimate commitment to maintaining scriptural doctrines. They had to argue against a separate origin of humanity out of necessity to this commitment, even if it made their task of defending slavery more difficult. This was not a fact that many Southern clergy admitted. Instead, they simply believed it was entirely possible to defend the absolute unity of the race and the full humanity of Black people while at the same time arguing for enough difference between the races to make slavery of one by another legitimate and desirable.<sup>333</sup> Walking this tightrope was used by Southern ministers to strengthen their claim to be conservative, orthodox, and at the same time, more compassionate than those who would deny the full equality of humanity to the enslaved Black population.

Southern theologians staked their claim to biblical orthodoxy and morality through multiple discussions of monogenesis.<sup>334</sup> The intense attention given to the origin of races reflected not only perceived attacks on the biblical creation account but also the prevailing culture of primitivism that

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<sup>332</sup> See Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 121-167, and Audrey and Brian Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>333</sup> Thus George Howe, in his article "The Unity of the Races," *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 3, no. 1 (July 1849): 166. can write so strongly that, "The conclusion to which we are brought, by what we fear will be to our readers a tedious deduction from facts, is what Adam in the beginning in some measure prophetically announced, that Eve, "is the mother of all living," and that God hath made of one blood, race and lineage, all the families of men that dwell upon the earth; that they, therefore, are our brethren, and, descending from one and the same federal head, are under the same condemnation, from which they are to be delivered by the same economy of redemption. To the Christian man, national distinctions disappear, in some measure when he looks upon them as originated by the diversity of race, and still more when he looks upon them in the light of revelations and the plan of mercy, in which there is neither Greek, not Jew, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free." Yet, Howe is still a pro-slavery Minister.

<sup>334</sup> Multiple articles appeared on this topic in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*. Presbyterians prided themselves on a modern view of science, desiring to plunder its riches to bedeck the biblical account with jewels of evidence and proof. They appointed the first professor of natural sciences at a seminary in the Person of James Woodrow. It was clear, however, that when science and the Bible stood at odds against one another, which was to be given the greater weight, Rev. Abner Porcher predicted that "a complete history of the conflicts between religion and pretended science would turn it with overwhelming power against the latter." James Woodrow, "Inaugural Address," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 14, no. 4 (January 1862): 505-530. Abner A. Porter, "The Unity of the Race," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 4, no.3 (January 1851): 359.

encouraged Southern ministers to locate racial slavery in the past.<sup>335</sup> Discussing the origins of humanity enabled them to place difference and hierarchy at the very start of the world as an organizing principle of humanity rather than just a simple historical outworking of contingent factors. The Southern system of racial slavery, in this way, could be seen as having not just an ancient precedent but an originating precedent. Southern ministers were aware of their need to prove the unity of humanity and how there could be diversity within that unity. If they could do that, it was only a small step to show that diversity meant difference, inequality, and slavery.

As well as pastoring an influential church in the heart of Charleston, Thomas Smyth was prolific author and polemical writer who published an extensive tome entitled *The Unity of the Human Races Proved to be the Doctrine of Scripture Reason and Science* (1851). It emerged from several articles published in various religious newspapers of the South and received an overwhelmingly positive response from reviewers across the Anglophone world.<sup>336</sup> For example, the first ten pages contained 16 letters of commendation from theological heavyweights across America and the British Isles, including the Free Church of Scotland Seminary Professors William Cunningham and Robert Candlish and the revered missionary Alexander McDuff. This was followed by seventeen pages of positive reviews from the national and international press.<sup>337</sup> The impetus to undertake this work was a discussion between Dr. Agassiz and Rev. Smyth, which took place at the Literary Conversation Club of Charleston in 1846. The debate gave such offense to Smyth as to stimulate him to produce what Colin Kidd called the most influential defense of monogenesis produced in the United States.<sup>338</sup> Dr. Agassiz was a Professor of Zoology and Geology at Harvard and argued for multiple creations of the different races to maintain his ardent belief in a separation of distinct species. Smyth believed that history would support the biblical account, and it is illustrative of his attitude and methodology that the chapters on the biblical narrative are entitled "The Historical and Doctrinal Evidence of Scripture." He wrote that "The 10th and 11th chapters of Genesis are unquestionably the best ethnographical document on the face of the earth...and all soberly-conducted antiquarian research and almost every spadeful of earth thrown out of the buried catacombs and palaces of Egypt and Nineveh, do but tend to confirm it."<sup>339</sup>

Smyth had imbibed contemporary philosophies of the development of civilization according to

<sup>335</sup> Hughes, *Illusions of Innocence*.

<sup>336</sup> The newspapers and journals in which the articles first appeared were *The Southern Christian Advocate*, *The Southern Baptist*, *The Southern Presbyterian*, *The New Orleans Presbyterian*, *The Presbyterian of the West*, and *The Watchman and Observer of Virginia*.

<sup>337</sup> Rev. Thomas Smyth, *The Unity of the Races Proved to be the Doctrine of Scripture, Reason, and Science. With a Review of the Present Position and Theory of Professor Agassiz* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1851), 1-27.

<sup>338</sup> Kidd, *The Forging of the Races*, 127.

<sup>339</sup> Smyth, *The Unity of the Races*, 100.

racial virtues and vices, believing that the initial roots of all the world's different peoples could be traced back to either Shem, Ham, or Japheth. He wrote,

“On these three races, a separate destiny was pronounced, God impressing upon them a moral and physical nature in accordance with the destiny to which each of them was appointed. The promise of extension was given to the race of Japheth — of religion to the progeny of Shem — and of servility to the descendants of Ham. Within the limits of this threefold destiny, this threefold race conveyed to their descendants those varieties of outward form and moral character which seem to be inseparably linked with their respective conditions.”<sup>340</sup>

In this view, Smyth caused an argument about the unity of humanity to become a defense of the distinction inherent in the social structures experienced in his adopted home. The condition of Ham could be found, according to Smyth, in the moral qualities endowed upon that unfortunate son of Noah by the cursing of Genesis 9. This view would be picked up, adapted, and deployed readily across the antebellum and Civil War periods by ministers concerned with giving historical weight to the system of racial slavery. Ministers could use Smyth's argument to explain further how they, as White Southerners were decedents of historic peoples, destined for more extraordinary things if only they held fast and maintained that which they had inherited.

Narratives from the early chapters of Genesis, especially chapter 9, have been a mainstay of biblical defenses of slavery throughout the church's history. The curse of Ham myth was taken up with great enthusiasm in the South as an explanation that at once preserved the biblical account of the origins of humanity while also allowing for racial differences and a racially based divinely ordained system of slavery. In a later chapter, I will address this theory and its various uses in the South. For now, suffice it to say that all Southern ministers agreed with the historicity of the three sons of Noah, even if they did not necessarily agree with the fact that the curse meted out on Ham was linked with African slavery.<sup>341</sup> One such theologian who believed in the historicity of the Noah story but not its relation to slavery was George Howe.<sup>342</sup> In 1849 he reviewed a series of lectures by Josiah Nott,

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid. 85.

<sup>341</sup> Peterson, *Ham and Japheth*, and Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse*.

<sup>342</sup> He composed two significant articles in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* on the subject of monogenesis, yet, before his first one in July 1849, he appended a short essay arguing against the notion that Blackness was a result of the mark of Cain. This was the theory mooted by some, stating that the curse received by Cain after killing his brother, meted out by God, was an adaptation of his skin to the color black. Howe outright condemns this view as not supported by scripture, and indeed, it was not supported by the majority of Southern theologians either, for the simple reason of the flood and the re-population of the world by the sons of Noah. It was not evident in any theory linking Blackness to Cain, how this curse was transmitted, and to whom in a post-diluvian world since all the descendants of Cain had presumably perished in the deluge. Again, this served to highlight the precision with which Southern Theologians treated this subject, not

delivered at the University of Louisiana on *The Relation of the Scientific Origin of Mankind to the Bible*. These lectures were considered controversial in their central contention that the Genesis account was only ever intended to explain the origins of the Caucasian race alone. This argument implied that the Black or African peoples of the earth should be considered a separate species from the White. Howe accused Nott of wishing "that he may not be of the same race" as the "Ethiopian" and not wanting to "view him as even a remote descendant from the same stock with himself." Howe was alarmed that this made the biblical idea of a covenant of redemption with humanity nonsensical, and wanted to know where the Black population, according to Nott, was meant fit into the scheme of salvation. Their sinfulness, redeemability, or otherwise, was a moot point to Nott. Howe was outraged at such an idea and believed this to be the height of infidelity. He responded by undermining Nott's credentials, linking him with figures that Southern ministers would know as acknowledged purveyors of error, declaring, "the man who can take Strauss for a leader, or pin his faith on De Wette's sleeve, is enamored of whatever is wide from sobriety and truth in religion."<sup>343</sup> He went as far as to accuse Nott of seeking to "Sap the foundations of revealed religion."<sup>344</sup> Howe was not pleased that Nott had expressly designed these lectures as a new possible defense for slavery, arguing instead that "If the institution can only be maintained at the sacrifice of the historic verity and full inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures, the Christian who, in past ages, has joyfully met the spoiling of his goods, and death itself for his religion, will again do so, and divorce himself forever from a cause which fears not God nor regards man." Howe left the reader to contemplate that removing the Christian basis for upholding slavery would result in its immediate demise.<sup>345</sup>

## Conclusion

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content to take any argument that legitimized slavery or denigrated the Black race, but instead basing as much of their defense of slavery and racism on biblical exegesis that accorded with their standards of scholarship as they saw it. Rev. George Howe, "The Curse of Ham and the Mark of Cain," *Southern Presbyterian Review*, 3, no. 2 (January 1850): 415-426.

<sup>343</sup> Rev. George Howe, "Nott's Lectures," *Southern Presbyterian Review*, 3, no. 2 (January 1850): 468, reviewing Josiah C. Nott, *Two Lectures on the Connection Between the Biblical and Physical History of Man* (New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1849).

<sup>344</sup> Howe. Nott's Lectures, 486.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid*, 490. Howe wrote about this same subject in the July 1849 Volume of the *Southern Presbyterian Review*; he states that "It has seemed to us, that while the theory of the common origin of the race from one pair, demands our assent because it is taught in the divine word, it also is most accordant with all the facts of history" and this was his view, that history would lend its voice to the truth of the Bible if studies correctly and diligently. He related with delight that even the work he is reviewing, Dr. Prichard's five-volume *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* (1836-47), "When attempting to undermine the bible, end up reinforcing it unawares," saying, "Dr. Murray has spoken of the coincidence, that both Cuvier and Prichard have made but three principal typical varieties of man, and that there were just three branches of the family of Noah; Japhet, Shem, and Ham." Howe, *Unity of the Human Race*, 164.



Southern ministers created historical narratives about slavery that informed Southern Christian identities. Historical identity and slavery went hand in hand and affected one another. Slavery and its defense were shared experiences that drew the Southern denominations together and allowed historic denominational identities to expand to fully Southern ones. The defense of slavery was, therefore, a deeply historical practice; it was also multifaceted and not restricted to simple expositions of scripture. Scripture was high on the agenda, carrying with it an obvious if contested authority in the various churches from which defenses of slavery emanated. Yet scripture could not stand alone; alongside it and undergirding its use were multiple views of history, of the history of man's origin, of the history of the development of human rights, of slavery in America, of abolitionism, and missions to enslaved people. These historical narratives contained a tension not apparent to the Southern theologians during this period. In defending monogenesis, Southern ministers appealed to the unchanging and once-and-for-ever truth of revelation, an essential reality that could not change in its interpretation. Yet, in arguing for inherited rights, they admitted the historically contingent nature of some truths. Rights they held as true urged one another to defend, and sought to retain, developed historically and therefore were subject to change. This reality would bring new realizations with emancipation and the end of the Civil War. Another contradiction in the claims of Southern ministers was found in the fact that many tropes, such as the innocence of the South in the origins of American slavery or the inability of Black populations to handle freedom, had very little to do with biblical argumentation. They were simple assertions, emotional appeals, and appropriations of secular rhetoric, baptized for use in the church.

This reality did not divest these tropes of their power in a South convinced of its own righteousness and a Christianity fueled by historical stories of fidelity in the face of opposition. Southern ministers appealed to the history of slavery in the American context, painting a picture of it as forced upon the South, not their responsibility, but brought to them against their will for a higher purpose. The North was therefore painted as hypocritical in its historical amnesia about its role in slavery and especially the slave trade, which Southern ministers had no qualms in condemning as sinful. Southerners could be represented as those who quietly cared for and converted their slaves, while Northern fanatics railed against them on the grounds of infidelity and error and fermented division and strife in the republic. These historical narratives fueled feelings of difference and victimization by the North and informed the religious outrage against the North in the lead-up to secession and the election of Lincoln. As the decade of the 1850s drew to a close, abolitionism and

anti-slavery movements gained momentum and entered the mainstream of political thought, culminating with the victory of the Republican Party in 1860. Formerly moderate voices seemed to grow in their extremism following John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. The South became more and more afraid that its interests were under threat. It became more apparent that the slave system, which formed the backbone of their Southern society and which they had spent so much time and spilled so much ink defending, was in danger.

This feeling was reinforced by the way Southern ministers narrated the history of slavery. In their accounts, emancipation had caused great poverty and degeneration to befall any society that attempted it. This convinced many Southerners that their fate would be worse than death if abolitionists held power. Linking abolitionism to infidelity, a loose view of human depravity, deist speculation on human rights, and democratic excesses was dangerous when a "nation's righteousness," as Thomas Smyth had argued, relied on an acknowledgment of man's depravity. Government was meant to restrain sin, not to bring about benevolent change, and certainly not to move towards a-historical levels of liberty for those who were not entitled to such rights.

Furthermore, the South had built up a picture of slavery as a divine charge, historically brought about under the care of a God who had promised that all nations would succumb to the power of the gospel message. Those who advocated for missions to the enslaved population saw this happening before their eyes; God had brought enslaved people from Africa through the evil workings of avaricious British and Northern man-stealers only to overrule that evil for good and bring about the conversion of formerly pagan Black people. If the Republican Party gained power and slavery was threatened, what would become of this plan? Could the gospel be effective among a free Black population? Southern ministers did not wish to find out.

Even though many Southern ministers opposed secession, their views on slavery fostered it and contributed to a culture that enacted it. Their view of history provided a rationalization and ideological arguments in its favor. It would not take much imagination on the part of Southern ministers who got behind the cause of the Confederacy as soon as secession became a reality to heighten and restate these arguments now with more urgency, vitriol, and more at stake. This is what we will see in the following chapters. The groundwork had been laid, the stage for war had been set, and the polemic fireworks of the antebellum period became missiles in full execution of military aims and Southern independence.

## **Section II: The Civil War**

## Chapter Four: Universal History, Racial Slavery, and the Purpose of the Confederacy

“God teaches man...by three books, the Bible nature and history...history in its own unbiased truth...is but the footprints of the ever-living God on time.”<sup>346</sup> So stated the Methodist preacher Rev. W. Rees to his Texan congregation in early 1863. It was an idea that many Christians from both North and South would have accepted. History, for them, was not a random series of events nor a chronicle of man's free action apart from any purpose. Rather, it was the outplaying of God's plans laid down in eternity. The key to understanding this plan was to be found in the Bible, and its principles would be read in the annals of mankind's existence. As such, history was eminently practical and could be used to discern the workings of God and the outlines of his design for the ultimate ends of creation. Knowledge of this kind could have immediate application for the future course of a nation, at no time more so than in the midst of war. As the *North Carolina Presbyterian* put it, "The object of the study of history is one of the noblest of the pursuits of man. It is to furnish minds with the knowledge of the great art on which depends the existence, the preservation, the happiness, and the prosperity of states and nations."<sup>347</sup> As Northern and Southern ministers peered into the depths of the past, the lessons they learned differed radically, and as they applied the principles of those lessons to the present and looked to the future, their visions of what would come to pass were in stark contrast. It was racial slavery which drove the interpretative wedge between these two groups of ministers. The majority of Northern ministers believed history taught that God's intentions for mankind required preserving the Union and eradicating slavery. At the same time, for Southerners, history necessitated the preservation of slavery and the disruption of the Union. If the Civil War represented a theological crisis, as Mark Noll has famously called it, then the center of the crisis was located in the area of the theology of history.

This chapter seeks to understand history's role in the Southern Protestant churches during the war and how theories of universal history were used to formulate ideas about the place of the Confederacy and slavery in God's plans. At the outbreak of hostilities that followed secession, the authority of history within the church shifted to a new stage of intensity and urgency. Ministers turned to scripture to explain the war, rationalize it, justify it, and predict its outcome, but not to scripture alone. Alongside their exegesis of biblical texts, ministers turned to historical examples, precedents, or

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<sup>346</sup> W. Rees, *A Sermon on Divine Providence; Delivered February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1863, In the Methodist Church at Austin* (Austin TX: Texas Almanac office, 1863), 7.

<sup>347</sup> “The Lessons of History,” *North Carolina Presbyterian*, April 6, 1864, 1.

illustrations that would underline any particular point they wished to make about the course of the war, aims, or justification. It was a technique that lent weight to the argument of a sermon or periodical article; history was used authoritatively, relying on the belief that God was the author of historical events. Any number of essays, newspaper editorials, or fast-day sermons contained phrases such as, "All history proves," "Need I say, to those who have read history," or "Does not all history teach" followed by an exposition of a principle that could be seen at work in the past, and being worked out in the events of the Civil War.<sup>348</sup> The war necessitated this historical turn in the minds of Southern ministers. They felt that they were specially placed as educated in history and versed in the Bible to interpret the times and to read the hidden meaning of events.

Current historical scholarship on religion and the Civil War lacks a full appreciation for the place of history in the life and intellectual output of the Southern Protestant churches, particularly concerning the continuity of thought between the antebellum period and the Civil War itself. Standard works on the role of religion in the Civil War begin with secession and the outbreak of hostilities and therefore miss the fact that the war acted as an intensifier of beliefs, attitudes, and theories which had been at play in the church's life for the preceding decades.<sup>349</sup> The figures discussed in this chapter were deploying the themes and ideas I have discussed in the previous chapters with added fervency and at a higher register of urgency. The growing tensions between North and South over ecclesiastical differences and the morality of slavery had given these ministers a public voice; the war would further propel them to places of central importance guarding the heart and soul of the Confederacy. Therefore, the sentiments they expressed during the war were the most refined articulation of their Southern consciousness; in this context, historic identities developed in denominational histories and seminaries expanded to encompass the Confederacy such that religious and national identities became intertwined.

Furthermore, Mark Noll has recently argued that pro-slavery advocates "[Condemned] all appeals to history as the illegitimate imposition of fallible modern consciousness on the infallible word of God." This position arises from his correct observation that some abolitionist arguments were based on the historical "progressive development of humankind's moral sensibilities," which had direct implications for the practice of slavery. This method of argumentation could be controversial or simply

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<sup>348</sup> These examples come from, in order, Edwin T. Winkler's *Duties of the citizen soldier: : A sermon, delivered in the First Baptist Church of Charleston, S.C. ... before the Moultrie Guards* (Charleston, SC: A J Burke, 1861), 11; Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, 18; Richard Wilmer, *Future good, the explanation of present reverses: A Sermon Preached at Mobile and Sundry other Points in the State of Alabama During the Spring of 1864* (Charlotte, NC: Protestant Episcopal Church Publishing Association, 1864), 9.

<sup>349</sup> See, for example, Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, Byrd, *A Baptism of Fire and Blood*, and Miller, Stout, and Reagan Wilson ed. *Religion and the American Civil War*.

unacceptable to Southern minds.<sup>350</sup> However, this was not the only theory that could emerge from a view of the development of history. Pro-slavery advocates - supremely in the short time of the Confederacy - could and did regularly appeal to the authority of historical arguments about the development of humankind's civilizational capabilities, which would directly affect the role of slavery within society. Thus far from condemning appeals to history based on development, even moral development, Southern ministers in the South during the Civil War show how central the development of history was to pro-slavery ideology.

Historians have also known for some time about the correlative of the Southern uses of history discussed here, namely the American obsession with providence, which forms the basis for the work of Nicholas Guyatt and George Rable.<sup>351</sup> What is missing is an appreciation that attempts to understand this providence were given in schemes often couched in the language of philosophies of history. In the process of inventing these schemes, Southern clergy were left holding together in tension ideas of progress and conservation, movement and stability. As ministers looked inward to see what differentiated the Confederacy from other nations, pondering what made them unique and what they could contribute to the history of humanity, one answer repeated itself; racial slavery. As the South's closest cultural interlocutors, the North, Britain, and other European countries became more and more overtly outspoken against slavery, Southern ministers drew upon their historical identity as bulwarks of truth to theorize that historical progress was propelled by maintenance and by continuity, not by reform and change, but by holding on to that which is under threat. Providence stood over the events of the Civil War and upheld them, but it was interpreting history which proved the course the war was to take.

This was the great aid to the Civil War effort that the clergy could contribute, and they did so with abandon. The centrality of the church to the Southern Civil War effort in general terms is recognized by the indispensable work of Drew Gilpin Faust, whose vision of the construction of a Confederate nationalism gives a central role to the voice of Southern ministers.<sup>352</sup> Similarly, James Farmer's classic *Confederate Moral and Church Propaganda* laid the groundwork for seeing the church as a major contributor to the morale of the Confederacy, which enabled the South to continue as long as it did.<sup>353</sup> This chapter deepens our understanding of this process by arguing that it was a belief in the authority of history in its universal sense which enabled Southern ministers to engage in this work and

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<sup>350</sup> Mark Noll, *America's Book*, 420-421.

<sup>351</sup> Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples* and Nicholas Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>352</sup> Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 22, 28.

<sup>353</sup> Silver *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*, 95-96.

fulfill this role. Individual ministers, notably Benjamin Morgan Palmer and the Episcopal Bishop of Georgia, Steven Elliott, who both feature prominently in this chapter, have received some attention for their view of history and the place of the Confederacy within it.<sup>354</sup> Describing the latter, Dwyn M. Mounger called Elliott "an abuser of history" and felt he suffered under a "delusion" regarding his ability to discern God's blessing or chastisement in historical events.<sup>355</sup> The reality is that, regardless of the palatability of Elliott's conclusions, he was using accepted ideas of how history worked and how God was involved in it and drawing upon philosophies of history that gained wide acceptance in the early and mid-nineteenth centuries. Similarly, Palmer was no outlier but representative of a wider trend, which I will demonstrate in this chapter by placing him alongside other less widely studied figures.<sup>356</sup>

In this chapter, I will examine the ways in which history shaped the Southern Protestant church's interpretations of the war. I will pull out the constructions of a narrative of universal history from the discourses and articles spoken and written by churchmen of the South, arguing that ministers felt themselves in a privileged position to pronounce upon the war from the Bible and history. They did so in elaborately thought out grand schemes that, while under the divine hand of a God concerned with the salvation of his people, also gave pride of place to the Confederacy and victory in the war. Creating these interpretations of the war was not a centralized process intentionally undertaken by any official organ of any of the major denominations. Rather individuals within denominations, with their own platforms, congregations, and publishing output, theorized about the nature of history and God's role in the world. There was significant uniformity of thought across denominations due to the similarity of theological and historical literature consumed by ministers of all stripes, a shared commitment to the place of slavery in society, as well as a shared cultural and intellectual milieu. Discerning the meaning

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<sup>354</sup> See Timothy F. Reilly, "Benjamin M. Palmer: Secessionist Become Nationalist," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 18, no. 3 (Summer 1977): 287-301 and Stephen R. Haynes, "Race, National Destiny, and the Sons of Noah in the Thought of Benjamin M. Palmer," *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 78, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 125-43.

<sup>355</sup> Dwyn M. Mounger, "History as Interpreted by Stephen Elliott," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 44, no. 3 (September 1975): 285-317. While she does acknowledge "Elliott's interpretation of history should not be snubbed" and that "His overarching conception of the historical process was, from a traditional Christian standpoint, sound, even if his application of it to particular events may be blameworthy." She does little to place him in the broader context of Christian belief or use of history in the South. See Ted Booth, "Trapped by His Hermeneutic: An Apocalyptic Defense of Slavery," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 87, no. 2 (June 2018): 159-79; also, William Clebsch, "Stephen Elliott's View of the Civil War," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 31, no. 1 (March 1962): 7-20. Clebsch focuses mainly on Elliott's view of the Civil War in retrospect rather than his use of history during the war. No full-scale biography of Elliott exists. However, there is Thomas Hanckel's *Sermons by The Right Reverend Stephen Elliott D.D., Late Bishop of Georgia with a Memoir* (New York: Pot and Amery, 1867).

<sup>356</sup> James Warley Miles is an example of a Southern minister whose view of history has been examined, albeit briefly. Ralph Luker, *A Southern Tradition in Theology and Social Criticism 1830-1930: The Religious Liberalism and Social Conservatism of James Warley Miles, William Porcher Dubose and Edgar Gardner Murphy* (New York: Edwin Mellon Press, 1984), 24-29.

of the war flattened the distinctions between denominations, and piety was elevated higher than the particular concerns of any one group. Central to this use of universal history was the belief that slavery would be vindicated, which served to make the role of the slaveholder integral to any conceived victory and the future greatness of the Confederacy.<sup>357</sup> The central tenets of the thought of many prominent ministers of the South were that this slave system was defensible from scriptures but in need of reform if it was to result in the blessing and final triumph of God that Christians in the South were told to pray for and anticipate. This would enable the longed-for “salvation of Africa” through the agency of a patriarchal-inspired planter society. I will show that Southern ministers were thoroughly committed to using the language of philosophies of history and the idea of development to construct meta-narratives of universal history which fore-fronted the church, the Confederacy, and racial slavery in the purposes of God.

### *The Southern Minister as Interpreter of History*

The Civil War was, like all wars, an event that required explanation, rationalization, and justification for those participating in it. History could help with this task. Ministers of the churches in the South felt themselves in a privileged position to discern and articulate the lessons contained in the past. This view arose from the conviction that history could only be interpreted correctly through the lens of biblical revelation; it was the Bible that provided the plan for the end of creation and the purpose of the world, and knowing those would aid in understanding the times. Presbyterian minister Rev. Moses D. Hoge declared in 1862, “It is only from the standpoint of the believer in divine revelation that the world's history can be properly understood, and its true significance appreciated.” He posited that

“It is only there that the hand and mind of Jehovah can be seen at work in the rise and fall of dynasties and kingdoms, as well as the hand and mind of man. It is only from that post of observation that the Almighty, Himself, can be descried walking in the magnificent procession of events which compose the world's annals, and which make human history a drama.”<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Genovese, *A Consuming Fire* is an extended discussion about the centrality of slave reform to religious Southern Whites. He demonstrates that Southern Whites believed reform of slavery to be central to the Confederacy's success and that once it fell, Whites believed that they were being punished for their failure to enact slavery along biblical lines, certainly not for the slavery itself. Genovese is on slightly less solid ground in the argument that southern Whites began to regret or feel guilt for slavery; this is harder to prove in any general sense despite the odd example here and there. This chapter, and my theses more broadly, adds the insight that an appeal to universal history allowed this view of slavery, and it was at once biblical and Biblicist and yet also did not preclude ideas of progress or the development of society over time.

<sup>358</sup> Rev. Moses D. Hoge, D. D. “*The Christian Statesman.*” *A Discourse Delivered at the Funeral of Hon. John Hemphill*



From start to finish, the course of history was seen as under the guidance of divine providence. This providence encompassed everything from the minute control of the exact destination of every bullet fired, to the outcome of battles, the fate of nations, the definite ends of races, peoples, and creation itself. On this grand narrative level of history, the trained minister could make sense of the creation and existence of the Confederacy and the maintenance of slavery. This required the eyes of faith, as Benjamin Morgan Palmer explained, “With the key furnished in the books of the Old Testament, we cannot fail to see that...providence aside from history is a blind enigma — history apart from providence is a sense-less fable.”<sup>359</sup> This did not mean, however, that biblical history, also referred to as sacred history, and post-biblical, also referred to as profane history, were to be conflated or had the same authority. Despite what rhetorical overstatement could occasionally seem to indicate, Southern clergy were keen to maintain the distinction between the two.<sup>360</sup> The history contained in the Bible was God's revelation to man, and the Bible was the authoritative word of God to which nothing could be added. Post-biblical history, therefore, contained no new revelation. Instead, it was held that the Bible could provide knowledge of the ultimate ends of history and basic principles for how God interacts with nations and people groups; with that knowledge, clergy were then free to try and discern the meaning of historical events. Methodist Bishop George Pierce stated, “The narratives of the Old Testament are not to be regarded as simple paragraphs in general history—mere links connecting, in consecutive order, the events of the olden time, but as embodying great principles in human society and in the divine administration, vital alike to the well-being of the one and the uniformity of the other.”<sup>361</sup>

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*LL.D., in the Second Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Va., Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>, 1862* (Richmond, VA: Enquirer Press, 1862), 14.

<sup>359</sup> Benjamin M. Palmer, “The Rainbow Round the Throne: Or Judgment Tempered With Mercy,” *Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer, D.D., Delivered Before the General Assembly at Milledgeville, Ga., On the Fast Day, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1863* (Boughton, GA: Nisbet & Barnes, 1863), 30. It has been commented by Gardiner Shattuck that “no Southern clergyman saw more religious meaning in the Civil War than Presbyterian Benjamin Morgan Palmer” *A Shield and A Hiding Place: The Religious Life of the Civil War Armies* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 35. Also, by David Cheesborough, “No preacher in the South equaled Palmer in his denunciations of the North, his defense of slavery and the Southern way of life, and his advocacy of separation from the union.” *God Ordained this War*, 197.

<sup>360</sup> Johan Kurtz, *Manuel of Sacred History*, 29. The history textbook used at Columbia Theological Seminary contained a helpful taxonomy of categories of history. He saw 'profane History' as distinct from 'sacred history'; the former “exhibits the general action of God, or his preservation of all things, and his government of the world;” the latter does this but also “exhibits the special action of God manifested in the *revelation* which he has given of himself.” Kurtz believed that “profane history harmoniously combines with sacred history when it assumes its most perfect form, which is universal history.” It is this category, also distinct from pure 'church history' In Kurtz's description, that most Southern Ministers fell into; in Kurtz's words, it “arranges all the developments of profane history...and estimates their importance according to the degree of their influence on the total earthly development of the human race...In this aspect, it is not permitted to over-look the arrangements and revelations of God intended to lead to the happiness and restoration of the human race.”

<sup>361</sup> Rt Rev. George F. Pierce, *The Word of God A Nations Life. A Sermon, Preached Before the Bible Convention of the Confederate States. Augusta, Georgia, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1862.* (Augusta: Office of the Constitutionalist, 1862), 5.

In the context of war, it became of utmost importance to discern what those principles were and how they could be applied to the Confederacy to ensure it was constituted according to God's plans and secure its place in history. This attitude was reinforced no more than when events seemed to align with what ministers expected, which only confirmed their preexisting notions of God's dealings with the Confederacy and how they aligned with history. Following the Confederate victory of first Manassas, Bishop Stephen Elliott claimed that he had correctly predicted the outcome of the battle and thus could be trusted in similar situations throughout the war, saying, “the conclusions then enunciated were deduced, through a train of reasoning, from premises distinctly laid down in the word of God, and acted upon again and again in his dealings with the nations.” To see patterns and repetition of principles in events of history was considered an eminently biblical concept, as R. E. M. Wheelwright reminded his congregation of Confederate troops; the book of Ecclesiastes taught that “there is no new thing under the sun.”<sup>362</sup> Failure to learn the lessons from these patterns could earn scorn and derision from Southern pulpits. It became a favored rhetorical attack against the North to accuse them of being anti-historical and deviating from the wisdom and safety that history could bring. Bishop George Pierce accused the North of being “Swollen with vanity” and argued that “they despise the lessons of the past.”<sup>363</sup>

Southern ministers had to avoid two related pitfalls in their zeal to interpret the course and purpose of history. They had to articulate the idea that the Confederacy had a place in God's plans for history without implying an equivalence between the Confederacy and the church. Similarly, they had to avoid equating the Confederacy with Israel while arguing that the Confederacy could learn lessons from how God related to Israel. While the use of the language of being a “New Israel” was used of the Confederacy it is instructive to keep in mind the words of James Henley Thornwell in his *Fast Day Sermon* of 1860, in which he began by clarifying, “I have no design...to intimate that there is a parallel between Jerusalem and our own commonwealth in relation to the covenant of God,” and, “I am far from believing that we alone, of all the people of the earth, are possessed of the true religion.”<sup>364</sup> Few, if

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<sup>362</sup> Rev. W. H. Wheelwright, *A Discourse Delivered to the Troops Stationed at Gloucester Point VA. February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1862* (Richmond: C. H. Wayne, 1862), 14.

<sup>363</sup> George F. Pierce, “Sermon,” *Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer, D.D., Delivered Before the General Assembly at Milledgeville, Ga., On the Fast Day, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1863* (Boughton, GA: Nisbet & Barnes, 1863), 6.

<sup>364</sup> For example, see Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States*, and Conrad Cherry ed., *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). I do not intend to argue against any of the thesis or premises of these books. American exceptionalism, a belief in God's special providential care for America, the language of being God's chosen people, or A new Israel is clearly a significant ingredient to American self-identity from a very early stage. My contention is simply to keep in mind that the mainline denominations, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopalian, had a developed theology of the unity between the Old and New Covenant that placed the church as the full development of the old testament and no specific nation fulfilled that role. Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 191, contends that Israel was used as a metaphor more commonly in the Southern Churches. James Henley Thornwell, *National Sins: A Fast Day Sermon: Preached in the Presbyterian Church*,

any, clergymen would have countenanced the idea that The South or the Confederacy had replaced Israel as God's covenant people. Rather it was held that nations could, as Presbyterian Scotland had been, be covenanted peoples that stood in relation to God in a way analogous to Israel, but not as a replacement or super-session of the covenant of Grace that was enacted as the distinguishing mark of the invisible church. What ministers would have accepted, however, was that Israel acted as a model society, a blueprint for how a nation should be before God, and an example of how God deals with nations, for example, through blessings for obedience and punishment for neglecting God's law. The Confederacy could be more or less like Israel, depending on the righteousness of its people or the sheer quantity of Christians in its population. An example of how this worked can be found in the thought of Rev. W. Rees of Texas, with whom this chapter began; he taught that "The Jewish polity presents the divine instituted model government of the world." And again later, "this, then was a model republic. It was also a slave holding government" such that "the only nation that can hope to be permanent...a nation that worships God through Christ, a confederation of independent states, having a constitution admitting domestic slaves of Hamatic origin." Therefore, in his mind, Israel, as a historical political entity, blessed by God in particular ways in the factual reality of time, could prove a deposit of instruction and warning for the new Confederacy. Rees also explained that "History has proved ruin has followed the consolidation of every government from nimrod until today." He saw that "Jews had 500 [years] as Confederacy, then only 80 when consolidated under Saul."<sup>365</sup> The lesson for him was clear; God's ideal plan for a nation was to be a confederation of slaveholding free states, proved from history, which was precisely why he felt the Confederacy was fighting.

Another area where clergy, trained in the study of both history and the Bible, felt exceptionally qualified to conjecture was eschatology. The Bible contains many examples of prophetic literature regarding the end times, particularly in Daniel and Revelation. These were held to contain the true explanation of history and how it would draw to a close at the consummation of all things. Interpretations of the precise meaning of the book of Revelation differed, but there was an overlap of agreement upon its central point. As Thomas Peck, professor of ecclesiastical history at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, summed up, "The Apocalypse...is designed to set forth the general history for the features of the church from the time of John's exile...until the second advent of the saviors' victory and glory."<sup>366</sup> Thus the book could be invoked to prove God's grand design of history to

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*Columbia, S.C., Wednesday, November 21, 1860* (Columbia, SC: Southern Guardian Press, 1860), 2.

<sup>365</sup> Rees, *A Sermon on Divine Providence*, 10.

<sup>366</sup> Thomas E. Peck, "The Apocalypse," *Miscellanies of Rev. Thomas E. Peck, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Theology in the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia Vol II*, ed. Rev. T. C. Johnson (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of

save a people for himself through the ultimate triumph of Christ. Any attempt to locate the Confederacy in this overarching scheme conferred ultimate significance on contemporary events. A Methodist minister of Yorkville, South Carolina, borrowed language from Revelation to explain to his congregation that they stood at a historical crisis. "Civilization and Christianity are mustering all their forces for a tremendous conflict. The seventh seal is about to be broken, and the seventh trumpet is about to sound."<sup>367</sup> Bishop Stephen Elliott also, on one occasion, stated, "In the Apocalypse, that prophetic roll of the world's history, whose leaves we are perpetually deciphering under the march of events, conflict succeeds conflict, up to the very moment when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and warriors, with garments rolled in blood, usher in its terrors."<sup>368</sup> The war was interpreted as part of this series of events, so he could preach, "As the world draws towards its end, the hand of God becomes more visible in its affairs."

Much of this discussion touched upon particular interpretations of the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation, which contains a prediction regarding a millennial reign of Christ. Conjectures about the nature and timing of this millennium suffused American Protestantism by the early nineteenth century. In this period, the main theories regarding the millennium fell into two camps; premillennialism, where Christ's return was seen as proceeding his millennial reign on earth, and postmillennialism, where Christ's return would come after a thousand years of unparalleled success in spreading the gospel enjoyed by the church. Historians generally acknowledge that postmillennialism was the dominant position taken in antebellum America, and this was also true in the South.<sup>369</sup> The novelty of the

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publication 1896), 167. This reflects the comment of Edward Elliott in his influential commentary on revelation where he stated, "It's subject matter I assume to be, The Continuous fortunes of the church and of the world...From the time of the revelation being given...To the end of all things." Rev. E. B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae; A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical Vol I. 5<sup>th</sup> ed.* (London: Seely, Jackson and Halliday, 1862), 111.

<sup>367</sup> John T. Whiteman, *The Glory of God the Defense of the South; A Discourse Delivered in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Yorkville, S.C., July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1861, the Day of National Thanksgiving for the Victory at Manassas* (Portland: B. Thurston & Co. 1871), 14.

<sup>368</sup> Rt. Rev Stephen Elliott, *The Silver Trumpets of the Sanctuary: A Sermon Preached to the Pulaski Guards in Christ Church, Savannah* (Savannah, GA: John M. Cooper & CO. 1861), 5.

<sup>369</sup> See Wright and Dresser, *Apocalypse and Millennium in the American Civil War*, and John Howard Smith, *A Dream of Judgment Day: American Millennialism and Apocalypticism, 1620-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); J.F.C. Harrison, *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780-1850* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1979); Ernest Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); James H. Moorhead, "Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought, 1800-1880," *The Journal of American History* 71, no. 3 (December 1984): 524-542; and "The erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought, 1865-1925," *Church History* 53, no. 1 (March 1984), 61-77; Donald Dayton, "Millennial views and Social Reform in Nineteenth-Century America," *The Coming Kingdom: Essays in American Millennialism and Eschatology*, ed, M Darrol Bryant & Donald Dayton (New York: International Religious Foundation, 1983), 131-149. Also, Jon R. Stone, "Nineteenth and Twentieth Century American Millennialisms," *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, ed, Catherine Wessinger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 492-515. For a discussion of the development and importance of postmillennialism, see Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

republican experiment, the experience of scientific and material progress, the cultural dominance of Protestantism and fear of Catholicism, made belief in the imminent success of the gospel appear to be a reality for many Christians. Those keen to usher in beginning of this millennium engaged in a host of reform activities seeking to advance society in accordance with the implications of the gospel, one of which, in the North, was abolitionism. While some historians have seen an egalitarianism in millennialism, which grew out of the second great awakening, some in the South were able to channel millennial thought into distinctly inegalitarian and hierarchical ways. Jack Maddex has argued that Southern divines, Presbyterians in particular, fused ideas of postmillennial development with the continuation of slavery.<sup>370</sup> The precise length of time that slavery would exist or exactly what role it would play over the duration of the millennium was not agreed upon, but what was universally accepted was that for the time being, regardless of what the future held, the Confederacy's job was to preserve and refine the form of slavery already being practiced. Historians have also argued that in the early republic, millennialism was fused with national identity to form a "political millennialism" which has been seen as flourishing during the Civil War in the North, where ministers linked the preservation of the Union to potential future millennial progress.<sup>371</sup> Southern clergy engaged in a similar conflation of political and religious ends with regard to the Confederacy, where its success and the position of slavery within it were considered to be components in the progress of history towards the millennium. Southern clergy, therefore, felt that with the Bible in their hands and an eye on the history of the world, they could interpret the times for their congregations and society at large, and in that interpretation, slavery played an integral role.

### *Slavery and Universal History*

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<sup>370</sup> Smith *A Dream of Judgment Day*, particularly the chapter "Lightnings and Thunderings and Voices: The Second Great Awakening;" 146-178. Jack P. Maddex, "Proslavery Millennialism: Social Eschatology in Antebellum Southern Calvinism," *American Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 46-62. James Moorhead has shown that postmillennialism allowed for a modern and future-oriented vision of society that had "one foot" in the world of apocalyptic vision. To redeploy this observation, one could say that Southern clergy wished to move into the future without leaving the past behind, and postmillennialism allowed them to do this. It held in tension the experience of modernity and continuity with the older patterns of biblical thought, a tension that Southern clergy continually attempted to maintain. Moorhead, *Between Progress and Apocalypse*, 525.

<sup>371</sup> Michael Lienesch, "The Role of Political Millennialism in Early American Nationalism," *The Western Political Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (September 1983): 445-465. This is not at all to mean "secular millennialism" or a millennialism that is separate from or emptied of its religious or theological content. Rather, it is millennialism, where religious beliefs are played out in the political and national sphere. James Moorhead, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860-1869* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

After their deep readings of the Bible and history, aided by the eyes of faith, what would these men proclaim from their pulpits? On the eve of war James Henley Thornwell, in his speech on the *State of the Country* later reproduced in the religious press, argued regarding slavery, “No age has been without it. From the first dawn of authentic history, until the present period, it has come down to us through all the course of ages.” He even went as far as to state that slavery was “an institution, whose history is thus the history of man.”<sup>372</sup> In this, he set the tone for the attitude of Southern clergy throughout the war. The course of history was at stake and inseparably linked with the fate of slavery, of the South, and of mankind itself. The centrality of the place of slavery within Southern society was the main factor in Southern clergy's confidence that the South would win the war, and it was not just slavery in the abstract that would guarantee such an outcome, but racial slavery that would win the day.

On the day of thanksgiving proclaimed following the Confederate victories of 2nd Manassas and the battle of Richmond, Kentucky, in September of 1861, Steven Elliott, Episcopal Bishop of Georgia, took the opportunity to elaborate his theory of the purpose of racial slavery in the South with regards to the course of the war. Almost two decades prior, Elliott had been deeply influenced by the historical ideas of the British historian and clergyman Thomas Arnold and begun to conceive of the South as the fulfillment of the last step of human civilization upon which Arnold had conjectured.<sup>373</sup> The events between those antebellum days and this war time sermon had, for Elliott, served only to clarify the precise nature of that step. Tellingly he entitled his sermon, *Our Cause in Line with the Purposes of God in Christ Jesus*. In his flowing and elaborate oration, slavery, the church, and the Confederacy worked towards the same goal under God's protection and guidance. He regurgitated the theories regarding the history of the origins and course of slavery within the American South, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, developed over the antebellum period. However, these theories were promoted from speculations and arguments against Northern abolitionists to real-life strategies for victory. What had previously been fodder for inter-religious debate between Christians was being

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<sup>372</sup> James Henley Thornwell, *National Sins*, 12-13; James Henley Thornwell “National Sins: A Fast Day Sermon” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 13, no. 4, (January 1861): 870-71.

<sup>373</sup> Stephen Elliott, *A High Civilization the Moral Duty of Georgians. A Discourse Delivered Before the Georgia Historical Society on The Occasion of Its Fifth Anniversary, On Monday, 12<sup>th</sup>, February 1844* (Savannah, GA: Georgia Historical Society, 1844), 7. Elliott quotes Thomas Arnold, who had argued that the inheritance of Greece, and then Rome, then Christianity had successively been realized as they interacted with new races “English, German, Saxon” and that each of these moved civilization along in its progression, but now there were no new races to receive this inheritance and develop it. Elliott believed that the people of the New World were that new race, but conceived not as a “new race” literally. Instead, he argued, “we may not find new races, but we inhabit that New World where God designed to work out, through the combination of those elements of civilization, the highest purpose of human nature.” Elliott is drawing from Thomas Arnold, *Introductory Lectures on Modern History* (Oxford: John Henry Parer, 1842), in particular his inaugural address.

played out in real-time before the very eyes of those who were caught up in the grand movements of God. He listed the providential ways slavery was brought to the South and cataloged the various setbacks it had overcome, which for Elliott, all pointed towards the fact that this was a divinely ordained institution.<sup>374</sup>

Elliott went on to re-articulate the old view that slavery had come to the South for a reason: the conversion of the last place on earth that had not yet received the gospel: Africa. The South was to Christianize its enslaved population so they could one day return to Africa with the gospel and advance the kingdom of God in its last major conquest. Elliott regaled his congregants with the tales of failed attempts by White missionaries to penetrate the interior of Africa and convert its population; for him, race was the central issue. He argued that it had to be Black Africans who would take the gospel to their native land, not White people who were too susceptible to the diseases and climate of the continent. Where were these Black Christians to be found? For Elliott, the South was the only place where a Black population existed in the necessary social relations for its conversion. It was an unspoken assumption of Elliott's that a free Black population, influenced by Northern infidelity, would not be sufficiently Christianized nor have the purest gospel to accomplish the desired effect of the conversion of Africa. As he put it, referring to the enslaved population of the Southern states, "I see here the instruments whom God is preparing, in his own inscrutable way, to ...bring in the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."<sup>375</sup> In Elliott's view, then, the South was assured of victory because God had a plan for its continued existence; it was integral in maintaining racial slavery, which would be instrumental in converting the slaves, who would, in turn, convert Africa and thus fulfill the aims of God in bringing his kingdom to the whole world. With these stakes, the South could not fail; he encouraged his congregants that "[God] has caused the African race to be planted here under our political protection and under our Christian nurture, for his own ultimate designs, and he will keep it here under that culture until the fullness of his own times."<sup>376</sup>

Elliott's sermon comprised one of the most lengthy and elaborate descriptions of God's plan for Southern racial slavery and the conversion of Africa. Yet, its sentiments and ideas were replicated time and time again in the sermons and articles produced by churchmen around the South. The same assumptions in Elliott's thinking surface in the preaching and writing of a substantial portion of ministers reared on decades of pro-slavery literature promoting this idea. Now in the context of war,

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<sup>374</sup> Stephen Elliott, *Our Cause in Harmony with the Purpose of God in Christ Jesus* (Savannah, GA: John M. Cooper & Co. 1862), 12.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid*, 9-10.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

ministers could see that what they had believed to be true had become integral to the nation's survival and could be advanced with more fervency and greater confidence. In 1864 Bishop Henry Lay could capitalize on years of Christian paternalistic rhetoric about enslaved people to remind his hearers, the Powhatan troop of Confederate soldiers, they were fighting to protect the enslaved population that lived in their midst, adding. "They are an inferior race committed to our guardianship by divine providence for our mutual benefit."<sup>377</sup>

This belief in the crucial role the enslaved population of the South would play in history necessitated their conversion to Christianity, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, had become an increasingly significant way Southern ministers defended and advocated for slavery in the antebellum period. Now that the victory of the South appeared to hang upon the preservation of the institution of slavery for the future benefit of the world through the advancement of the gospel, the impetus to engage in missions to the slaves and ensure they were provided for in terms of biblical preaching became a life and death issue. Ministers could gain some comfort from the efforts and success that had already been made and, seeing this as an indication that God's blessing was upon their cause, sure up the spirits of the Confederacy. George Pierce felt confident to boast that the "Southern churches count more converts among the decedents of Ham than the united efforts of Christendom have gathered upon all the mission fields of the heathen world."<sup>378</sup> He believed that this was the divinely ordained purpose of the country and saw attempts to dehumanize or deny Black people the gospel as misguided or downright sinful as well as unpatriotic to the cause of the Confederacy, instead declaring, "The negro is an immortal being and it is his right by the law of creation and the purchase of redemption to read for himself the epistles of his Redeemer's love."<sup>379</sup> He encouraged the Georgia

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<sup>377</sup> Rt. Rev. Henry Champlin Lay, *Sermons 1861-1865* Transcript of Manuscript #418, Manuscripts Dept., Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Documenting the American South, University Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill 1999. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/ims/layhenry/layhenry.html>. In mentioning the paternalism of Southern Christians, I am not buying into the narrative they are presenting or arguing that slavery, as practiced in the South, was motivated by paternalism. This was largely rhetorical, and any slight improvement in the treatment of enslaved peoples, which may have derived from it, does not in any way, shape, or form mitigate the horrific nature of Southern Slavery. Histories of Slavery that take the paternalistic rhetoric of slaveholders seriously include Eugene Genovese *Roll Jordan Roll, The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995). Histories of slavery that show that paternalistic talk from slaveholders should be treated with skepticism include Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders and Slaves in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Wisconsin 1989); Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>378</sup> Pierce, *Sermons*; 7.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid*; 14.



assembly to take up the cause of educating slaves, announcing, “A Bible in every cabin will be the best police to the country, and despite the ravings of a brainless fanaticism, subjection and order will reign throughout our land.”<sup>380</sup> Rev. W. Rees concurred. “Missionary enterprise has spent thousands of lives and means to Christianize the African.” he asserted, “with comparatively little results, while here in the south, over 60,000 communicants belong to the church, of which I have the honor to be a minister.” He concluded, “the redemption of a whole race is blended with our national constitution as a people.”<sup>381</sup>

These glimpses of success in evangelizing the slave population gave the church hope and boldness in asserting their view of the slave's place in Southern society and, thus, world history. Presbyterian and father of President Woodrow Wilson, Rev. Joseph Ruggles Wilson, said of the slaves of the South, “we ought to look forward to the time when they will all be what the Bible would make them; a race whose love for the Master above will spread through their rejoicing millions a measure of sanctification which will convert their services into the very first of home-blessings, and their piety into a missionary influence for saving the Black man everywhere from the ruin of perdition.”<sup>382</sup> Because that was the aim, Confederates were “to endeavor to train up their servants for heaven--as much bound to do this as they are bound to attend to the religious instruction of their own children.”<sup>383</sup>

Rev. James Lyon delivered an address on the floor of the 1863 General Assembly of the Old School Presbyterian Church CSA encouraging just this. He framed secession and the war as an opportunity for the South to fully achieve the goal towards which it had been aiming prior to the war. He interpreted the times, “the providence of God has...committed to the people of the southern states the entire interests, physical, moral, intellectual and religious, of the Black race in our midst.” As he saw it, it was a privilege to be “workers together with God, in evangelizing, developing and elevating an entire people.”<sup>384</sup> Lyon believed that the war was, in effect, the process by which the South had been set free from the interference of the North in order to complete this mandate fully and more efficiently. It was A mandate that had historical significance, as it was to be played out on the grand stage of human development for the purposes of God. Lyon points to the oft-cited thirty-first verse of the sixty-eighth Psalm, “Ethiopia will lift up her hands to God,” taking this to mean that Africa would be converted to Christianity, which would further fulfill the teaching of scripture that the “whole world

<sup>380</sup> Ibid; 15.

<sup>381</sup> Rees, *Divine Providence*; 8-9.

<sup>382</sup> Joseph R. Wilson, *Mutual Relation of Masters and Slaves as Taught in the Bible. A Discourse Preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Augusta, Georgia, on Sabbath Morning, Jan. 6, 1861* (Augusta, GA: Chronicle and Sentinel, 1861), 19.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid; 20.

<sup>384</sup> James A. Lyon, “Slavery, and the Duties Growing out of the Relation,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 16, no. 1 (July 1863), 2.

shall be given to Christ for his inheritance.”<sup>385</sup> Lyon saw that the inhospitable nature of Africa had acted as a bar to the march of progress of the gospel. But in God's providence, “instead of sending the gospel to Africa, brings the African to the gospel” and believed that “The whole history of the introduction of the African into this country evinces an overruling providence.”<sup>386</sup>

Despite this high calling given to the South and the fact that it appeared to indicate a sure victory, the South experienced setbacks and defeats. Ministers were prepared to acknowledge that some people did not live up to the standards of the divine charge that had been placed in their hands, for which they believed the South was experiencing judgment and needed, therefore, to take action if it was to fulfill its mission. An anonymous article in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* on slave marriage admitted, “We must look into the private management of our Negroes with fresh diligence. We must subject our slave codes to rigid inspection; criticism must be free and bold; abuses must be exposed; and the inner life of slavery reformed and restored, as far as may be, to the pattern shown us in the Bible.”<sup>387</sup> It was also understood that many slaveholders were in the pews of the various denominations and more in some than others. Bishop Elliott, when speaking against the splitting up of slave families, said, “It belongs, especially to the Episcopal Church, to urge a proper teaching upon this subject, for in her fold and in her congregations are found a very large portion of the great slaveholders of the country.”<sup>388</sup> Even at the crisis point of the Civil War, there was still an argument to be had with regard to the relationship between slave and master, and a case had to be made for legal reform regarding slave marriage and education, as it was not yet generally accepted, even in the pews, that Christian education of slaves was desirable. One writer in the Georgia Baptist newspaper, the *Christian Index*, defended the policy of not allowing slaves to read by sneering, “I have nowhere learned that it is necessary to read in order to be saved; and that all unlettered persons fail of eternal life.”<sup>389</sup> The Methodist *Southern Christian Advocate* took the more common tone of Southern clergymen and argued for the repeal of laws forbidding the education of slaves and argued that “The truest and best friend of Africa is the Southern Christian slaveholder.”<sup>390</sup> The ups and downs of the war experienced in the South made ministers the shepherds not just of their flocks but of the nation. If what they said of the purpose

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<sup>385</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>387</sup> “A Slave Marriage Law,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 16, Vol. 2 (October 1863), 145.

<sup>388</sup> Stephen Elliott, *Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of the Protestant Church to the Clergy and Laity of the Church in the Confederate States of America. Delivered Before the General Council, In St Paul's Church, Augusta, Saturday, Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1862.* (Augusta, GA: Steam Power Press Chronicle & Sentinel, 1862), 11.

<sup>389</sup> *Christian Index: Organ of the GA Baptist Association*, Oct 7, 1862.

<sup>390</sup> “Should the Law be Repealed Prohibiting Teaching Our Slaves to Read the Bible,” *Southern Christian Advocate*, Nov 27, 1862, 1.

of the Confederacy in history was true, then debates about the exigencies of slave education and proper treatment of the enslaved population needed to be put aside, and a proper form of Godly slave-owning needed to pervade the South, now more than ever.

### *Patriarchal Performed Biblicism*

For ministers in the South, there was a clear and historical pattern for such a Godly slave-owning found in the pages of the Bible. The Patriarchal Age was to provide the blueprint for the Godly slave-owning that would aid in Christianizing the enslaved population in the South and bring about Confederate victory. Richard T. Hughes has discerned five historical periods in particular that contributed to the creation of what he terms a Southern civic theology, one of which is the time of the patriarchs.<sup>391</sup> Of the five he identifies, this was the period most referred to when discussing the correct form and function of slavery within the Confederacy and, as such, became the source of what Seth Perry has termed performed biblicism. I contend that in the decades prior to the war, the patriarchal period was not simply a strand in a general “civic theology” that set an aesthetic tone for southern elite society, but rather that the pattern of slavery and family relations found in it became an authoritative guide for the plantation life. Then during the war, enacting this pattern of life became the stated aim of ministers believing themselves to be acting in line with God's plans for history.

Seth Perry defined performed biblicism as “rhetorical gestures aimed at enacting forms of bible-based authority.” He included slave-holding Southerners as an example of a group that engaged in this act through a focus on a patriarchal society. He argues that “Would-be authorities extracted roles from the Bible that challenged audiences, real and imagined, to respond with coordinating roles.”<sup>392</sup> I will develop this idea further in this section and tease out some of the ways in which the authority of the Bible's depiction of patriarchal slavery was used performatively during the Civil War as a pattern of life that would advance history. Ministers in the South urged reform of the institution of slavery in conjunction with a call for slaveholders to emulate the biblical patriarchs, to think of themselves as such, and to perceive their place in society as analogous to those figures in the Bible. Achieving this would make racial slavery the history-making force churchmen so desired it to be. The period of the patriarchs can be defined as that covered by the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, generally, this could be extended to the whole book of Genesis or the post-diluvian world of Noah up

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<sup>391</sup> Hughes “A Civic Theology for the South.”

<sup>392</sup> Perry, *Bible Culture and Authority in the Early United States*, 67.

until the exodus.<sup>393</sup> Also included in this Patriarchal Age was the life of Job, although it should be noted that in the sermons, popular literature, and articles produced during the antebellum and Civil War eras, definitions of the patriarchal period were seldom offered in a precise manner.<sup>394</sup>

One of the most prominent ways the Patriarchal Age informed Southern culture before and during the war was through the prevalence of the “curse of Ham myth.” This myth was a reading of the ninth chapter of the book of Genesis that emphasized the belief that the origins of racial slavery could be found in the curse meted out upon his sons by Noah. The text reads, “cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And [Noah] said, blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant” (Gen, 9:25-27 KJV). It was argued that the name of Ham, who had disrespected his father Noah by exposing his nakedness to his brothers, indicates that he was Black. Ham's decedents were the Canaanites, which Israel enslaved, so this was interpreted as a perpetually binding curse. Thus, it was ostensibly used as a justification for the racial basis of Southern Slavery and a way to raise it to the level of a God-instituted, eternally relevant institution. Furthermore, this could be achieved while maintaining that all the races of the world descended from one initial human family.

Stephen Haynes Sees one aspect of the appeal of the myth as the fetishism latent in the uncovering of Noah's nakedness by Ham. As well as, the dynamics of dishonoring legitimate authority in the person of Noah, was a relational dynamic that was triggering the honor-based order obsessed Southern mind.<sup>395</sup> Thomas Virgil Peterson, on the other hand, sees the success of the Myth of Ham as due to the Southern need to “fuse their racial ethos with their biblical worldview” because it “justified Black bondage in a way that was compatible with the religious convictions of Whites” which were that “Adam and Eve were the progenitors of all races.”<sup>396</sup> Not all historians have been so quick to validate

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<sup>393</sup> Johann Kurtz demarks the age of the patriarchs and also lends significance to this epoch in biblical history by stating that “The history of the patriarchs is, consequently, the prelude and the type of the entire subsequent history of the nation, both in its divine and in its human aspects. The peculiar features of the character and the life of the ancestors of Israel reappear in the character of the nation descending from them, in so far and so long as that nation does not, with suicidal violence, cut itself off from its source, and oppose its own nature and destination. The pictures of life which the age of the patriarchs presents in their representatives, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, are like a mirror, in which the future generations of Israel may behold the reflection of themselves and, indeed, they render the same service to that succeeding age in which the spiritual Israel takes the place of Israel after the flesh.” Kurtz. *Manual of Sacred History*; 70. Charles Colcock Jones refers to Job and Noah as Patriarchs in his *History of the Church of God*, 121 and 140.

<sup>394</sup> Stephen R. Haynes argues that Southern ministers rarely cited their sources when discussing the Ham myth. *Noah's Curse*, 68.

<sup>395</sup> Stephen R. Haynes *Noah's Curse*; 73-74.

<sup>396</sup> Peterson *Ham and Japheth*, 8 and 12. See also David Whitford's "A Calvinist Heritage to the "Curse of Ham": Assessing the Accuracy of a Claim to Racial Subordination," *Church History and Religious Culture* 90, no. 1 (January 2010): 25-45; and Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity*, in which Johnson argues that regardless of if the myth was used to defend slavery or not, most Whites in the North and South shared a conviction that

this view. However, Eugene Genovese claimed that “the racial argument from Noah's curse was so feeble that James Henley Thornwell, R. L. Dabney and George Howe, the South's most formidable and influential theologians, rejected it.”<sup>397</sup> One could marshal theologians on both sides of the exegetical debate.<sup>398</sup> Regardless of the contested specifics over the exact exegesis of the curse of Ham, what is important to note is that there was a widespread belief that the Patriarchal Age contained the origins of slavery and that this is what it was argued the South needed to re-capture in order to be securely within God's providential plans for the South. The most integral element of the Noahic story and the curse of Ham for Southerners was that at the beginning of a new world, recreated after the flood, slavery was instituted. Now in the New World, slavery was present, and in the new society of the Confederacy, slavery would be perfected.

This fact accounts for the popularity and prevalence of the Noahic story and the time of the patriarchs more broadly across the South. In a time when primitivism had cultural authority, proving that slavery existed from the foundation of the post-diluvian world was rhetorically powerful. The South was proud of its age and heritage but was at the same time a society in transition, moving westward with expansionist ambition, and now the Confederacy was breaking away to form a new nation; it was slavery that allowed Southern ministers to hold in tension the old and the new, tradition and change, it was slavery that would link the past to the future through its present preservation. In other words, the new birth of the Confederacy was justified by continuing the ancient form of God-ordained slavery. This attitude can be detected in the devotional material consumed by Christians, for example, the following poem published in the *Southern Episcopalian*,

And the fresh, fertile earth,  
Baptized by the flood.  
Heard - and her bosom felt the shock  
Of severed brotherhood  
All through her forest green,  
And caverned mountains rude,  
Echoed the awful thunder-stroke  
Of Canaan's servitude -  
“Servant of servants shall he be

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Black people descended from Ham. Furthermore, he demonstrates how black Christians used the idea of descent from Ham as their own source of Identity in their own ways.

<sup>397</sup> Genovese, *A Consuming Fire*, 4. Mark Noll has also written, “most elite theologians had long since dismissed that kind of application in favor of reading that saw the prophecy fulfilled when the children of Israel conquered the promised land.” Mark Noll, “The Bible and Slavery,” *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall Miller, Harry Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 62.

<sup>398</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer was not an insignificant theologian, and John L. Dagg, the first systematic theologian of the Southern Baptists, also believed Noah's curse on Ham was the origin of American racial slavery. John L. Dagg *The Elements of Moral Science* (New York: Sheldon & CO, 1860), 344.

To Japhet's large posterity!"<sup>399</sup>

In this stanza is the concept of a fresh, fertile earth, just like the ever-expanding horizons of land to be settled and planted with slave labor which looked so enticing to the Confederacy. This land was “baptized by the flood,” made sacred, hallowed, and so too was the land of the South, baptized this time by blood, the blood of the Revolution and great founder heroes of the past, but more importantly by slaveholding southern gentlemen in the current war, after which a brand-new society could be allowed to continue the ancient institution of slavery. This view was also stated more explicitly by the Virginian Presbyterian Rev. Hall, who saw slavery as book-ending human history; he said slavery was, “standing under the eye of Jehovah in the patriarchal era, the first period of history, and reappearing, in the identical system of these States in this last period.”<sup>400</sup>

It was, therefore, not just slavery in the abstract that was to be defended, perpetuated, and celebrated, but a primitive, original form of slavery, which served as a pattern for life and the correct ordering of society along Godly lines. Benjamin Morgan Palmer preached to the South Carolina Assembly, “While slavery has existed in every variety of form through the whole tract of human history, it has been reserved to our times to beat a crusade against it under precisely that patriarchal form in which it is sanctioned in the word of God, and in which it has never been found since the overthrow of the Hebrew empire, until now.”<sup>401</sup> For Palmer and many others, this was integral to the purpose of the South, as discussed earlier, due to the need to convert and Christianize Africa, which he believed was most effectively done under a patriarchal form of slavery. He stated before the Georgia Assembly of 1863, “Under our patriarchal system, the descendants of Ham have thriven in the midst of us, expanding in a couple of centuries from a few thousand to four million.”<sup>402</sup>

What, then, was the nature of this patriarchal slavery? Its forms and patterns were, according to Southern ministers and the churches of the South, to be found in the history recorded in scripture. Thus, the lives of Southern Christian plantation owners and slaveholders were to be shaped and constrained by the authority of this historical epoch as recorded in the Bible. The Pauline conception of headship was critical to the dominant interpretation of slavery in Genesis. In brief, this was the idea that the man had been given authority as head of his household in a similar way to which magistrates had authority over subjects. It is an authority derived from God to oversee the proper governance and nurture of those

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<sup>399</sup> “Canaan’s Doom,” *Southern Episcopalian*, March 12, 1861, 640.

<sup>400</sup> Rev. William A. Hall, *The Historic Significance of The Southern Revolution*, (Petersburg, VA: A. R. Crutchfield 1864), 13.

<sup>401</sup> Palmer, *A Discourse Before the General Assembly of South Carolina*, 13.

<sup>402</sup> Palmer, *Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer*; 38.

under the man's charge, including his wife, children, servants, and, importantly, slaves. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job were imagined as archetypical heads of their households, embodying a mode of living to be emulated. This view dovetailed nicely with the development of a Victorian sentimentalizing of the family and the home, which emphasized the domesticity of the women and the centrality of piety to a flourishing family life.<sup>403</sup> *The Southern Christian Advocate* reproduced an article from *The Religious Herald* about Abraham, the slaveholder, and his family's religion. It explained that his legitimate authority was used in a praiseworthy manner, worthy of imitation by southern heads of families as “he labored to bring his children and his household to a righteousness and a faith like his own, which included *instruction* and *discipline*.”<sup>404</sup> In contemporary Southern Christian thought, the slave was considered part of the “household” or family. As Palmer had stated, “slaves form parts of our households, even as our children; and that, too, through a relationship recognized and sanctioned in the scriptures of God even as the other” and that, “my servant, whether born in my house or bought with my money, stands to me in the relation of a child...and I am to him a guardian and a father.”<sup>405</sup> This was a sin to disregard; failing to live up to this charge to recreate patriarchal slavery could lead to the White population of the country suffering. Looking back to the primitive example of Abraham's time, an early 1865 edition of *Southern Christian Advocate* warned Southerners that “[Lot's] first sin was to neglect the family altar.”<sup>406</sup> The family altar as a focus of regular exhortation to patriarchal devotion throughout the war and a rhetorical call to familial piety, which embraced servants and slaves.

In October of 1863, the *Southern Presbyterian Review* ran an article arguing against legal suppression of slave marriage based on the fact that “the slave is, with us, the subject of family government, not civil government. The family is his state. The master is his law giver. He is in no sense a member of municipal society, but of the household estate.”<sup>407</sup> Christian slaveholders in the South were being imbibed with a view of society that had them act as patriarchs of old over their wives, children, and slaves as miniature states within a wider political structure. In 1863 The Presbyterian Church in the

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<sup>403</sup> See Anne C. Loveland, “Domesticity and Religion in the Antebellum Period: The Career of Phoebe Palmer,” *The Historian* 39, no. 3 (May 1977): 455–71. Richard Rankin, *Ambivalent Churchmen and Evangelical Churchwomen: The Religion of the Episcopal Elite in North Carolina, 1800-1860* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1993); and Jeffrey Robert Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); also A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of The Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993). For a discussion of patriarchal slavery in terms of simply slavery which was subsumed under a household with a male at its head, see Michael P. Johnson, “Planters and Patriarchy: Charleston, 1800-1860,” *The Journal of Southern History* 46, no. 1 (February 1980), 45-72.

<sup>404</sup> “Family Religion,” *The Southern Christian Advocate*, October 30, 1862.

<sup>405</sup> Palmer *Thanksgiving Sermon*; 7.

<sup>406</sup> Lot and His Wife,” in *North Carolina Presbyterian*, February 8, 1865, 1.

<sup>407</sup> Anonymous, *A Slave Marriage Law*, 146.

Confederate States issued a report on “the religious instruction of the colored people,” which agreed with this view, using it to advance their desire for slaves to be taught the Bible, “Our servants constitute part of our households. It is only on this ground that we can find any sanction in the word of God for the institution of slavery. As members of the family compact, they have therefore the same claims for religious instruction that our children have.”<sup>408</sup> Thus the patriarchal form of slavery, which was inherently family-based, was practically deployed to effect policy and church positions regarding civil laws. Writing the SPR, James Lyon concluded, “let us, therefore, make slavery, by law, the patriarchal institution that is recognized and sanctioned in the bible.”<sup>409</sup>

With the emphasis on family piety and devotion, it is unsurprising that the prevailing view of patriarchal slavery would filter down into literature designed for the instruction and edification of the young, the future generation of slave owners and Christian patriarchs, and their wives. 1863 saw the publication of a pamphlet, with the title, *Scriptural History Versified, From the Creation to the Flood* specifically designed for use with children. The author claimed that they were “endeavoring to follow the language of the Bible, as closely and as literally as practicable, consistently with the exigencies of rhyme and rhythm.” Yet, the volume builds to a crescendo with the final stanzas including such patriarchal views of slavery as the following,

A curse he called on Canaan's head,  
Cursing Ham's seed in Ham's own stead;  
Iniquity, by God's decree,  
Falls on the sinner's progeny.  
"Cursed be Canaan! " God then said,  
" My vengeance fall upon his head;  
Servant of servants shall he be,  
And to his brethren bend the knee."  
" Blessed be Shem, in his Lord God,  
Canaan shall serve beneath his rod;  
Japheth, enlarged by God, shall dwell,  
In tents of Shem — and shall excel —  
O'er Europe and the New World spread,  
By Ham's descendants, cloth'd and fed."<sup>410</sup>

Thus, the mentioning of the New World and the perpetual nature of the relation between Japheth and Ham, the experience of the South is imposed into the narrative of the very Bible itself and so endowed

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<sup>408</sup> Rev. J. Leighton Wilson, “Report of the Committee on the Religious Instruction of the Colored People,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 16, no. 2 (October 1863): 191.

<sup>409</sup> Lyon, “Slavery, and the Duties Growing out of the Relation,” 36.

<sup>410</sup> *Scriptural History Versified, From the Creation to Flood: For the Use of Sunday Schools* (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Steam Press, 1863), 3, 40.



with scriptural authority. The South was not simply using an institution that was merely allowed by the Bible or even sanctioned and regulated by it; they were continuing the very storyline of the Bible itself by recreating the structures of the first society instituted by God after the flood. Thus, the patriarchal nature of slavery raised it to an unassailable height and rendered it foundational to the moral and ethical framework underpinning any theological and historical view of the South and the Confederacy.

Rev. Rees gives us an insight into why calls to enact lives modeled on biblical patriarchs were so influential in the period of the Civil War. Arguing that the Noahic period, as recorded in scripture, contained the origin of government, he also reproduced the familiar argument that at that moment was to be found the perpetual nature of Ham's servitude to Shem, saying, "men may clamor and deluge the earth with blood for Ham's emancipation, still he will be a slave."<sup>411</sup> Interestingly he then turned to the findings of "recent discoveries" in the field of archaeology proving that the kings of Egypt were of Shemite descent, and so continued this law of the subjugation of Ham.<sup>412</sup> This displays a trend experienced in the mid-Victorian period analyzed at length by Paul Gutjahr.<sup>413</sup> A fascination with the middle east flourishing in the decades before the Civil War saw Bibles produced with maps, facts, and figures designed to give the reader a deeper appreciation of the historical nature of biblical events. New discoveries were eagerly reported on in the religious press, and all this attention brought the ancient past nearer to the modern world inhabited by Southerners thousands of years later and thousands of miles away. In this climate, patriarchal slavery did not seem remote or strange to try and emulate but was accessible and imaginable to Christians who saw its patterns as worthy of imitation.

### *Philosophies of History*

These conjectures and theories about the role of slavery within the purpose of the Confederacy were often couched in the language of "philosophies of history," a term that proliferated in the antebellum and Civil War periods.<sup>414</sup> What can be observed are relatively common attempts by Southern clergy to

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<sup>411</sup> Rees, *Sermon on Divine Providence*; 10.

<sup>412</sup> Charles Pickney, rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Charleston, also gave a sermon in 1861 under the title of *Nebuchadnezzar's Fault and Fall*. The introduction to this sermon relied heavily on Col. Lanyard's recent excavations of Nineveh and Babylon. There are long descriptions of these ancient cities and what they might have looked like in biblical times. Rev. C. C. Pickney *Nebuchadnezzar's Fault and Fall: A Sermon Preached at Grace Church, Charleston, S.C. On the 7<sup>th</sup> February 1861* (Charleston SC: A.J. Burke, 1861).

<sup>413</sup> Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Stanford, CA: University of Stanford Press, 1999), 40-88.

<sup>414</sup> Translations of German philosophers Fredrick Schlegel and Johann Gottfried Herder's attempts at constructing coherent philosophies of history were published in 1841. They found a mixed reception in the South regarding the particularities of their theories. However, the general project of determining the development of humanity throughout history was

explain the significance of the war with recourse to the language of historical development that sought to explain the connection of various periods of history and conjecture about the Confederacy's role in it. Yet, for all their theorizing, very few Southern Clergy could be said to be disciples of the great historical thinkers of the age. Instead, we find a patchwork of assimilated ideas and terminology sown together in contradictory and inconsistent ways. No Southern Minister consistently followed through to its conclusion any of the radical implications of the new forms of Romantic history or historicism emanating from across the Atlantic and being published and discussed in America. Rather they picked and chose various elements or concepts while ignoring others. Southern ministers, therefore, took up the idea of nations having particular characteristics and the concept of their being historic and non-historic peoples who either contributed to the development of history or did not, but rejected deeper observations like the fact that human nature could not, therefore, be said to be a constant over time and between nations.<sup>415</sup> Also to be rejected was the historicist notion that each epoch was historically contingent and, therefore, distinct and incomparable to other epochs.<sup>416</sup> Instead, Southern ministers shoehorned ideas about historical peoples and development into a broadly Whig stadial view of history where each epoch could still provide universal examples and lessons for the Confederacy based upon unchanging principles.<sup>417</sup> Most crucially, all discussions of history unfolding led to a conservative view of the Confederacy, whereby slavery was to be maintained, not to a continual or further development in freedom.

Rev. James Warley Miles, the librarian of the College of Charleston, was one of the South's few liberal theologians and had the distinction of being the only Southern antebellum theologian to be translated into German.<sup>418</sup> He gave the graduating lecture to the College of Charleston in 1863 and took

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influential when adapted to fit a more theologically orthodox framework. For Southern receptions of these works, see "Schlegel's Philosophy of History" *Southern Quarterly Review* 3, no. 6 (April 1843): 263-317; and Herders Philosophy of History' *Southern Quarterly Review* 5, no. 10 (April 1844): 265-311. The works published respectively were James Frederick von Schlegel *The Philosophy of History; in the course of Lectures*, trans. Burton Robertson (New York: D Appleton, 1841); Johan Gottfried Herder *Outlines of the Philosophy of a History of Man* Trans. T. Churchill (New York: D Appleton, 1841). Alongside these appeared volumes of the classic Whig historians David Hume and Lord Macaulay, as well as the work of the historicist Thomas Arnold and idiosyncratic Thomas Carlyle, all of which left their mark on the historical thinking of the South without developing a coherent school of thought.

<sup>415</sup> Collingwood, *Ideas of History*, 88-93.

<sup>416</sup> These features of historicism are taken from Bebbington, *Patterns in History*, 113. Faust also points out that for the South's most prominent thinkers, "History appeared... as 'philosophy teaching by example,' a record of social and moral phenomena awaiting Baconian perusal for the revelation of its general truths; it was, Tucker and Hammond agreed, simply the record of "a series of Experiments" from which man might select "the principles that have been found to be based on truth" *A Sacred Circle*, 94. This is a decidedly Enlightenment attitude toward history.

<sup>417</sup> For a discussion of how historicism did not catch on in nineteenth-century America and how Whig history dominated, see Dorothy Ross, "Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth Century America," *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 4 (October 1984): 909-928.

<sup>418</sup> This translation was done at the instigation of none other than August Neander, who had one of his students complete the

the opportunity to elaborate upon a unifying theory of human history.<sup>419</sup> He asserted that “the foundation of a philosophy of history...seeks a true internal connection of law or thought, giving unity to and expressed by the manifestations of the history of nations.”<sup>420</sup> He argued that “the archetypal idea of universal history must involve the necessary development, through the various phases of the life of nations, of all that is involved in the earthly destiny of man.” He conceived, therefore, of history as a great unfolding, under the divine hand, of mankind's capacities in different spheres, for example, language, religion, and politics.<sup>421</sup> Miles believed that not all races, nations, or peoples would contribute to this process, but only those he terms “historic,” which he defined as those that had developed literature. He argued that the Aryan was the most significant of these historic races, which included the Grecian, the Roman, and the Germanic as three particular stages of that race, all of which had added to the development of humanity. The areas where they advanced were seen as different but overlapping, and the sum of their labors brought about language, religion, politics, art, and philosophy.<sup>422</sup>

Miles was convinced that since races and cultures in history had naturally built upon those that preceded them, “no nation can live only for itself. Each nation has a role to play and its mission to perform.”<sup>423</sup> It was then that he moved from the theoretical to the practical. What did the Confederacy have to teach mankind? In what way could it develop humanity? Miles theorized,

“We have the glorious but awfully responsible mission of exhibiting to the world that supremest effort of humanity—the foundation of a political organization, in which the freedom of every member is the result of the law, is preserved by justice, is harmonized by the true relations of labor and capital, and is sanctified by the divine spirit of Christianity.”<sup>424</sup>

This, in practice, amounted to the fact that the South had,

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task. Luker *A Tradition in Theology and Social Criticism*, 8. In his discourse on “God in History,” Miles cites Wilhelm Von Humboldt and Giambattista Vico as those who had contributed to the philosophy of history and cited Kar Josias von Bunsen.

<sup>419</sup> Ralph E. Luker, “God, Man and the World of James Warley Miles, Charleston’s Transcendentalist,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 39 (June 1970): 101–36.

<sup>420</sup> Rev. James Warley Miles, *God in History A Discourse Delivered before the Graduating Class of the College of Charleston on Sunday Evening, March 29, 1863*, (Charleston, SC: Evans & Cogswell, 1863), 7.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid*, 19-20.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

“A great lesson to teach the world with respect to the relation of races: that certain races are permanently inferior in their capacities to others, and that the African who is entrusted to our care can only reach the amount of civilization and development of which he is capable-can only contribute to the benefit of humanity in the position in which God has placed him among us.”<sup>425</sup>

Implicit in Miles's view of history is a progressive process whereby each race of people, or classification of civilization, contributes something to the sum of mankind. Yet, in Miles, the trajectory of this progression leads to the firm distinction between races and does not entail liberty for enslaved people. Despite mentioning the fact that this was the unfolding of "God's Plan," Miles's scheme was mostly removed from a discussion about the gospel or the progress of God's kingdom. Other ministers attempted to see a similar pattern of cultures adding to one another in succession, but with far more emphasis on the role of Christianity in that historical process. The South Carolinian Methodist preacher, John T. Whitman, argued that the race of man “parted and became four heads.” He saw the “Hebrew [as] the religious heart, the Greek the intellectual head, the Roman the all-conquering arm, then the Germanic race...the feet of humanity.” Hebrews were the recipients of divine revelation; the Greeks translated it into an international language in the Septuagint, the Romans enabled its spread westwards with their extensive empire, then the Germanic people, with their skills in commerce and technology, spread it all over the globe.<sup>426</sup> Again the crucial next step was to determine the precise significance of the South within this scheme. Whitman designated them as one of the Germanic peoples, but different from The North, England, or Germany. This difference was explained as primarily due to the economic situation of the South. Whitman was confident that the South served as a Bulwark against “pagan and papal aggression” and went as far as to say that “the cotton trade keeps the bible and the press under the control of Protestantism.” He argued that the “fields of the South have built the bulwarks of Zion, equipped missionaries, evangelized Africa, touched a thousand springs of benevolence, and gathered within the bosom of the church inexhaustible reservoirs of wealth and power.”<sup>427</sup> Whitman thought integrated historical development and Christian eschatology. For him, it was Protestantism, when protected by the economic realities of slavery, that would advance the kingdom of God and, thus, the course of history.

The Virginia Presbyterian Rev. William Hall began his exposition of the historic significance of what he termed the “southern revolution” with the statement, “We must survey this great

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>426</sup> Whitman, *The Glory of God*, 4-5.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid, 7.

movement...controlled by the noble spirit of the philosophy of history.” He claimed that he did not accept the entire development theory of the “German school.” However, he did argue for a “genetic development” between periods of history and between stages in the life of people groups so that each one grew out of the proceeding stage and worked out the “great principles which each embodies in itself.”<sup>428</sup> Hall also claimed to be influenced by Matthew Arnold, who argued in his lectures on modern history a quarter of a century earlier, that humanity had entered its final stages of development. Hall outlined five successive stages of the history of the world, all working out the underlying law that “*power seeks an equilibrium.*” He narrated periods of formation, conquest, consolidation, disintegration, and reformation.<sup>429</sup> Lastly, he saw that the Confederacy was now on the brink of the final period, “*conservation.*” The Southern revolution was aiming to conserve God instituted “Republican government” against the “modern philosophical atheism, [which] reached its extreme development in the Northern portion of the late United States.” It was considered part of the “primeval law of nature,” according to Hall, “which puts the relation of master and slave, as one of the four essential relations of the household.” This relation was under threat, and therefore the moral government of God was also under threat. Hall believed that,

“By the providence of God throughout the entire history of our race; and now assailed in this last period of history by the combined infidelity of the ages--the doctrine of domestic slavery and the system of labor which time has built upon it are in a true sense divine; they are the sum and the condition of the African's welfare; and they will probably continue on some part of earth until the last day.”<sup>430</sup>

Thus, for Hall, the world's history through all its eras had led to his epoch, the last and most crucial, and the final push of history; the last step would not be a change but preservation. Hall's discourse is a protracted attempt to situate the Confederacy within historical development, giving its mission historical and divine authority. However, his view of historical development opposes the ones articulated in the North that would see history as moving towards greater liberty and emancipation.

Benjamin Morgan Palmer was an avid advocate of the same principle and, over his career as a preacher, often took recourse to a theory of history that emphasized that a nation stood before God as an individual with a particular role to play; he explained,

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<sup>428</sup> Hall, *The Historic Significance of The Southern Revolution*, 4.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid*, 13-14.

“A nation often has a character as well defined and intense as that of the individual...however derived, this individuality of character alone makes any people truly historic, competent to work out its specific mission, and to become a factor in the world's progress...If then the South is such a people, what, at this juncture, is their providential trust? I answer, that it is to conserve and to perpetuate the institution of domestic slavery as now existing.”<sup>431</sup>

He also explained how this theory worked to the South Carolina assembly, “Schlegel has well remarked, in his *Philosophy of History*, that in the whole circumference of the globe, there is only a certain number of nations that occupy an important and really historic place in the annals of civilization.” which led Palmer to conclude, “The negro race...has never in any period of history been able to lift itself above its native condition of fetishism and barbarism; and except as it has indirectly contributed by servile labor to human progress, might well be discounted, according to Schlegel's view, in the general estimate of the world's inhabitants.”<sup>432</sup> So for Palmer, the challenge was to rise to the level of being a “historic people” and avoid being discounted in the progress of humanity.

The fact that the nation could be conceived of as relating to God in a way comparable to an individual did not obviate the role that historical individuals who embodied the spirit of a race or age could enact on history. As we shall see in a later chapter, the popular philosophy of Thomas Carlyle's Great Man theory of history found a ready reception in the South looking for heroes for its cause and was quickly Christianized by Southern ministers. Benjamin Morgan Palmer agreed that it was great men that drove the course of history but that it was specifically the faith of great men that had the most impact on the course of nations. “The men in all ages who have made history have been men of faith - men who could hide a great principle deep in their heart and, work it out as a potential and substantive fact, and await the verdict of posterity.”<sup>433</sup> This contemporary infatuation with the great men of history and the instrumentality of people and nations in God's plans also intersected with another contemporary trend in history, one that emphasized great turning points, such as battles, in the course of the world. 1851 had seen the publication of Edward Shepherd Creasy's book *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, which proved an influential method of viewing history that found a ready reception in the church.<sup>434</sup> It could easily supply a straightforward interpretation of where God had acted in the past, and offer hope that something similar might happen again soon. W. Rees argued that “there are turning

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<sup>431</sup> Palmer, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, 6.

<sup>432</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *A Discourse Before the General Assembly of South Carolina*, 7.

<sup>433</sup> Palmer, *Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer*, 40.

<sup>434</sup> The book was warmly reviewed in “Sketches of Recent Works,” *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* 6, no. 1 (January 1852), 157.

points in the history of individuals and nations that fashion and establish their whole future course.”<sup>435</sup> Ministers across the South looked for such turning points to see what the course of history would hold in store for the Confederacy. Even to the end, ministers were convinced that such a point would come, and history would move forward through preservation, not change.

### *Religion and Politics, not Church and State*

All these philosophies of history and ideas of the place of racial slavery within God's providence brought about tension in the preaching and thought of Southern churches.<sup>436</sup> If slaves were to be Christianized and if the Confederacy's fate was somehow inseparable from the spread of the gospel, then there would be ways in which the spheres of Government and Law would need to be strongly influenced by Christianity and churches. Until this point, all major Protestant denominations in the South had prided themselves on adhering to a doctrine of the spirituality of the church, even arguing over who first articulated such an idea.<sup>437</sup> This doctrine demarcated the proper spheres of jurisdiction for the respective authorities of the church and magistrate. It was essentially an inconsistent facade selectively used as a defense against Northern attempts by various churches to pronounce upon the sinfulness or otherwise of slavery.<sup>438</sup>

Now in the context of war, according to the theology of the Southern clergy, victory necessitated correct belief. Furthermore, their philosophy of history required the correct treatment of the enslaved population. In order to achieve these goals, greater involvement in politics was advocated

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<sup>435</sup> Rees, *A Sermon on Divine Providence*, 4.

<sup>436</sup> The tension can be seen in the regularity with which ministers prefaced their remarks with caveats about the proper relationship between politics and the church, especially the pulpit. For example, Charles Minnigerode, when he began to muse upon the nature of the war, displayed trepidation, saying, “I trust I'll be forgiven the introduction of this subject. God forbid that I should speak as a mere man and not as the minister of Christ, that I should introduce politics where religion alone should raise her voice, Rev. Charles Minnigerode, *“He That Believeth Shall Not Make Haste.” A Sermon Preached on the First of January, 1865, in St. Paul's Church, Richmond* (Richmond: Chas. H. Wynne, 1865), 6. It was also generally considered a poor form for ministers to run for public office in elections. However, there were exceptions to this rule. James Boyce ran to be a delegate for the South Carolina Secession Convention but lost to James C. Furman, another Baptist minister. Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 135.

<sup>437</sup> Ministers were likely to claim that their tradition had a history of not speaking about politics from the pulpit. Historians, too, have differed upon who, in particular, should be credited with originating the idea of a proper separation of the spheres of the church and politics. Richard Carwardine sees it as something Methodists received from Pietist influences in Richard Cardwardine, “Evangelicals, Politics and the Coming of the American Civil War, a Transatlantic Perspective,” *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism In North America, The British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990*, ed. Mark Noll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 198. Cheesebrough, *God Ordained this War*; 143, claimed it as a distinctive of the Baptists. At the same time, Ernest Trice Thompson takes the view that it was a Presbyterian doctrine, Thompson, *Southern Presbyterians: Vol II*, 10.

<sup>438</sup> Jack P. Maddex “From Theocracy to Spirituality: The Southern Presbyterian Reversal on Church and State.” *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985) 54, no. 4 (1976): 438-57.

by ministers around the South. The Civil War effectively allowed churches to re-assess their relation to civil power and constitute a new nation with the politico-religious settlement they desired. As we shall see in later chapters, the symbolic representation of this feeling was the inclusion of an official recognition of God in the constitution of the Confederate states, something that Southern ministers felt was sorely lacking in the old constitution of the Union. This process was aided by historicizing the relationship between religion and politics. Multiple Southern preachers discoursed upon the need for nations to enact Christian laws and foster a Christian spirit without favoring one denomination with establishment. When Virginia was contemplating secession, the Presbyterian minister Isaac Handy declared to his congregation that, “in this country we want no establishment....but we do want the countenance of civil authority in favor of Christian principle.”<sup>439</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer opined before the General Assembly of Georgia, “All history moreover attests this guardianship of the church over the State: for the records of ancient and modern times will be searched in vain for a single instance in which a nation has been destroyed, holding in her bosom a pure and uncorrupted church.” This was a policy statement for the South; history, according to Palmer, was on his side; if the churches were allowed a say in the Confederacy's dealings, then God would bless the South. He also reminded his listeners that history demonstrated the principle that nations that “showed kindness to the people and church of God” have generally flourished, but all those that persecuted Israel have “gone down a mournful wreck beneath the waves, leaving scarcely a trace of [their] existence behind.”<sup>440</sup>

Rev. O. S. Barton succinctly said to his congregation at Warrenton, “We do not believe in the Union of church and state...we do believe in the union of religion and politics.”<sup>441</sup> This distinction became a stock phrase trotted out upon the right occasion by Southern ministers. It was a statement to which James A. Lyon gave his full support in an article highlighting this very point; he claimed that “the union of church and state is a very different thing from the union of religion and politics” and placed the attack of this notion in a historical context, which enabled him to reject it. “That religion and politics should be separated, the one wholly divorced from the other,” he contended, “is a popular fallacy,” an idea that he saw as “of recent growth...the birth of...modern infidelity.” He used the biblical citation from Revelation 11:15 as the key verse that placed this process in the progress of history.

<sup>439</sup> Rev. Isaac Handy, *Our National Sins: A Sermon, Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church, Portsmouth, VA, On the Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1861* (Portsmouth: Daily and Weekly, 1861), 9. Charles Colcock Jones said, “the Union suffered under the burden of a godless constitution.” Quoted in Paul Harvey, “The Bible in the Civil War,” *The Oxford Handbook to the Bible in America*, ed. Paul Gutjahr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 358-369.

<sup>440</sup> Palmer, *Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer*, 29.

<sup>441</sup> O. S. Barton, *A Sermon Preached in St James Church Warrenton, VA., on the Fast Day June 13<sup>th</sup> 1861* (Richmond, VA: Enquirer Press, 1861), 8.



Speaking of God's law, he declared, "its scepter is destined to rule over all other scepters, and its kingdom to swallow up all other kingdoms! Consequently, Christianity...is, in due time, to become the law of the whole world!"<sup>442</sup> The need for the church to influence the civil sphere with the principles of the gospel is thus given an immediacy of historical proportions; it is, for Lyon, intimately wrapped up in the world's destiny. The *Southern Christian Advocate* also articulated this view of the church by stating, "We hold that the church...is of paramount dignity – high above republics, kingdoms, and empires, – over senators, armies, and constitutions – that these also exist only for the sake of the church and to maintain order in the world, which gives it security until its divine principles shall everywhere prevail, and the law of God become universally the law of man." The author went on to explain how this would take place. "the church has a right to be heard in all legislative questions, to have a voice in all the deliberations of cabinets and councils, to exercise its influence in all the great movements of the race, to dictate from her code to the legislators of a country... in a word, that the church should give law to the world." The church was, therefore, to achieve God's ends in extending his rule over the earth not by having an established church but by "so infusing the principles of his code into the individuals who compose the state, that they should feel their responsibility to him and perform their civil duties under a sense of obligation to the supreme lawgiver."<sup>443</sup> In this way, it was conceived by Southern ministers that the trajectory of the church and the trajectory of the Confederacy could converge so that the ends of the one would aid in achieving the ends of the other.

### *Conclusion*

The mind of the Southern minister was profoundly historical, reinforced through education, study, and consumption of contemporary sermons, journals, and popular literature, which contained and discussed works of history and philosophies of history. Time and time again, ministers would turn to the pages of the past to draw inspiration, illustration, example, and exhortation. The history of mankind stood beside the Bible, which in their minds also contained history as a source of examining and explaining the working of God in the course of current events. When correctly interpreted through biblical principles, the past was full of patterns that could be discerned to give meaning and encouragement to the South during the Civil War. Ministers drew upon arguments and beliefs that had been developing during the conflicts over slavery and other theological issues within the various churches, scaled up the rhetoric,

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<sup>442</sup> James Lyon, "Religion and Politics," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 15, no. 4 (April, 1863): 569-570.

<sup>443</sup> "How Christianity Should Control in Politics," *Southern Christian Advocate*, October 23, 1862, 1.

and dialed up the urgency. They drew upon their constructed historical identities as people with a storied past, those that conserved orthodoxy and preserved piety that they had told themselves in their histories prior to the war. But now, the theoretical purposes of God and the far-off consequences of slavery were coming closer and closer to home, and the discourses, sermons, and writings of this period reflect that reality. The scope was enlarged to encompass the epic; nothing less than the fate of the world, church, and humanity was seen to be at stake. Central to the majority of the Southern expositions of history was the institution of slavery, inescapable as a key instigator of the war, and, since its defense had been defended in biblical terms for so long, its preservation and perpetuation took on apocalyptic proportions. Slavery was seen as having a significant role to play in the purpose of the South; the war was interpreted as being a chance for the South to reform their practice of slavery to conform further to biblical models, away from the interference of the North and its imagined legions of abolitionists which Southern ministers feared were only moments away from bringing down Southern society and potentially Christian civilization with it. Slavery was also to be the guarantee of victory as multiple ministers saw the conversion of their enslaved people, and then subsequently, the continent of Africa could be an essential step forward in bringing about Christ's kingdom and possibly ushering in the millennium. This was thought most likely to be achieved through the patriarchal model of slavery. The Patriarchal Age became a particularly resonant period of biblical history for the South. Southern elite slave owners looked to its patterns of family worship and hierarchy, potentially race-based, to model the type of slavery that would serve God's ends in history and be the gift the victorious Confederacy would bestow to the world.

The constant discussion of reforming slavery along patriarchal lines and the experience of the church in a time of war gave rise to a new way of thinking about religion and politics that saw the two more closely aligned than most churchmen of the antebellum period would have publicly countenanced, influenced as they were by a prevailing sense of the spirituality of the church. Ministers and theologians of the South began to conceive of the state as subordinate in some ways to the influence of the church, as the victory and success of the South as God's new nation to bring about great final things on earth required civil authorities to be godly and promote godly causes and behaviors. This was part of a historical process by which Christ's kingdom would extend over the face of the earth. The focus of the following three chapters will be the role of specific periods of history in ministers' attempts to influence the Confederate war effort and how they deployed certain narratives of the past during the war.

## Chapter Five: Puritanism, Christian Militarism, and the English Civil War

Scholarship on Southern Protestantism, as well as on nineteenth-century transatlantic evangelicalism, has tended to give the impression that antebellum Southern Protestantism was introspective, insular, intellectually isolated, and due to its ever more defensive stance on slavery, largely cut off from currents of international evangelicalism.<sup>444</sup> However, contrary to this image, the religious newspapers of the South regularly reported with approbation upon religious developments in the United Kingdom, religious journals favorably reviewed recent theological and historical works published in London and Edinburgh, and Southern ministers traveled to Britain where they met and befriended influential British ministers.<sup>445</sup> Michael J. Turner has argued that a significant number of Britain's churches favored the South's cause during the Civil War due to a belief that "Britain and the South were bound together by a common Christian civilization."<sup>446</sup> However, there has been no attempt to ask if this feeling was

<sup>444</sup> Classic treatments of Southern Christianity by Donald Matthews, Anne Loveland, and Christine Leigh Heyrman are virtually silent on the question of any transatlantic influence. Richard Carwardine has commented that "if we are looking for the profound aberration, or fault line, in the Atlantic world it was not to be found in the distinctiveness of United States' evangelicalism compared with the experience of Britain and the Old World; rather it was the exceptionalism of theologically and socially conservative Southern evangelicals as against the advancing postmillennialist anti-slavery culture of ambitious British and Yankee reformers," Quoted in Charles Reagan Wilson, *Southern Missions: The Religion of the American South in Global Context* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 22. See also Richard Carwardine *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and North America, 1790-1865* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1978), and John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The age of Wilberforce, Moore, Chalmers, and Finney* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007). Literature on the Evangelical Alliance also paints Southern evangelicals as cut off from mainstream evangelicalism; see J. F. Maclear, "The Evangelical Alliance and the Anti-Slavery Crusade," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (Spring, 1979): 141-164; and "Thomas Smyth, Frederick Douglas and the Belfast Anti-Slavery Campaign," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 80, no. 4 (October 1879): 286-297. James Farmer commented that "nostalgia understandably stronger in the Old South because these people could find so few contemporary societies with which to identify." *Metaphysical Confederacy*, 112. However, Britain was certainly one with which they did identify closely. The South has been described by Paul Harvey as "inward and provincial" in *Christianity and Race in the American South*, 7.

<sup>445</sup> For example, nearly every issue of *The Southern Episcopalian* contained news from Britain of church meetings, appointments, revivals, and other news from many traditions, not simply the Church of England. Of particular interest is an article in the March 1858 issue that commented upon the recent rebellion in India, in which Henry Havelock gained his fame. This article describes the English as having a "kindred blood" and "a high civilization and pure Christianity." Furthermore, several key ministers of the antebellum and Civil War, who are quoted in this work, traveled to Britain and met with leading Evangelicals. Thomas Smyth, James Henley Thornwell, Moses Hoge, John Bailey Adger, and Philip Slaughter are the most prominent examples.

<sup>446</sup> Michael J Turner, "British Sympathy for the South during the American Civil War and Reconstruction: Religious Perspective," *Church History and Religious Culture* 97, no. 2 (2017): 195-219. See also his "Our Brethren: A British Version of Southern Separatist Ideology During the American Civil War," *Britain and the World* 13 no. 1 (March 2020): 47-68. Historiography on Britain and the American Civil War, in general, is vast. It reaches back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when political and diplomatic histories of the relation between Britain and North America were in vogue; for example, see Milledge Bonham Jr., *The British Councils in the Confederacy* (London: [unknown] 1911), Lord Newton, Lord Lyons: *A Record of British Diplomacy* (London: Longmans 1913); E. Douglas Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War* 2 Vol (New York 1924). The 70s saw the publication of work devoted to the military role and crises that erupted between the two countries, for example, Frank J Merli, *Great Britain and the Confederate Navy* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1971); Brian Jenkins, *Britain and the War for the Union* (Montreal: McGill 1974); Adrian

mutually held by Christians in the South. The near-ubiquitous use of four British names by Southern ministers as bywords for Christian soldiering, Oliver Cromwell, Henry Havelock, Hedley Vicars, and Colonel Gardiner, would suggest that Southern ministers did, indeed, consider Britain to be a Christian civilization that was worthy of admiration and emulation.<sup>447</sup> The attempts of Southern clergy to instill piety in their armies through the use of these British examples show the influence of burgeoning Christian militarism, which blossomed in mid-Victorian Britain and reached across the Atlantic to significantly shape the religious tone of the American Civil War.<sup>448</sup>

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Cook, *The Alabama Claims* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); Norman Ferris, *The Trent Affair* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee, 1977). A distinct turn was taken towards the image of the Civil War created in British public discourse with Mary Ellison, *Support for Secession: Lancashire and the American Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), something that would become a dominant theme in the literature of later years, for example, R.J.M Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2003); Hugh Dubrulle, *Ambivalent Nation: How Britain Imagined the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 2018). The past decade or so saw the publication of widely read popular works which are full of vivid details and exciting narratives, Christopher Dickey, *Our Man in Charleston* (New York: Broadway Books, 2015), Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2010). The works which are most interesting for our purposes, however, deal with the view of the Civil War from a Christian standpoint in Great Britain, such as W. Harrison Daniel "The Response of the Church of England to the Civil War and Reconstruction in America," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 47, no. 1 (March 1978): 51–72.

<sup>447</sup> James Gardiner was a Scottish Colonel in the British army who died at the battle of Prestonpans during the Jacobite uprising of 1745. He had been popularized by the famous dissenting minister Philip Doddridge in a devotional memoir of Gardiner's life published in England in 1747. However, he had also enjoyed acclaim in America where, by the early nineteenth century, it had gone through multiple editions. Philip Doddridge, *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Honorable Col. James Gardiner* (London: 1747). His book served as a precursor to the evangelical religious biography, which would be the medium for the fame of Hedley Vicars, another name in the pantheon of British military Christians used by ministers during the American Civil War. Vicars was a Captain in the British army killed at the siege of Sevastopol during the Crimean War. What made him widely renowned as a Christian saint was the biography written by Sarah Marsh, see Sarah Marsh, *Memorials of Capt. Hedley Vicars, 97<sup>th</sup> Regiment* (Edinburgh: 1856) and, Trev Broughton, "The life and Afterlives of Captain Hedley Vicars: Evangelical Biography and the Crimean War," *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* Issue. 20 (May 2015); and Petros Spanou, "Soldiership, Christianity, and the Crimean War: The Reception of Catherine Marsh's Memorials of Hedley Vicars," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 22, no. 1 (January 2022): 46-62. Henry Havelock was an East India Company army officer who died during the Lucknow siege in 1857. He was a devout evangelical Baptist and became an icon for mid-Victorian evangelicalism. The first biography of Havelock was written by his Brother in law the Baptist missionary and Historian John Clark Marshman; it is a hagiographic account in the vein of many other Victorian Christian biographies, J. C. Marshman, *Memoirs of Major-General Henry Havelock* (London: Longmans, 1860). Havelock's story was recreated for soldiers in several pamphlets and articles during the war. I will treat Oliver Cromwell more fully in this chapter.

<sup>448</sup> O. Anderson, "The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain," *The English Historical Review* 86, no. 338 (January 1971): 46-72. Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), is of particular interest in outlining how biographies and other literature encouraged emulation by British and North American Readers. Eugene D. Genovese, "The Chivalric Tradition in the Old South," *The Sewanee Review* 108, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 188–205, is full of many examples of how the tropes of Chivalry were readily used in the South. Also illustrative of this point is Sherer Davis Bowman, *Masters and Lords: Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. Planters and Prussian Junkers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). For this chapter, I am taking Christian militarism to mean a fusing of the aesthetics and morality of warfare and soldiering with evangelical piety, such that traditional virtues of soldiering, self-sacrifice, discipline, bravery, courage, the readiness to defend, honor, and others, became emphasized in the religious life. In addition, the language of warfare, soldiering, fighting,

Failing to consider the impact of transatlantic trends on Southern Protestantism has resulted in historians of religion in the Civil War seeing the Southern church's contribution to Confederate nationalism as rooted exclusively in an American religious context separate from international religious identities.<sup>449</sup> In fact, as ministers attempted to influence the construction of Confederate nationalism, they searched beyond the narrow experience of America for examples and precedents from the wider world to which they felt linked by a shared Christian faith and common heritage. Moreover, they did so in a way that did not necessarily adhere to the narratives produced by politicians and cultural commentators but drew on international sources of evangelical Christian militarism. As a result, when ministers attempted to lend their voice to the creation of a Confederate identity during the American Civil War, they drank deeply from the wellspring of British history.

When war broke out, and the Confederacy required legitimization, the Southern clergy could supply images and narratives that emanated a reassuring continuity with preexisting historical realities with ease in a cultural milieu shaped and informed by a close identification with Britain and its past.<sup>450</sup> British precedents made sense and resonated with Southerners whose cultural reference points were informed by this closeness of culture, language, and a sense of a shared history. Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Episcopalian all looked to the British Isles as their place of origin, saw themselves as offshoots from the history of Britain, and looked to the Britain of their day as their co-worker in maintaining and spreading the Protestant gospel. In the crucible of war, Britain supplied the heroic, Christian, and historical military figures and examples to be manipulated and deployed for Southern ministers' purposes. In effect, Britain provided the Confederacy with a usable past. Southern ministers could conjure romanticized ideals of the English Civil War to a public well-versed in its events and meaning in a culture primarily determined by British paradigms.

It makes sense to see the Southern ministers' various uses of the English Civil War and Puritan

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conquering, and victory became more prevalent in evangelical discourse. Similarly, soldiering became increasingly endowed with the traditional virtues of piety and religiosity.

<sup>449</sup> Byrd, *A Holy Baptism of Fire and Blood* is an example of this; Byrd discusses Confederate attempts to co-opt American national identity and history and focuses on the role of providence in national identity but says nothing of attempts to appropriate the memory of history outside of the United States, nor the Evangelical piety or trends that flowed back and forth between Europe and North America and how they may have affected either side of the religious nature of the conflict.

<sup>450</sup> For discussions of the cultural relationship between Britain and America in this period, see Eliza Tamarkin, *Anglophillia: Deference, Devotion, and Antebellum America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008); Christopher Hanlon, *America's England: Antebellum Literature and Atlantic Sectionalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Frank Thistlewaite, *The Anglo-American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: the University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959); Sam Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010); and the distinctly religious aspect, Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

history through the lens of Christian militarism displayed in the adoration of British Christian military figures and heroes. Historians who focus on the North, such as Kenyon Gradert, have masterfully recreated how New England's religious thinkers and public intellectuals re-imagined and applied the Puritan past to their contemporary moment. His work helps show that Puritan identities were not informed by North American sources alone but were also shaped by the images of Puritanism presented by British historians and theologians. The same was true for the South.<sup>451</sup> Nevertheless, for Gradert, despite modifying and reacting against classic interpretations of Puritan identity by Perry Miller and Sacvan Bercovitch, the Puritanism in his narrative remains essentially a national identity based on New England's lineage from a Puritan heritage.<sup>452</sup> The same cannot be said for the South, who did not inhabit a similar genealogical link to the Puritans as experienced by those in New England. Southern ministers thought of Puritanism as larger than North America and part of a primarily British movement that had international reformed Protestant connections. Their appeals, therefore, to Puritanism were not mainly an attempt to recapture the memory of New England's settlers and the Puritan fathers. Instead, they used Puritanism as they found it in British and international authors and historians who were not invested in glorifying Puritanism's North American expressions but identified with its broader and larger historical manifestations.<sup>453</sup>

This reality is overlooked by many prominent historians of religion and the Civil War, as can be seen in the frequent references in current scholarship to Southern churches' repudiation of Puritanism. Thus, a historian such as Harry Stout can write that "Many [Southern] writers justified the righteousness of their cause by contrasting the evangelical Christianity of the revivals with the "Puritan" spirituality of the North" and goes as far as to say, "for the South, the dark side of revivalism was Puritanism."<sup>454</sup> When sufficient notice is taken of Puritanism as not just a North American phenomenon but a broader movement spanning from the Elizabethan settlement to the Restoration, the

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<sup>451</sup> The standard history of the Puritans used in this period was still the Englishman, Daniel Neale, originally published between 1732 and 1738, but recently published in a new edition in America as *A History of the Puritans, or Protestant non-Conformists from the Reformation in 1517, to the Revolution in 1688, Vol I.*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1843).

<sup>452</sup> Gradert, *Puritan Spirits in the Abolitionist Imagination*. 163-4, 216. The same is true in the work of Richard T Hughes, who has discussed Benjamin Morgan Palmer's use of Puritan history. Hughes focuses entirely on negative depictions of what happened to Northern Puritanism. This is only one part of the Southern use of Puritan history; Southern ministers were much more positive about the Puritanism of the Elizabethan, Stuart, and Civil War periods in England's history. Hughes, *A Civil Theology for the South*, 452-455.

<sup>453</sup> See earlier chapters on history textbooks in Southern seminaries; nearly the entire corpus of church history consumed by Southern ministers originated in two places, Britain and Germany, very little of which is interested in elevating the place of the Puritan settlers of New England. See also the chapter on Southern denominations' histories and congregations produced before the Civil War. As presented in their historical accounts, the identity of the main four denominations of the South praised Puritanism and low church evangelicalism but not primarily their North American expressions.

<sup>454</sup> Stout, *Upon the Alter of the Nation*, 333.

Southern clergy's use of Puritan history appears nuanced, and a positive view of Puritanism emerges. Failure to use this wider lens can result in comments such as that from George Rable that the typical Southern comparison between Confederate General Stonewall Jackson and Oliver Cromwell was "Ironic in light of the widely held notion of a yawning gulf between Southern Cavaliers and Northern Puritans."<sup>455</sup> This ignores the reality that many Southern ministers did not see a yawning gap between themselves and Northern Puritans but rather a yawning gap between Puritans and what the North had become. Drew Gilpin Faust comes closer to a correct analysis of the Southern clergy's position when she points out that the Southern view of Puritanism was not an unalloyed critique but saw elements of worthy good in the Puritan past.<sup>456</sup> However, this is primarily presented as an attempt to recapture the nationalist Puritan America narrative from the North. The ways in which Southern ministers deployed the history of Puritanism become more apparent when seen within a wider framework of identities rooted in continuity with British antecedents. These identities were supplied with images, pictures, and references from a shared evangelical militaristic anesthetic that was at large in Britain. This culture of Christian militarism connected piety and soldering in the oft-cited quadrumvirate of Cromwell, Havelock, Vicars, and Gardiner.

Southern ministers interjected a notion of historical Christian identity into Confederate nationalism that relied on a known world view, yet, was distinct and nuanced in some of its particularities. Specifically, I will argue that the church did not agree with the primary facets of the Puritan North versus Cavalier South narrative used by many Southern commentators. Instead, clergy adapted it for their own purposes or repudiated it by shifting around the historical identities so that piety and orthodoxy were at the center of any comparison between Confederates and participants of the English Civil War. Therefore, ministers should not simply be seen as following the state or culture in all aspects of their vision of Confederate nationalism.<sup>457</sup> Instead, clergy interpreted the unfolding situation in their own terms, with their own reference points. In doing so, they used history to legitimize and underpin their view of what the Confederacy should be as a nation and how it could win its war. Southern minister's prescription was for the Confederacy to imitate the Godly piety of many forebears

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<sup>455</sup> Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 138.

<sup>456</sup> Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 27.

<sup>457</sup> Ann Loveland, *Southern Evangelicalism and Social Order*; have warned against seeing the Southern church as simply a "'culture religion' shaped by and subservient to the ideology of the old South." In a seemingly overlooked article, Robert Bonner also argues that some clergy in the South attempted to appropriate the image of the Puritan for Southern use. However, his argument is more to do with the failure of racial thinkers to sustain a viable ethnic distinction between North and South for Confederates to identify with than any implications this has for the Southern church or what we can learn about the fact that it was specifically and mainly clergy who made this intellectual move. "Roundheaded Cavaliers? The Context and Limits of a Confederate Racial Project," *Civil War History* 48, no. 2, (March 2002): 34-59.

and fellow Christians in Britain. This use of the history of the Puritans fused well with the historical identity of ministers, which placed them in the position of conservative maintainers of orthodoxy and piety. The memory of Puritans in the English Civil War could be constructed to underline a commitment to inherited rights against encroaching tyranny and religious orthodoxy against innovation, two concerns close to the heart of Southern ministers.<sup>458</sup>

### *The English Civil War*

Southern ministers' use of Puritan history and identity tended to focus on the English Civil War rather than the Puritan settlement of North America. It is not surprising that comparisons between the English Civil War and the American Civil War captured the minds of Southerners. The White Southern population descended predominantly from forebears from the British Isles; a large proportion was of English stock, and the Scottish and Scotch-Irish immigrants made up a further significant minority.<sup>459</sup> These countries were the constituent nations of the "Wars of the Three Kingdoms," which comprised the English Civil War of the mid-seventeenth century. What was true for Southern society broadly was also true of the Southern churches more specifically. Three of the four major denominations in the South, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian, all traced their lineage to ecclesiastical bodies and parties that played significant roles in the events of the English Civil War. The turmoil of the English Civil War and the century in which it took place was fundamental to the self-conception of these denominations. For example, *The Tennessee Baptist* often ran articles and letters, as well as sections of a relevant denominational history, which included the role of Baptists in Cromwell's army.<sup>460</sup> Furthermore, a significant portion of the historical literature consumed by the South was of British origin. O'Brian has commented that the canon of English historians readily available in the South began with the Earl of Clarendon, whose major work was one on the English Civil War. The most widely read English historians of the time, David Hume and Charles Babington Macaulay's works also centered around the English Civil War and subsequent political and constitutional turmoil.<sup>461</sup> Children and young men, in particular, devoured these books and, as such, the English Civil War entered the familiar landscape of historical memories for a certain class as a shared reference point.<sup>462</sup> The clergy of all four

<sup>458</sup> John Coffey has written of Puritanism's "puzzling set of legacies." If not necessarily puzzling, Southerners' use of Puritanism is contradictory and slightly unexpected. "Puritan legacies" *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 327.

<sup>459</sup> Clement Eaton, *A History of the Old South* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 9.

<sup>460</sup> See *The Tennessee Baptist*, June 20, 1857; December 08, 1860; February 04, 1854; September 3, 1859.

<sup>461</sup> O'Brian *Conjectures of Order*, 594.

<sup>462</sup> James Henley Thornwell was said to have read Hume's History of England as a boy. Benjamin Morgan Palmer *The Life*



major denominations valued the reading and study of this history, and it formed an integral part of theological education; *The South Western Baptist* advised young and aspiring ministers to read extensively in the field of history, saying, "You are altogether inexcusable in not knowing the history of your own country, and this you must remember embraces the history of England down to the Revolutionary Wars."<sup>463</sup>The fact that clergy took this advice seriously is reflected in the regularity with which British history was reviewed in prominent religious Journals.<sup>464</sup>

Therefore, Southern ministers often turned to the English Civil War as a historical precedent to draw parallels and lessons which they could use to assess and explain the conflict they were experiencing. In addition, British history gave a sense of continuity and venerability to a culture concerned with avoiding any semblance of novelty. Clergy in the South believed in the consistency of God's actions throughout history. So, if history did not quite directly repeat itself, there would be patterns of activity displayed in the purposes of God that could be seen and used to discern the significance of current events. The question became if there was a parallel between the two conflicts, or indeed a continuity, which side of the American Civil War corresponded to which side in the English Civil War? In other words, which army, Cavalier or Roundhead, would provide the Southern soldier the imaginary framework with which to construct the meaning of their cause? This was a question the broader Southern culture answered with the contemporary myth of the Cavalier South versus Puritan North that cast the American Civil War as part of an ongoing conflict in direct continuation from the English Civil War. Southern ministers did not simply regurgitate this trope from the surrounding culture but instead refracted what they found through the lens of their own history and priorities. Thus, for Southern ministers ensconced in a transatlantic evangelical, low church tradition that highlighted orthodox reformed piety combined with militaristic Christianity, how the North and South corresponded to the parties in the English Civil War was often reversed from the broader culture around them.

### *Puritan North vs. Cavalier South*

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and *Letters of James Henley Thornwell D.D., LL.D.* (Richmond, VA: Whittet & Shepperson 1875), 20.

<sup>463</sup> "Essay," *South Western Baptist*, February 16, 1860, 1.

<sup>464</sup> See, for example, John Boccock, "The English Reformation," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 7, no. 2 (October 1853): 161-185 and "The Martyrs of Scotland and Sir Walter Scott," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 10, No. 1 (April 1857): 69-94. This was by no means just a Presbyterian phenomenon either. See W. S. Grayson, "Cromwell and His Religion," *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* 5, no. 1 (January 1851): 58-85; and "Macaulay as an Historian," *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* 5, no. 2 (April 1851): 300-315.

Throughout the antebellum period, a historical myth of the Southern Cavalier almost universally penetrated the Southern imagination and informed the South's conception of itself. Sidney Ahlstrom has described this myth as central to a new kind of Southern nationalism emerging from the 1830s onward.<sup>465</sup> The Cavaliers supported Charles I during the English Civil War and, according to popular belief at the time of the American Civil War, had been the settlers of the Southern states, particularly Virginia and the Carolinas. These Cavaliers had been opposed to the Parliamentarians, or Roundheads, who would become dominated by the personality of Oliver Cromwell during the Commonwealth that followed the execution of Charles I. These Roundheads, the historical enemies of the Cavaliers, were seen to be particularly fanatical in their religion and contained within their number the independents and advocates of ecclesiastical reform who were often termed Puritans. The label Puritan, first used during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, was also applied to the settlers of the New England colonies. It was widely observed in popular discourse that the Northern states followed the character of their founders and were fanatical, intolerant, and oppressive as well as hypocritical and joyless, whereas the Cavalier of the South valued order, propriety, and the leisurely gentlemanly pursuits of the plantation life. The North was also middle-class, populated by lawyers, shopkeepers, and merchants, whereas the South was founded by aristocrats of noble blood and natural leadership.

William Taylor has expertly elucidated this myth and sees it emerging as a literary trope in the eighteenth century and developing over the course of the nineteenth. He argues that the myth's popularity was stimulated by the decay of traditional economic security and a general decline in wealth experienced particularly strongly in Virginia. This economic downturn was combined with a perceived loss of political influence, most starkly seen in the presidency ceasing to be dominated by Virginians. In addition to these factors, the fear of religious fanaticism and increasing anti-slavery sentiment contributed to the desire for nostalgic ruminations about the Cavalier characteristics of the South.<sup>466</sup> The Cavalier myth gained popularity in a period when the novels of Walter Scott were setting a precedent for the enjoyment of a romanticized past and were being enthusiastically devoured by a Southern elite who wished to see themselves as noble, honorable, aristocratic, and therefore inherently able to govern and to rule. As Bertram Wyatt Brown has written, the Cavalier-Puritan dichotomy was “[a] nostalgic hearkening to a prior epoch in western history, properly enveloped in romance and adventure.”<sup>467</sup> The myth provided a narrative source of authority to alleviate the fears of Southern elites

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<sup>465</sup> Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 654.

<sup>466</sup> Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee*, 51-55, 57-65.

<sup>467</sup> Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, 181.

by providing an elevated account of their place in the world. At the same time, the development of the Northern states' historical identity in distinction to the South as an exotic "other" reinforced the myth.<sup>468</sup> Like all good myths, it contained just enough truth to be believed and sustained. The Puritan nature of the New England settlements was a matter of historical record. However, the South's interpretation of what that meant by the opening of the Civil War was buried in a mire of prejudices and tropes. The Cavalier nature of Southern society, however, was less sure, but even in the twentieth century, historians such as Clement Eaton and William Hackett Fischer have felt it was not entirely without basis.<sup>469</sup>

The relative merits of the historical arguments about immigration to the Southern states are not our primary concern. For our purposes, it is enough to note the widespread belief that the South was populated by Cavaliers and their descendants and the North by Puritans and their descendants. Upon the outset of the Civil War, the Cavalier myth assumed a new level of importance as its language began to pervade Confederate rhetoric and significantly inform its historical identity. Jefferson Davis drew on Cavalier imagery in his first speech after his inauguration to declare that "The Northern Roundheads bred in the bogs and fens of Ireland and Northern England, could never dominate the Southern people, who were decedents of the bold and chivalrous Cavilers of old."<sup>470</sup> Many other commentators used the dichotomy between Cavalier and Puritan as a key explanatory framework for the war. A writer in *The Richmond Express* explained, "We never believed that slavery had as much to do with this war as personal resentment and vindictiveness, transmitted from generation to generation, smoldering embers of the old Cavalier and Puritan feuds, which never died out." They then went on to assert in no uncertain terms that the descendants of those two classes in the North and South would have gone to war, "sooner or later, if slavery never existed."<sup>471</sup> This explanation for the war was also offered in the foreign press and re-used by Southern newspapers to reinforce the Confederacy's perception of itself.<sup>472</sup>

This Cavalier myth was also given real intellectual credence by lengthy articles in some of the South's most prestigious journals. Both *DeBow's Review* and the *Southern Literary Messenger* ran

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<sup>468</sup> Cobb, *Away Down South*, 1, 4. The role of the North in romanticizing the South through travel is also a theme of Susan Mary Grant's *North Over South*, 81-111.

<sup>469</sup> William Hackett Fischer has seen fundamental importance in the streams of migration from England forming "Folkways," the Southern iteration of this phenomenon being created in part by "Distressed Cavaliers" *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Eaton, *A History of the Old South*, 69.

<sup>470</sup> Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, 180.

<sup>471</sup> *Richmond Dispatch*, Richmond, September 14, 1863.

<sup>472</sup> See, William. H. Russell, *Pictures of Southern Life: Social, Political, and Military* (New York: James G. Gregory, 1861), 1-3. For Southern newspapers reprinting an article from the *Time of London* about the Puritan versus Cavalier explanation for the American Civil War, see *The Charleston Daily Courier* February 6, 1863. and *South Western Baptist* October 8, 1863.

pieces that sought to explain the war through this lens by interacting with the most recent ethnological and racial scholarship. In these articles, the antagonism between Puritans and Cavaliers was given an added layer of complexity by the association of Puritan with Saxon and Cavalier with Norman. In this way, the war could be presented as both religious and racial.<sup>473</sup> The Florida attorney William Archer Cocke opened his 1861 *DeBow's Review* article with the contention that nations have characters that are maintained by the correct ordering of the various disparate elements within them. It was argued that this was achieved in England by the Norman conquest of the Saxons and the subsequent maintenance – primarily by force – of a racially-based aristocracy. The Normans and the Saxons were seen as forming the two sides of the English Civil War and settling the different regions of North America.<sup>474</sup> Cocke argued that the "Saxon" North and "Norman" South had united during the Revolutionary War to gain independence from the British crown, yet, since that time, the principle of their "radical and irreconcilable" differences had made itself evident and inevitably led to the Civil War.<sup>475</sup> It was argued that this difference could be attributed to the characteristics of these groups, which settled the Northern and Southern states.

“The Puritans were the first settlers of the Northern colonies; the Cavaliers, with Huguenots and Covenanters, settled the Southern colonies. The Puritans, if desiring to escape the thralldom of tyranny, were in their hearts tyrants: The Cavaliers and those who sought with them a home in the Southern colonies, designed to escape from the tyranny that they might be free and establish and dispense the principles of liberty to all who might live among them and live after them.”<sup>476</sup>

Cocke narrated the history of Puritan strictness and the excesses of those who eventually made their way to rule in New England, focusing on their "intolerance" and "bigotry." For his sources, he relied upon recognized authorities such as David Hume, George Bancroft, and James Grahame's *The History of the United States of North America*, commenting on the validity and reliability of each. The thrust of the argument in the article was that the Puritans escaped persecution only to become persecutors of others. A direct line was then drawn from the Puritans of the Seventeenth century to the Northerners of the nineteenth, showing that they were equivalent in “vices, religion, and politics, and utterly unfit for

<sup>473</sup> James McPherson, “Two Irreconcilable Peoples? Ethnic Nationalism in the Confederacy” in *Civil War as Global Conflict: Trans-national Meaning of the American Civil War* ed. David T. Gleeson, Simon Lewis (Columbia: USC Press, 2014) and See also Watson, “The Difference of Race.”

<sup>474</sup> William Archer Cocke “The Puritan and the Cavalier; or, The Elements of American Colonial Society,” *DeBow's Review* 31, no. 3 (September 1861): 224. The attribution of this article to Cocke is made by Robert Bonner in *RoundHeaded Cavaliers*.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid*, 209-210.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid*. 210-211

civil liberty.”<sup>477</sup>

### *Defending the Puritans*

The Protestant clergy of the South never universally or even generally accepted the central tenets of the Cavalier versus Puritan narrative. Instead, ministers influenced by Christian militarism valued the piety of Christian soldiers over the supposed aristocratic virtues of the Cavaliers. However, the clergy most likely to endorse the Cavalier myth were Episcopalians. This is unsurprising given their descent from the faction of the Church of England that had been loyal to Charles I and gained power upon the restoration of Charles II. It made sense, therefore, for Episcopalian churchmen to ride the wave of Cavalier nostalgia, and, indeed, the Episcopal Church experienced influence among the upper echelons of the Confederacy's Political and Military elite. Jefferson Davis worshiped at St John's Episcopal Church in Richmond and was baptized and confirmed as an Episcopalian during the war.<sup>478</sup> It is from this section of the Southern Protestant clergy that historians have often misleadingly drawn upon when discussing Cavalier's identity and the Southern churches.<sup>479</sup> However, in the Southern context, where evangelical and low-church Episcopalianism was well represented, this was not universal across the denomination.<sup>480</sup>

For the most part, Southern ministers were primarily concerned with defending and appropriating the memory of the Puritans. This defense of the Puritans did not necessarily mean a wholesale repudiation of the Cavalier heritage of the South either. What was common was the melding

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid 223.

<sup>478</sup> For Jefferson Davis's religion, see William J. Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 388.

<sup>479</sup> Harry Stout and Christopher Grasso have charted the ways in which the *Richmond Dispatch* under Episcopal editorship perpetuated the Cavalier versus Puritan Narrative, and George Rable points to the example of the Episcopal Bishop of Mississippi William Mercer Green, who railed against the “spirit of Puritanism” at large in the North. Harry Stout and Christopher Grasso, “Civil War, Religion and Communications: The Case of Richmond,” *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall Miller, Harry Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 336-37. Rable, *Gods Almost Chosen Peoples*, 39. One particularly quotable example of Episcopalian cavalier identity, however, comes from Daniel Dreher, Rector of St James church in Concord, North Carolina, who declared, in a sermon before the general assembly of Virginia, “If you turn to history, you will find that the New England States were originally settled by a peculiar people from England, Scotland and Holland, a rebellious and restless people, always fond of liberty, but most intolerable masters when they had the power.” His discourse continues even to show sympathy for “Poor Charles the I, [who] fell victim to the fury of their ancestors,” and he argues that the same spirit responsible for this egregious act during the English Civil War is alive and thriving among the Puritans of the North; “In America, they raised the hand of religious persecution among the colonies. Strange as it may seem, they who fled from persecution were first to persecute. They have been people of one idea for many years... hence the unwillingness to let the South go in peace; rather than do so, they prefer forcing a war upon us with a view of our subjugation.” Daniel I. Dreher *A Sermon Delivered by Rev. Daniel I. Dreher, Pastor of St. James Church, Concord N.C., June 13, 1861. Day of Humiliation and Prayer, as per Appointment of the President of the Confederate States of America* (Salisbury, NC: Watchman 1861); 9.

<sup>480</sup> In addition, it could be argued that in many instances, the criticism of Puritanism is of its form as found in New England rather than Puritanism in general.

of a Cavalier aesthetic - romanticized and reliant on its association with chivalry and honor - with a Puritan piety and militarism. In effect, there was a re-forging of the myth to create an image of the Southerner who could be like a Cavalier with regard to chivalry and honor but like a Puritan with respect to orthodoxy and fervency of faith. Thus, the word Cavalier could be used as a shorthand to signify bravery or chivalry, as when in an article after the first battle of Manassas, the *Tennessee Baptist* praised the courage of one regiment in words, "The blood of old Alabama was up, the sons of the old Cavaliers showed themselves worthy of their noble descent."<sup>481</sup> Nevertheless, for the most part, it remained just that, a rhetorical shorthand, and few churches in the South identified significantly with the cause of Charles I in the English Civil War.

On the whole, the churches of the South instead sought to use the animosities of the two parties in the English Civil War in an altogether more nuanced way that gave precedence to its religious and political themes. When making comparisons to the English Civil War, it was the Puritans who were more likely to be depicted positively. The evangelical culture of the four main denominations had long drawn upon Puritan spiritual traditions, not least devotionally. Authors such as John Bunyan and Richard Baxter remained staples for the Southern religious reader as well as figures such as George Whitfield, whose sermons were widely read and reflected a Low Church Episcopal tradition that had much in common with the Puritanism of the Parliamentary armies.<sup>482</sup> Furthermore, Presbyterians and Baptists could trace the histories of their denominations directly back to the events of the English Civil War, where they emerged as groups within the New Model Army. The 24<sup>th</sup> October 1861 edition of the *South West Baptist* carried an article pointing out to its readers the fact that "Many of Cromwell's ablest officers were Baptists, and so were many of his army."<sup>483</sup> Presbyterians were also highly attuned to this reality as their confession of faith was composed by Puritan divines at the behest of Parliament during the English Civil War.<sup>484</sup> It is unsurprising that ministers and theologians were slow to endorse the Cavalier versus Puritan narrative that they found pervading the culture.

Southern ministers preferred to adapt the history of the English Civil War to draw their own parallels and resist the denigration of the Puritans. One of the most striking examples of this was given by the Presbyterian William Hall, Chaplain to the Washington Artillery, in a lecture delivered in Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia. He addressed what he considered a pressing issue. "The absurd

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<sup>481</sup> "Manassas," *Southwestern Baptist*, October 24, 1861, 1.

<sup>482</sup> Fox-Genovese and Genovese *The Mind of the Master Class*, 327-328.

<sup>483</sup> *South Western Baptist*, October 24, 1861.

<sup>484</sup> Thomas Smyth, "The History, Character and Results of the Westminster Assembly of Divines: A Discourse in Commemoration of the Bi-centenary Anniversary of that Body," *Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth D.D. VOL IV*; ed. J. WM. Flinn (Columbia, SC: R.L. Breyers 1908); 385-434.

idea that this unprecedented struggle.... is a renewal of the strife between the Puritan and the Cavalier."<sup>485</sup> Scoffing at the idea, he presented an outline of the demography of the North and the South and its early settlers, concluding, "the immense majority of the present population of these States, are of any but Cavalier origin.... and the vast majority of the present Northern population, are of any but Puritan origin."<sup>486</sup> He then went back through the constitutional and ecclesiastical conflicts involving the Puritans from the Reformation to the English Civil War, arguing that the Puritans, particularly the Parliamentarians, fought for liberty and the inherited rights of Englishmen. Their struggle, to Hall, was comparable to the Confederacy's struggle for its liberties and inherited rights. He reminded his audience that "The Puritans included all the lovers of civil and religious liberty," and calling on recognized authorities on the subject, said, "This explains why Mr. Hume, the historian, Lord Brougham, and Mr. Macaulay, out of no partiality for the Puritans, unite in the brilliant testimony that, England is indebted to the Puritans for every principle of liberty."<sup>487</sup>

Hall not only admired the Puritans of England for their role in fighting for liberty as he saw it but also for their religious qualities. In his interpretation of history, the North is presented as having fallen far from the glories of any original and pure Puritan faith that they may have had, he argued. "Puritanism, properly so called, has no connection whatsoever, with this inhuman crusade upon the confederate states."<sup>488</sup> Hall presented the North as having "Repudiated every principle of the Puritan faith," particularly its "reverence for the Word of God."<sup>489</sup> The faults of the North, as far as they could be called Puritan, were blamed on the extremism within Puritanism. In this regard, Hall cannot wholly embrace the term Puritan without critique, and he was keen to point out that Presbyterians and Puritans are not the same. Speaking as a Presbyterian, he said, "We fought the Cromwell Puritans during the civil wars in England; we fought the Independents over the floor of the Westminster Assembly." His issue with Puritanism was one at the heart of the Southern church's worldview: order in society. Hall argued that Puritanism meant "pure democracy," which gives "unrestrained freedom to all individual tendencies." In contrast, Presbyterianism embodied "representative republicanism: in which all power is conserved in the hands of the few."<sup>490</sup> Here Hall sums up the contradictions and complexity of the Southern Christian and their use of the Cavalier versus Puritan motif. He wished to keep the religious element of seventeenth-century Puritanism and applauded Puritan contributions to the acquisition of

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<sup>485</sup> Hall, *The Historic Significance of The Southern Revolution*, 24.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

constitutional freedom but distanced himself from the full implications of their quest for liberty amid a society built upon order, hierarchy, and structured division of inherited rights.

An article published in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* in 1863 also sought to offer a sound defense of the Puritans without defending their Northern descendants. Rev. Joseph Atkinson, reviewing a history of Puritanism by the Northern Samuel Hopkins Published in 1859, of which he thoroughly disapproved, exclaimed, "No intelligent person can fail to have perceived, no evangelical believer can fail to have deplored, the indiscriminating censure and scorn with which the Puritans have been stigmatized of late"<sup>491</sup> He defended the Puritans by arguing that they were championing the cause of Parliament during the English civil war against a tyrannical king. Atkinson refused to identify the "insane and inhumane crusade now instituted against the people of the Confederate states with the creed and character of the Puritans."<sup>492</sup> Instead, Atkinson insisted the South was "contending this day for the very truths and doctrines...for which the Puritans contended in Great Britain." He provided a sympathetic account of Puritan resistance to the ecclesiastical policies of Queen Elizabeth I and concluded, "In contending for the rightful supremacy of the word of God in opposition to the mandates of kings and the decrees of councils, the Puritans conferred a priceless boon on the human race."<sup>493</sup> However, in the minds of Southern churchmen, the North had not been able to maintain the traditional beliefs and character of this honorable heritage. In the View of R. L. Dabney, the decay of the purity of the Puritans was part of a historically observable trend whereby great and powerful movements of God trail off and become apostate or cold and formal over succeeding generations. Dabney looked to the example of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland and likened their experience of doctrinal and moral decline following the Reformation, as he perceived it, to the Puritans of the North East.<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> Rev. Joseph M. Atkinson, "The Puritans," *The Southern Presbyterian Review*, 15. no.2 (October 1862), 234. Other Southern ministers also reacted against the denigration of the Puritans that they saw in the surrounding culture. Alexander Sinclair, Presbyterian minister of the church in Six Mile, South Carolina, declared, "Never were doctrines purer than those handed down to their descendants by the Puritan Fathers of New England. I have heard men in their ignorance attribute our national disorders to the influence of Puritan doctrines. Egregious error! The doctrines of the original Puritans were, and are, the doctrines of the Bible. They are the truths which we believe. They are the truths which from Sabbath to Sabbath, are preached in all the Presbyterian pulpits of the South." However, he ended his thought with the telling condemnation, "But the descendants of the Puritans have gone far astray from the creed of their forefathers." Rev. Alexander Sinclair, *A Thanksgiving Sermon, Preached in the Presbyterian Church at Six-Mile, Lancaster District, S.C., on Thursday, Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>, 1862*, (Salisbury, NC: J. J. Brunner 1862), 14. The *Central Presbyterian* commented on this trend also in November of 1862 with the following: "There are a few senseless scribblers in some of our political papers who are never weary of heaping indiscriminate abuse upon the old Puritans; a class of men of whom, with all their faults, the world was not worthy." "Gleanings from Adam's Commentary," *Central Presbyterian*, November 27, 1862. 2.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid*, 235.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid*, 242.

<sup>494</sup> Dabney Army Sermons 001 Union Presbyterian Seminary, William Smith Morton Library Archives, Robert Lewis Dabney faculty papers collection <https://cdm17236.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p17236coll4/id/0/rec/1> Union



The lesson for the South to draw from this was explicit; maintain a fervency of spirit in orthodox piety to avoid the doctrinal and moral slide experienced in the North.

### *English History as Constitutional Struggle*

Rev. Hall, among others, had attempted to situate the Confederacy and the Puritans in a sequence of movements contributing similarly to the progress of history. To his mind, they were part of a continual contention exerted by historical peoples. He argued, "The Puritans [contended] for their rights as churchmen; our fathers in the first American Revolution, for their chartered rights as Englishmen but we, merging all these ideas in one, and standing on higher and broader ground - we are contending for our inherent rights as men simply."<sup>495</sup> Hall arranged past conflicts to form a direct succession of movements that aided God's purposes in the world. He wanted to make it clear that the Confederacy was the next step on the same path that the Puritans forged in an earlier period. This attempt to equate the principles of previous conflicts can be found in the sermon of Stephen Elliott, preached before the Pulaski Guards in Savannah in 1863,

"The Anglo-Saxon race has never waited until the stroke of tyranny actually descended. It has ever snuffed tyranny at a distance and armed itself against its advent. The barons who wrested Magna Charta from John, at Runnymede; the *bold commoners who brought the Stuarts to the proper knowledge of a people's rights*; the colonies which struck the blow against taxation without representation, all acted upon this principle."<sup>496</sup>

For most Southern clergymen, their concept of history, if not entirely and systematically thought out, was influenced by a Whig interpretation of English history that emphasized the development of progress towards individual liberty and the constitutional rule of law through the English Civil War and Glorious Revolution.<sup>497</sup> This is why a thinker such as the Episcopal minister James Warley Miles told

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<sup>495</sup> Hall, *The Historic Significance of The Southern Revolution*; 28.

<sup>496</sup> Rev. Stephen Elliott, *A Sermon Preached to the Pulaski Guards* (Savannah, GA: John M. Cooper & Co. 1863), 8.

<sup>497</sup> See Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England From the Accession of James II in V Volumes* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coats, 1848), and helpful explanation of Macaulay the historian in J. P. Kenyon, *The History Men: The Historical Profession in England Since the Renaissance* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1983) and John Clive, *Thomas Babington Macaulay: The Shaping of an Historian* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1973). Another potential influence on Southern historical assumptions is Thomas Carlyle, who was more idiosyncratic a historian, and no Southerner, to my knowledge, became a consistent disciple of his. However, Chris E. Vanden Bossche has written of Carlyle as a "prophetic historian," whereby "Carlyle starts not from the past. The past prophesies the present. For this reason, he was never a strict historicist; he did not concern himself with discovering the pastness of the past and its uniqueness in contrast with other eras. Rather than take his readers into the past, he sought to make the historical actors of the past live in the present as spectral apparitions carrying messages that we fail to heed at our peril." Southerners

the graduating class of the College of Charleston in 1863, "The whole history of England is that of the progress of constitutional liberty."<sup>498</sup> North Carolina Episcopalian Rev O. S. Barton also preached to his congregation that each nation "has represented some leading idea, England's is constitutional liberty," and John Adger was able to write in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* about the "Pure stream of the English doctrine of liberty."<sup>499</sup> On this path to this constitutional liberty, there were events and moments where progress had been made, one of which was the English Civil War, where the arbitrary power of the monarch had been irreversibly curtailed. George Howe readily conceded that when it came to constitutional liberty, "The English Puritans and done their share."<sup>500</sup> However, this progression of liberty had its limits; the Confederacy was viewed as the final step, and the cause of White Southerners was seen as the culmination of this stream. What was needed now was the preservation and conservation of existing ideals and principles. It was alien to the mind of a clergyman of the South who valued this tradition to be overly enthusiastic about the Cavaliers who stood for arbitrary rule and a seemingly less godly - certainly anti-Calvinistic - stance in matters of religion. Furthermore, the Restoration of Charles II and the renowned immorality of his court was not a lifestyle that an Evangelical minister could countenance.<sup>501</sup> Indeed, far from identifying as cavaliers, some applied that appellation to the North, the *Southern Episcopalian* editorial of 1861 that compared the actions of the Union to the "despotic phases of Charles I."<sup>502</sup>

Benjamin Morgan Palmer, who was also known to compare Lincoln's actions to that of Charles I, sought to draw a lesson from the constitutional struggles of England and apply them to the experience of the states in North America.<sup>503</sup> In his discourse before the South Carolina Assembly of 1863, He reminded the delegates present "to look into the brilliant pages of Macaulay to learn how long and bitter was the struggle between prerogative on the one hand, and privilege on the other, before these two poles of the English constitution were adjusted in even tolerable harmony." Fearing that the

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thought of earlier periods and events as types or shadows of current debates and conflicts from which they could learn and understand the present, which is also how they treated the English civil war. "Introduction," in *Carlyle: Historical Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), xxiii.

<sup>498</sup> Miles, *God in History*, 18.

<sup>499</sup> O. S. Barton, *A Sermon Preached in St James Church Warrenton, VA., on the Fast Day June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1861* (Richmond VA: Enquirer Press, 1861), 6; Rev. John D. Adger, "Motley's Dutch Republic," *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 15, no.1 (July 1862.): 99.

<sup>500</sup> Howe, "The Scotch-Irish," 497.

<sup>501</sup> James Henley Thornwell evinced the usual attitude of Southern ministers when he visited England. He had found himself wondering at the places full of historical resonance from the stories of the past he knew so well, particularly the spot where Charles I was, in his words, "gloriously beheaded" Palmer *The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell*, 173.

<sup>502</sup> "The War," *The Southern Episcopalian* 8., no, 3 (June 1861): 147.

<sup>503</sup> Riley, *Secessionists become nationalists*, 293.

South was expecting the perfect political resolution to all their complaints and worries, he added, "It is far too early for us to abandon the experiment commenced by our fathers, and unmanly to succumb beneath the first difficulties encountered in our historic probation." Instead he urged his fellow Confederates to emulate their English forbears, advising them, "rather let us, with the patience and moderation of our British ancestors, amend by gradual changes what experience shows to be defective in our institutions."<sup>504</sup> Others articulated this sentiment to calm the fears of Southerners concerned about the lack of a quick conclusion to the war. The *South Western Baptist* called to the mind of its readers the fact that "England struggled for half a century, passing from Charles to Cromwell, and from Puritan to Cavalier, and from Jacobite to Orange and Hanoverian control before she settled down to her present condition" The point was driven home, "Every people must have their birth throws...but let us be patient."<sup>505</sup>

Ministers in the South also felt free to criticize the Parliamentary cause without necessarily endorsing the Cavalier side or completely repudiating the piety of the Puritans. The religious sensibilities of the Puritans were seen as sound, but it was believed that they had erred in their conception of the relation between church and state. Southern churchmen who adhered, at least theoretically, to the doctrine of the spirituality of the church may have endorsed the Parliamentary cause for constitutional liberty and may have seen much to admire in the fervor and prayer-fullness of the Puritans but could not go as far as to accept their mingling of the human magistrate with ecclesiastical authority. Rev Alfred A. Watson put forth this view at the 1863 meeting of the Diocese of North Carolina. Reflecting on what he saw as the North's dangerous entangling of church and politics in the form of abolitionism, he warned that history had been down this path before and the Southern church would do well not to forget this principle, "Puritanism forgot this when she set up the Kingdom of God, as she called it, in the English commonwealth."<sup>506</sup>

### *The English Civil War as Moral Exemplar*

Throughout the American Civil War one of the primary concerns of ministers was the morality of the troops. Pastors were, by their very nature, shepherds of their sheep and used to looking after their flocks by encouraging them towards morality, issuing stern rebukes, and preaching cautions against

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<sup>504</sup> B. M. Palmer, *A Discourse Before the General Assembly of South Carolina*, 9.

<sup>505</sup> "Patient Hope," *Southwestern Baptist*, January 28, 1864, 1.

<sup>506</sup> Rev. Alfred A. Watson, *Sermon Delivered Before the Annual Council of the Diocese of North Carolina, Upon the Festival of the Ascension, May 14, 1863* (Raleigh, VA: Progress print, 1863), 18.

vice. In all the four main Protestant denominations an evangelical culture of personal piety that involved abstaining from certain sins was part and parcel of the Christian life. Ministers were only too aware of the temptations that could befall a young man off to war and confronted with unfamiliar surroundings separated from home, church, and community. Such a soldier would be thrust into the company of unconverted people whose influence could not be controlled. A further issue, which has been well charted by historians, was the lack of chaplains. This dearth of spiritual influence seemed to heighten the threat of the moral dangers faced by soldiers.<sup>507</sup> In the face of this dire situation ministers reached for an historical parallel that highlighted the military effectiveness of a holy army. They saw the Confederates cause as holy, and it required a holy army in order to carry it out. Any departing from the highest levels of righteousness could spell disaster for the Confederacy, and this was felt especially in the latter stages of the war as defeats seemed to mount up in frequency and severity. Southern Christians believed God was punishing them for their sins, purifying them as a nation, turning the hearts of the South to God so that he would receive all the glory once the inevitable victory came. Therefore, a historical precedent showing that holiness was a good military strategy was a vital to the message that clergy wanted to send to the soldiers. Ministers found that parallel the Parliamentary army of the English Civil War. When it came to holiness as a model for Christian soldiering there was no hesitation in the choosing of sides, the Cavalier aesthetic was of little use to ministers wishing to encourage deep and rigorous piety on their country's soldiery.

Since the work of the historian Christopher Hill the parliamentary army has been seen as a hotbed of political and religious radicalism, yet the historical works most likely to be read by Southern ministers were more inclined to place an emphasis on the orthodox and fervent piety of the New Model Army.<sup>508</sup> Thomas Carlyle's popular work on the letters and speeches of Oliver Cromwell for example

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<sup>507</sup> Woodworth, *While God is Marching on*, and Shattuck, Jr. *A Shield and Hiding Place*, are works that both chronicle the relatively poor pay, conditions and status of the Confederate chaplains, a situation, that brought criticism from some clergymen, for example see Rev. T. V. Moore, *God our Refuge and Strength in this War: A Discourse Before the Congregations of the First and Second Presbyterian Churches, on the Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, Appointed by President Davis, Friday, Nov. 15, 1861* (Richmond, VA: W. Hargrave White), 12.

<sup>508</sup> See especially Christopher Hill, *The World Turned upside down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London: Pelican, 1972); *The Century of Revolution: 1603-1714* (London: Routledge 1961). Mark Kishlansky put it amusingly in 1978 "The new model army is associated with radicalism just as King Alfred is with cakes." Mark Kishlansky, "The Case of the Army Truly Stated: The Creation of the New Model Army," *Past and Present* 81 (November 1978.): 51. For the views of widely read historians in the South see, Lord Macaulay, who is generally positive about Cromwell and complementary about his armies, Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay *a History of England from the Accession of James II, Vol I*, 114. Neale also comments upon the religiosity of the parliamentary armies, *A History of the Puritans*, 428. Mosheim, probably the most commonly used ecclesiastical history text book for ministers in the South, is critical of the aims of the parliamentary army, and dismisses the license given to the "vilest and most absurd sects" during the commonwealth, but does concede the orthodox reformed nature of the majority of Cromwell's army, Johan Lorenz Mosheim *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern Vol III*. (New York: Harper and Bros, 1841), 424-426.

contained the assessment that the army “Prayed *Actually* Prayed” and contained illustrations of prominent times when this was the case.<sup>509</sup> As a result, calling upon their example became a natural rhetorical technique replicated in many sermons and periodicals throughout the course of the Civil War. Historians, such as James Silver, have observed that Southerners made the comparison between Cromwell's army and their own forces, yet have not preceded to explicate the meaning of such a continual equivalence.<sup>510</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese come close to the heart of the matter when concluding that the Confederates, viewed “their army [as] rightful heir to Cromwell's bible-reading army.”<sup>511</sup> This idea became so ingrained in the mindset of the South that it persevered after the war and became part of the lost cause mythology.<sup>512</sup> Widespread revivals in the Confederate army in the years 1863-1864 which seemed to progress and develop in size and fervor in proportion to the defeats that were suffered only served to heighten the idea that the Confederate army was a truly holy army akin to that of Cromwell's.<sup>513</sup> The extent and uniqueness of these revivals has been questioned, but what is key here is that they were felt to be real and significant at the time, in Kurt Berends words they were a “cultural event” widely reported on and used to rouse the hope of ultimate victory.<sup>514</sup> A key component of this hope was that in the past such resoundingly Christian armies, such as the New Model Army, had been victorious.

On November 15<sup>th</sup> 1861, on a fast day proclaimed by Jefferson Davis when the South was still relatively confident, Rev. T. V. Moore, preaching in Charleston's Second Presbyterian Church pronounced to his congregation, “I believe, that there has never been an army since the time of Cromwell, in which there was a more pervading sense of the power of God than our own.” This was an eminently good thing because, as he went on to explain, “All history proves...the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. God gives victory as He pleases to carry out his great and holy purposes in human history.”<sup>515</sup> The idea that it was not military strength nor human might that won

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<sup>509</sup> Quoted in the *Southwestern Baptist*, May 16, 1861.

<sup>510</sup> Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*, 32.

<sup>511</sup> Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*; 686.

<sup>512</sup> See especially J. William Jones, D.D., *Christ in the Camp: or Religion in the Confederate Army* (Richmond, VA: B. F. Johnson, 1888), 20. He writes “I shall be able to show...that no army in all history – not even Cromwell's “Roundheads” - had in it as much of real, evangelical religion and devout piety as the Army of Northern Virginia.”

<sup>513</sup> Woodworth, *While God is Marching on*; 209-210.

<sup>514</sup> Kurt O. Berends, “Wholesome Reading Purifies and Elevates the Man: The Religious Military Press in the Confederacy,” *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall Miller, Harry Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 135. For discussion of the revival's extent see, Reid Mitchell “Christian Soldiers? Perfecting the Confederacy,” *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall Miller, Harry Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 297-312. Also Drew Gilpin Faust “Christian Soldiers: The Meaning of Revivalism in the Confederate Army,” *Journal of Southern History* 53, No. 1 (February 1987): 63-90

<sup>515</sup> Moore, *God our Refuge and Strength in this War*, 13.

battles but the will of God was a common theme of Southern sermons. Many Southern ministers raged against the saying, often attributed at the time to Napoleon, that, “God's providence favors the big battalions.”<sup>516</sup> Rather, it was believed that God's action in history determined the outcome of battles, and the ability of Cromwell's army to trust in providence and prayerfully rely on God was what worked in the English Civil War. Rev. Moore was desirous that the same winning formula be deployed to full effect in the Confederate struggle against the North. He concluded his oration with a firm belief that it was the Christianity of the Parliamentary armies that enabled them to achieve great victories, saying, “did time permit, it would be easy to show that the religion, which fits men for any duty, suffering and danger, must fit them for the duties, sufferings and dangers of war;... nerved the iron men of Cromwell to such deeds of daring prowess.”<sup>517</sup> It was now for the Confederate soldier to emulate this great exemplar from the past and similarly achieve great things through faith.

These were sentiments replicated throughout the Confederacy, especially on the days of fasting set aside by the senate of the Confederate States of America. On the very same day that Rev Moore was extolling the virtues of Cromwell's armies to his congregation, Stephen Elliott was discoursing upon the theme of how to renew the Confederacy's “national strength.” One of the key aspects of the strategy that he laid out for the Confederacy to regain its ascendancy in the military sphere and experience victories once more was acknowledgment of God's power and man's ineffectiveness. The period and circumstances in history from which to draw that lesson par excellence was the English Civil War. He preached,

“It is a great mistake to neglect moral power, while we are cultivating physical power; to forget all that strength which is derived from God and His spirit, the strength which comes from prayer, from sobriety, from godliness, from holiness. It was those things which made the armies of Cromwell irresistible; which enabled the apprentices of London and the artisans of the towns to overcome the disciplined royalists, and the Cavaliers of Prince Rupert.”<sup>518</sup>

By evoking the socially inferior and amateur nature of the “apprentices of London and the artisans of the towns” he tapped into a strong reservoir of emotion felt by the South, numerically smaller, with a

<sup>516</sup> See for examples See “Fast Day Sermon,” preached at the Alabama General Assembly on Friday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1863 by Isaac Taylor Tichenor, J. S. Dill *Isaac Taylor Tichenor: The Home Mission Statesman*, (Nashville, TN: Southern Baptist Convention, 1909), 105; and Drury Lacey *Address Delivered at the General Military Hospital, Wilson N.C., on the day Appointed by the President as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer*, (Fayetteville, NC: Hale & Sons, 1863.), 11.

<sup>517</sup> Moore, *God our Refuge and Strength in this War*, 15.

<sup>518</sup> Stephen Elliott, *How to Renew Our National Strength: A Sermon Preached in Christ Church, Savannah, on Friday, November 15th, 1861, Being the Day of Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer, Appointed by the President of the Confederate States* (Savannah, GA: John M. Cooper & Co. 1861), 15.

rural and poor rank and file in their army, they too, with faith and through cultivating moral power could take on the seemingly efficient large professional armies of the North. Thomas Smyth took a similar approach to rally his audience when giving an oration in thanksgiving for the victory of Manassas. After extolling the victorious nature of Cromwell's army, he turned to its social and moral composition, "Such was the material of his Ironsides: Respectable sons of the soil; sons of Christian households, reared in the fear of God; men who to strict discipline joined the fear of God; and who passed from the prayer – meeting to the field of battle, with their Bibles girt under their armor." Smyth then made the direct application to the hearers there in South Carolina with him and challenged them to reenact this victorious godliness, he continued, "and such is, emphatically, the constitution of this regiment, drawn from the flower of our section, the sturdy children of the soil. May your sobriety, discipline, and elevated fear of God, make the Eighteenth to be known hereafter as the invincible Ironsides of this war!"<sup>519</sup> After all, as Rev Charles Wesley Andrews pointed out in his pamphlet *An Address to the Soldiers of the Confederacy*, "It was this [prayerfulness, reliance on god]; which made the first armies of Cromwell the terror of all Europe."<sup>520</sup>

At times evoking the holiness and piety of the parliamentary army could move beyond mere rhetoric. There were times when Confederate soldiers were invited to physically inhabit the historical role of the Parliamentary army and re-enact their piety and victory with tangible concrete steps. One such time was in the publishing of a soldier's pocket Bible in 1863. These were not uncommon things, and devotional material of all varieties was issued to the Confederate troops and dispersed widely among the ranks. This particular pocket Bible, however, had historical resonance and went through multiple publications. It was a reproduction of the soldiers Bible issued to the Parliamentary army during the English Civil War recreated now for the Confederate troops. It contained a collection of verses thought to be particularly pertinent to the life of a soldier and was designed to aid in the soldier's devotions by making it easier to locate important texts in scripture that related to the business of warfare. These quotes were arranged as proof texts listed under headings in the form of moral imperatives such as "A Soldier must be valiant for God's cause" and "A soldier must pray before he goes to fight." Within its covers was also to be found a brief introduction explaining the reasons for its issuance and its design and offered encouragement to the reader with the words, "Cromwell's Ironsides, as they are usually called, fed their faith upon God's word, went into battle with psalm-singing and

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<sup>519</sup> Thomas Smyth, "The Victory of Manassas Plain," *Southern Presbyterian Review*, 14, no. 4 (January 1862.): 613.

<sup>520</sup> C.W. Andrews, *A Christian Address to the Confederate Soldiers* (Winchester: Republican office, 1861): 15.

prayer; and fearing God only, were the best soldiers perhaps the world has ever seen.”<sup>521</sup> *The Richmond Christian Advocate* Claimed that “the success of Cromwell’s array commenced immediately on the publication of “The Soldier’s Pocket Bible,” and they never lost a battle.”<sup>522</sup> Here in this artifact was an opportunity for the soldier not to just emulate a holy army from the past, but actively participate in enacting the thing that made them holy and in so doing recreate the success of the past and become the best soldiers the world has ever seen.

The book of Hebrews famously describes the word of God as a two-edged sword and for the Confederate army the bible became a weapon issued to its men. According to many ministers it was Bible reading and Psalm singing that had been the true source of Cromwell's victories. The Georgia minister Rev J. Jones made exactly this point in a discourse that relied heavily on Cromwell's military campaigning experiences as a model. He claimed it was this use of scripture that led to them becoming unconquerable, “they were never, defeated! These men, with their leader, carried their Bibles into their camps, and studied them as they did their maps and charts. Their battle-cry often was a word or verse of scripture.” Not content with a simple assertion, he brought specific examples to bear, “At the battle of Naseby. it was: 'God is with us.' At the battle of Dunbar: 'The Lord of Hosts, the Lord of Hosts!' And at that battle, 12000 of Cromwell's army defeated the Scotch army of 23,000.” Rev Jones also wanted to highlight the discipline and ferocity this could cause; by combining obedience and piety the Confederate army could become like

“Cromwell’s men [who]were remarkable for their obedience. In the hottest pursuit, they halted and rallied at the call of their leader. In the midst of the battle of Dunbar, wherein the enemy were flying, Cromwell called off his Ironsides, and they united in singing the 117th Psalm; and their thunder tones rolled up to the heavens, above the din of war— And then they dashed upon their foes, sweeping them like chaff before the whirlwind.”<sup>523</sup>

The same point was made by a Rev. Harris who wrote to soldiers in a series of letters; offering them encouragement and council, he enthused, “See what Oliver Cromwell with his immortal Ironsides achieved! With a firm confidence that theirs was the cause of God and truth and righteousness, before they would engage in a battle they would commit themselves in prayer to the God of battles, and

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<sup>521</sup> *The Soldiers Pocket Bible: Issued for the Use of the Army of Oliver Cromwell* (Charleston, SC: South Carolina Tract Society, 1861) also published in Raleigh, N.C. By the General Tract Agency.

<sup>522</sup> “The Soldiers Bible,” *The Richmond Christian Advocate*, July 31, 1862, 1.

<sup>523</sup> Rev. J. Jones, *The Southern Solders Duty: A Discourse Delivered to the Rome Light Guards, and Miller Rifles in the Presbyterian Church of Rome, GA., on Sabbath Morning, the 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1861* (Rome, GA: D. H. Mason, 1861), 13.



chanting an inspired Psalm, they would make that dashing charge which always brought defeat to the army of Charles.”<sup>524</sup> These encouragements to Christian soldiering relied on a felt connection to the participants in the English Civil War made possible by an increased Christian militarism pervading the South. Godliness and the soldiering profession were fused, success in military operations and personal piety were seen as intricately connected. The cultural memory of Cromwell's forces as a godly army proved to be a potent image that aligned with southern ministers' self-conception as Christians contending for the right in a fight that was not simply military, but spiritual.

### *Cromwell*

As will have been noticed above, one man dominates the memory of the English Civil War and its usages in the South during the American Civil War. Oliver Cromwell; Commander-in-chief of the New Model Army; Lord Protector of the English Commonwealth; Fanatically devout in matters of religion.<sup>525</sup> From the moment of his death he was, and continues to this day to be, a divisive character in British history, even being dug up and posthumously executed upon the return of Charles II to the throne. He was an enigmatic figure, replete with much charisma and interest and was consequently fascinating to Americans; he presented a host of complicated issues that often made him unable to be either fully admired or traduced.<sup>526</sup> The obvious comparison with Cromwell for some in Southern society at large, was to Abraham Lincoln. One recruiting advertisement in *The Richmond courier* called Lincoln a new Cromwell and used Cromwell's violent atrocities committed in Ireland as a motivation for people to volunteer as soldiers.<sup>527</sup>

Churches and ministers in the South tended to hold a far more positive opinion of Cromwell. Rev. Edward Reed of Flatrock North Carolina, for example, told his congregation that Cromwell's rule was “just and vigorous, beyond any regal administration before it.”<sup>528</sup> Cromwell's reputation underwent a resurgence of favor in the decades prior to the American Civil War with Thomas Carlyle's edited

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<sup>524</sup> Rev. J. S. Harris, *The True Soldiers Spiritual Armor: Being a Series of Letters to the Volunteers of the Confederate States* (Columbia, SC: R.M. Stokes 1861), 13.

<sup>525</sup> For a helpful overview of the career of Oliver Cromwell see the older and popular but still useful Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1970) and Antonia Fraser *Cromwell: Our Chief of Men* (London: Granada, 1977).

<sup>526</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has demonstrated the complex relationship that Southern society and culture had with the great man, Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*; 685-688.

<sup>527</sup> *The Charleston Mercury*, January 3, 1862. 2.

<sup>528</sup> Edward Reed. *A People Saved by The Lord: A Sermon Delivered at Flat Rock, July 28<sup>th</sup> 1861* (Charleston: Evans and Cogswell, 1861).

edition of the speeches and letters of Oliver Cromwell being printed in 1845, a publication which was well received by Christians in the South.<sup>529</sup> It was glowingly reviewed in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* for giving a fair portion of attention to the religiosity of the man.<sup>530</sup> *The Southwestern Baptist* expressed approbation that “the cloud which, for several ages, has hung over the sincere piety of Oliver Cromwell has begun to clear away.”<sup>531</sup> They hastened to add that for their part, they “never doubted that he knew the secret of the Lord.” For many in the South, particularly Christians, the figure of Oliver Cromwell was the most fitting comparison for their most beloved soldier, General Stonewall Jackson. Historians have long noticed and commented upon the central role Jackson played in the mind of the Confederacy.<sup>532</sup> He was a devout Presbyterian who wore his piety on his sleeve, prayed through battles, gave glory to God for all victories and was ferociously successful and disciplined in his methods of warfare. To many the comparison seemed obvious, almost natural. The novelist, John Easton Cooke, published a short memoir of Jackson in 1863 and twice compared him to Cromwell.<sup>533</sup> William Pendleton commented in his diary that upon reading Carlyle's life of Cromwell “General Jackson is the

<sup>529</sup> Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 596.

<sup>530</sup> Thomas Carlyle ed, *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell in two Volumes* (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1845) reviewed in “The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell,” *The Southern Presbyterian Review*, 1. no.1 (June 1847): 121-158. The publication of this work was also a reason given by Rev. Atkinson in his essay “the puritans,” in the October 1845 edition of the *Southern Presbyterian Review* for why he had hoped the puritans were experiencing something of a resurgence of admiration.

<sup>531</sup> “War as Cromwell viewed it,” in *Southwestern Baptist*, October 10, 1861, 1.

<sup>532</sup> Daniel W. Stowell, “Stonewall Jackson and the Providence of God,” *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall Miller, Harry Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 187-207. An interesting example of the reverence which was felt for General Jackson can be found in the Acrostic poem made up of bible verses that encapsulates his character as the poet sees it. It was published in the *Christian Observer* and quoted in the *Richmond Christian Advocate*. “A Scriptural Acrostic on a Christian General”, 20 November, 1862.

*Some trust in Chariots, and some in horses; but who will remember the name of the Lord our God?*

*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they will run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.*

*Open they mouth wide, and I will fill it.*

*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.*

*Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.*

*Wait on the Lord: Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: Wait, I say on the Lord.*

*All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep the covenant and his testimonies.*

*Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.*

*Lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou are the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day.*

*Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne: Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

*All things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

*Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.*

*Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

*Search the Scriptures.*

*Only believe.*

*Now unto Him that is able to keep you.*

<sup>533</sup> John Esten Cooke, *The Life of Stonewall Jackson. From Official Papers, Contemporary Narratives, and Personal Acquaintance* (Richmond, VA: Ayres & Wade, 1863), 25, 283.

exact counterpart of Oliver Cromwell as Carlyle draws him.”<sup>534</sup>

This was not universally the case however. The death of Jackson propitiated several orations eulogizing the great man, one by the Rev James B Ramsey preached on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1863 at the First Presbyterian Church of Lynchburg did not invoke the name of Cromwell, instead he settled for “Gustavus Adolphus, Gardiner and Havelock” as soldiers who had excelled on account of their holiness in a way comparable to Jackson.<sup>535</sup> Robert Louis Dabney, who had served with Jackson on his staff, was a personal friend of the General, and had been chaplain to a regiment of his troops did not approve of the comparison. In his 1867 biography of Jackson, which he had begun during the war, he repudiated attempts to compare Jackson and Cromwell, instead, seeing a closer similarity to the British Christian hero General Henry Havelock, but Dabney felt even that comparison was not entirely accurate.<sup>536</sup> Dabney also had the distinction of giving the oration at Jackson’s funeral, which he used to praise his Christian virtue but spurned any comparison to Cromwell. Instead he chose to liken him to John Hampden, another hero of the English Civil War and the namesake of Dabney's own alma mater; Hampden-Sydney College. Dabney sought to allay the fears of his audience who were lamenting the death of Jackson as the man they thought had been destined to win them the war. This was a dark time for a Confederacy that desperately needed to see some light, Dabney assured them “The lamented fall of John Hampden was not the fall of the liberties of England... So, let us hope, the tree of our liberties will flourish but the more for the precious blood by which it is watered.”<sup>537</sup>

The linking of Cromwell and Jackson was made possible by an historical theory in vogue in America at the time combined with a deep need in the religious mind of the Southerner brought on by the experience of the war and the threat of defeat. This was the “great man” theory of history which is most commonly associated with Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle had published, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History* (1841), which cemented his place in the intellectual culture of the Southern elite

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<sup>534</sup> Susan P. Lee, *Memoirs of William Nelson Pendleton, D.D., Rector of Latimer parish, Lexington, Virginia; brigadier-general c.s.a.; Chief of Artillery, army of Northern Virginia*. (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott 1893), 230.

<sup>535</sup> Rev. James B. Ramsey, *True Eminence Founded on Holiness. A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of Lieut. Gen. T.J. Jackson. Preached in the First Presbyterian Church of Lynchburg, May 24th, 1863* (Lynchburg, VA: Water Power Press, 1863), 14.

<sup>536</sup> R. L. Dabney, *Life and Campaigns of Lieut.-Gen. Thomas J. Jackson* (Richmond, VA: National Publishing Co, 1867), 113.

<sup>537</sup> R. L. Dabney, *True Courage: A Discourse Commemorative of Lieut General Thomas J. Jackson* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication of the Confederate States, 1863), 22. “The Soldiers Bible,” in *The Richmond Christian Advocate*, July 31 1862, 1. Also published the following story about Hampden, “Hampden, however, was convinced, by a short conversation with Cromwell, that good men made better soldiers than mere gentlemen; as ho has himself written—“ I accordingly raised such men as had the fear of God before them, end made some conscience of what they did. And from that day forward they were never beaten; but whenever they were engaged against the enemy they beat it continually.”

where he had a warm and long lasting reception.<sup>538</sup> The concept of the theory in its simplest form is that great men affect the course of history, rising up by the power of their charisma and courage or personal abilities as the embodiment of certain ideas of their age, they were able to mold contemporary events and master them in order to drive history forward. This was a particularly powerful concept in the South when combined with a belief in divine providence and the righteousness of the cause of the Confederacy. The South was looking for a savior, Lee was a hero, and the epitome of the chivalrous Southern gentleman but his charisma was more solid and refined than romantic and eccentric in the way a true mold of history in the “hero type” needed to be, Jefferson Davis may also have fit the mold but he was a politician and far too open to criticism from the myriad interest groups of the South. Jackson, however, suited the description of a “great man” almost as if he had been created for the role. Clergy were only too pleased to offer and reinforce this interpretation of Jackson as he was, after all, a near perfect exemplar of the Calvinistic Southern Christian, manly and pious in equal measure and honorable to a fault.

The great man theory of history as expressed by Carlyle was not specifically Christian, indeed it almost removed the role of God and placed too much emphasis on the agency of mankind in the transpiring of historical events. Ministers therefore had to re-cast the theory of the great man in terms that aligned more closely with a Biblical concept of God's interaction with the world. The solution was to place the emphasis on God's raising up of the great man in question. It was not by their own strength, courage or genius that they rose to prominence, but rather God who acted to bring about their preeminence in any given period of history so they could affect great change as God had ordained it to come to pass. In September 1862, before Jackson was killed at the battle of Sharpsburg, the Rev Joseph Atkinson opined on the course of the war and the role of the great man within expressing it in Christian terms. He told his congregation, “God has raised up for us in this our time of need, able and godly leaders, like Lee, Jackson, Hill and others, whose character would confer honor on any cause, as their public services would shed luster on any age” and went on to ask them “may we not hope that Jackson, the Christian hero, the man of piety and prayer,...has been graciously given us as the interpreter and impersonation of the Christian element and the Christian consciousness of this grand conflict?”<sup>539</sup> The Rev Sinclair expressed it this way. “The days of miracles have long ago ceased, so that when God

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<sup>538</sup> For the reception of Carlyle in the South see Gerald M. Straka, “The Spirit of Carlyle in the Old South,” *The Historian* 20, no. 1 (November 1957): 39-57. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Hero in History* (London: James Fraser, 1841).

<sup>539</sup> Joseph M Atkinson, *God the Giver of Victory and Peace. A Thanksgiving Sermon, Delivered in the Presbyterian Church, September 18, 1862* (Raleigh, NC: [unknown] 1862), 9.

would maintain a nation he raises up on their behalf men whom he endows with qualities fitted for the emergency of the times....When he would correct the abuses of suppressed State, he raises a Cromwell.”<sup>540</sup> The Baptist minister and chaplain to the 10<sup>th</sup> Alabama regiment J. J. D. Renfroe preached a sermon in August of 1863 in which he wished to remind his people that the battle is the Lords and that “He can encompass us with invincibility, and crown our struggles with unbroken success, as did the Hebrew armies of Gideon and David, and the Christian armies of Cromwell and Havelock.”<sup>541</sup> In this way the greatness of the man and the providential sovereignty of God were both preserved, Cromwell and Jackson were indeed great men, according to the Southern minister, able to achieve great things, but only as God raises them up, sustains them and uses them.

### *Conclusion*

The Confederate nationalism conjured by Southern Protestant clergy arose from churches rooted in historical identities that spanned the Atlantic as well as temporal boundaries. This historical consciousness set the Confederacy within a flow of history that developed out of British precedents, was informed by British historians, and was rooted in transatlantic intellectual and religious movements. Southern ministers of all four major denominations imbibed the Victorian militaristic aesthetic of an ascendant evangelicalism, at ease with the projection of power and the use of force epitomized in the life and subsequent mythologizing of Havelock and Vicars, in a tradition that developed out of the example of Col. Gardiner. Southern ministers saw the Puritans, Cromwell's soldiers, and the Parliamentary cause through this lens. Promoting a tradition that combined military prowess with piety was a way clergy encouraged their audiences to believe what was considered a historical fact and a living continuing reality that the South could participate in and continue.

Southern ministers knew English history, and they felt that their congregations would know the rough outlines of the events and key figures with enough specificity to utilize it in sermons and denominational literature. Southern ministers read widely in English history and drew lessons from its course, which they could apply to the American Civil War. They drew parallels and used them rhetorically to make moral points or highlight an aspect of God's action in their day. The English Civil War and its surrounding events and the role of Puritanism in England's constitutional struggles proved

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<sup>540</sup> Sinclair, *A Thanksgiving Sermon*, 8.

<sup>541</sup> J. J. D. Renfroe *The Battle is God's: A Sermon Preached Before Wilcox's Brigade on Fast Day the 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1863, near Orange Courthouse, Va.* (Richmond, VA: Macfarlane & Fergusson, 1863), 25.

fertile soil for parallel and comment. Southern clergy could present themselves as true heirs to the Puritans by fighting for the exact causes in the civil and religious spheres. Thus, Puritanism became a Christian chapter in the pages of history that, when turned, led inevitably to the Confederacy. Overall the use of British history was most evident in the South through the contemporary fad of the Cavalier versus Puritan myth. The church interacted with this narrative in various ways, from simply appropriating it for direct unquestioning use to outright rejection. This use of the history of Puritanism occurred in a variety of modes, including academic scholarly articles in review journals dealing with commonly accepted historical authorities and accounts, but also popular orations tracts and newspapers. The church was never satisfied with the political implications of any view of history but always sought to forefront piety, orthodoxy, and morality when placing themselves within a narrative or tradition.

By far, the most common reason for turning to history was for moral examples and encouraging illustrations. At a time when the country was at war and the nation's youth found themselves taking up arms, ministers were keen to find resources for keeping their soldiers on the straight and narrow. They did not simply rely on the Bible but looked for examples that would resonate more closely with the soldier's experience and put to rest any lingering worries about the validity or effectiveness of Christian soldiering; they needed to find times when martial valor and personal piety went hand in hand. They found these resources in British history. The religious aspect of the English Civil War offered the perfect parallels to provide examples for imitation to soldiers. Thus, history was central to the Southern church's self-conception, what they wanted the Confederacy to be, and how they felt the Confederate army would be victorious, namely, by conscious emulation of the saints and heroes of the past. The Protestant heroes of Britain's history resonated with Southerners as a shared past, shaped in its retelling in the mid-Victorian period by a shared evangelical worldview.



## Chapter Six: The Meaning of the American Revolution

The historical memory of the American Revolution occupied a central place in the minds of Americans and, therefore, naturally served as a continual point of reference for both sides in the Civil War. It cast a long shadow over the country; it was the founding myth, the pivotal moment of birth for a new nation; it had come about through warfare and hardship in events replete with pathos and emotional import. Furthermore, the figures involved displayed virtues and vices that made them like heroes and villains from a storybook. Like all myths and stories, it was ripe for retelling and reinterpreting, and its meaning was not precise or universally accepted. By the period of the Civil War, the shadows of the Revolution had grown long with time, yet, the events of fourscore and seven years ago were close enough that they resonated powerfully with most Americans and far enough away that they could be romanticized and manipulated to fit a rhetorical narrative.<sup>542</sup>

Historians of the Civil War have often noted the ubiquity of appeals to the history of the Revolutionary period on both sides. As James Byrd has commented, during the American Civil War, "Reverence for the Revolution was almost universal."<sup>543</sup> However, current literature fails to move past a simple recognition that both sides attempted to present their cause in the Civil War as a natural continuation of the principles of the American Revolution.<sup>544</sup> The simple fact that Protestant clergy in the Confederacy attempted this tells about the nature of Southern Christianity in this period. Far from relying simply on biblical arguments, theological, or even millennial schemes – all of which do feature prominently throughout the Civil War – ministers also felt entitled, qualified, and obliged to wade into historic arguments over the nature of the American Revolution and related legal and constitutional debates over the technicalities of state sovereignty. From the most gentrified Episcopalian and Presbyterian ministers, directly interacting with politicians and policymakers, to upstate Baptists and rural Methodists, all were submersed in historical conjecture about the principles behind the American Revolution and their relationship to the American Civil War. Ministers imbibed views from their lay co-coreligionists and fellow Confederates and regurgitated theories from the surrounding culture. As Seth Cotlar has commented regarding the early nineteenth century, "influential Americans...built a

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<sup>542</sup> For a valuable overview of how the South used the symbols and iconography of the American Revolution in Justifying and conceptualizing their secession and Civil War, see Anne Sarah Rubin's "Seventy-Six and Sixty-One: Confederates Remember the American Revolution" in W. Fitzhugh Brundage *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 85-107.

<sup>543</sup> Byrd, *A Baptism of Fire and Blood*, 11.

<sup>544</sup> Prominent examples include Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 191, and Guyatt *Providence and the Invention of the United States*, 259-298.



moderate, non-revolutionary vision of American politics.” Southern ministers spoke out of this attitude.<sup>545</sup> They were quick to highlight continuity and downplay the radicalism of the Revolution. Southern clergy assumed the tenets of Southern conservatism, including a philosophical commitment to a radical separation between state and society, which allowed for classically liberal views of the size and influence of the state to be combined with traditionalism in society, as well as the amalgamation of Christianity and Calhounian states’ rights theory.<sup>546</sup> Southern ministers adopted a position that saw the American Revolution as a conservative revolution, one that preserved more than disrupted and maintained more than destroyed. This interpretation of the Revolution provided a precedent for the South's self-proclaimed attempt at a "conservative revolution" in the form of secession. This narrative fitted neatly with their conception of themselves as Christians who preserved truth held onto Orthodoxy, and stood in line with true Christianity across history. Piety and preservation went hand in hand, so ensuring that the American Revolution and then secession could be presented in these terms was vital to the Southern clergy's integration of historical Christian identity and Confederate identity.

As ministers of the gospel, clergy were never content to discourse on political theory alone but instead sought to infuse it with theological consequence. Ministers populated the American Revolution's history with unassailable principles supposedly embedded in its correctly understood meaning, for example, hierarchy, inherited rights, honor, piety, order, and most importantly, continued racial slavery. The result was that a specific meaning of the Revolution, and therefore of America acquired authority. From this vantage point, clergy mounted criticism against any element which did not neatly align. The inalienable rights of the Declaration of Independence or the absence of God from the Constitution could be written off as excess and decrepit deviations from the ideal. When mixed with the historical identity Southern ministers had constructed over the preceding decades as a people with a storied past and maintainers of truth against error, this view of the Revolution and its meaning became a key ingredient in the concoction of Confederate nationalism. Theologians and Pastors across the Southern states took this identity and applied it to the situation they found themselves in and were able to reinforce, in their minds and those of their hearers and readers, the notion that they were in the right and Northerners were lying, changing history, and deviating from the old ways of the time-honored past. The South was preserving what the North was destroying. They had stayed the same; the North

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<sup>545</sup> Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 2.

<sup>546</sup> Eugene Genovese, *The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitation of an American Conservatism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 41-77; and Adam L. Tate, *Conservatism and Southern Intellectuals, 1789-1861: Liberty, Tradition and the Good Society* (Columbia, SC: University of Missouri Press, 2005).

had changed.

This view of the American Revolution enabled Southern clergy to make the comparison to their own conflict from which to draw comfort, solace, lessons, and encouragement. Furthermore, from this perspective, secession did not have to repudiate an American nationalist past but could be portrayed, in Drew Gilpin Faust's words, as "the fulfillment of American nationalism."<sup>547</sup> Thus the nation's history could be wielded rhetorically against the North. The Northern states, it was argued, by its apostasy, had forfeited their inheritance and departed from the faith of the fathers. In this sense, Confederate nationalism did not need to be built from the ground up but relied heavily on continuity with that which had gone before. Ministers contributed to this process by thoroughly endorsing the idea that the Revolution and secession were two events with the same principles enacted for the same purposes. With this done, ministers could and did heighten the moral outrage and the righteous indignation felt at the actions of the North. They redirected the religious interpretation of the significance of the American Revolution to the secession and independence of the Southern States. Southern ministers were able to redeploy theological arguments used during the American Revolution about the right of Christians to engage in legitimate resistance to government. By doing this, they hoped to expose the true nature of the Northern tyranny and hypocrisy and assume the identity of those who were in true continuity with the American Revolutionaries. Additionally, Southern clergy used the memory of the Revolution to weave a deep sense of place and home that combined religion and history to imbue the South with a sense of being a sacred space that Northern troops were seen to violate and desecrate. Southern ministers used the Revolutionary heritage of the South to hallow the very ground of the South in a mirror of what Lincoln's Gettysburg address achieved for the battlefields of the North, contributing, in effect, an alternative Confederate civil religion which grew out of and borrowed from prevailing strands of an American civil religion.<sup>548</sup> Clergy were, therefore, expanding the horizons of their imagined communities, from their churches and denominations to the nation. In joining their fellow Confederates in co-opting the memory of the Revolution for the cause of the South, Southern ministers were shaping a heritage for the Confederacy and attempting to provide a full-orbed religious nationalism.<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Faust, *Confederate Nationalism*, 14.

<sup>548</sup> Peter Gardella, *American Civil Religion: What America Holds Sacred* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 72.

<sup>549</sup> By this fraught term, I take Anthony Smith's definition of nationalism as an "ideological movement that seeks autonomy, unity, and identity for a population deemed to be a nation" and see that the religion, in this case, Christianity, is what (at least in aim and intention) provides the Unity, shapes the identity, and supplies the providential and teleological reasoning for the autonomy. Anthony D. Smith, "Ethnic Election and National Destiny: Some Religious Origins of Nationalist Ideals," *Nations and Nationalism* 5. no. 3 (July 1999): 332. This is to take religious nationalism as a distinctive kind of nationalism, one of the four ways of approaching religion and nationalism outlined by Rogers

## *Contended Meanings of the American Revolution*

The decades following the Treaty of Paris were, as Gordon Wood has called them, “an experiment in republicanism.”<sup>550</sup> Without any predetermined path to take, the early republic was an era when the meaning of this new nation was hotly debated, as David Waldstreicher has demonstrated, through “everyday interplay between rhetoric, ritual, and political action.”<sup>551</sup> There was to be no smooth process of nation-building or identity-forming; there were competing narratives and proposals for the relationship between the various states, each having its own motivations and interpretation of what character should define the nation.<sup>552</sup> Recent scholarship has acknowledged that from independence onward, there existed, in reality, multiple nationalisms vying to dominate the country's cultural discourse.<sup>553</sup> The proponents of these various nationalisms believed that their version of the nation and its founding was correct and historically verifiable. Susan Mary Grant has observed that by the antebellum period, “Americans looked back to the Revolution as...a time when the American national idea was most fully expressed.”<sup>554</sup> The problem was that the question remained up for debate; what was this idea which had been so fully expressed in the Revolution? Which part of the country was really preserving that idea? In the decades leading up to the Civil War, these questions and the various answers given began to crystallize around the institution of racial slavery. Consequently, the gulf of understanding between the slaveholding and free states concerning the nature of the country and its founding widened.<sup>555</sup> While abolitionists argued over the Constitution's relationship to slavery and

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Brubaker in “Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches,” *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 3 (November 2011): 2-20.

<sup>550</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>551</sup> David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>552</sup> Elkins comments, “currents of feeling...arose out of deep anxieties as to the very nature of the republic was to assume, the moral direction it was to take, and the sorts of men who would give it its predominant tone.” Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4.

<sup>553</sup> Park, *American Nationalisms*, and the completion to find a unique national character in Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>554</sup> Grant, *North Over South*, 25.

<sup>555</sup> Although outdated in many respects, the classic volumes in the series “A History of the South” Edited by Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, Vol V, Charles Sydnor, *The Development of Southern Sectionalism 1819-1848* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1947) and Vol VI. Avery O. Craven, *The Growth of Southern Nationalism 1848-1861* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1953) is still useful for an overview of the key events and individuals involved in sectional debates and crises. A more recent overview can be found in the chapter “Battles over Sovereignty” in Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) and parts of James McPherson, *Battle-cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

appealed to the equality enshrined in the Declaration of Independence as the true spirit of the Revolution, slaveholders in the South came to their own clear and firm conclusion about what the Revolution had meant.<sup>556</sup> In the Southern states, a particular version of the Revolution story flourished, emphasizing the free collaboration of independent and sovereign states to form a pragmatic and politically expedient union to restore inherited rights.<sup>557</sup> In following this view, Southern clergy incorporated a Southern view of nationalism into their theological and religious concerns, fusing the two together to form a distinct Southern religious nationalism.<sup>558</sup> In doing so, they attempted to hold together an uneasy amalgam of Revolution and continuity; God ordained liberty for themselves and servitude for their enslaved people.<sup>559</sup>

From early after the Revolution, historians wrote books and wove narratives that contributed to this debate over the country's meaning and were used to comment upon contemporary events. Some of the first were authored by David Ramsay, a native of Pennsylvania who had relocated to the Charleston area in 1773. He wrote multiple works on the events of the Revolution; *A History of the Revolution of South Carolina*, produced in 1785; *A History of the American Revolution* four years later in 1789; and his *Life of Washington*, published in 1807. Peter Messer has stated that Ramsay was attempting to make his history a “valuable guide” to “offer effective solutions to the nation's myriad problems.”<sup>560</sup> By the Civil War, the standard work on the American Revolution was the Northern Unitarian and politician George Bancroft's magisterial *A History of the United States of America*, volumes one to eight of which had been published by 1860.<sup>561</sup> Eileen Cheng has argued that for Bancroft, “the principles of the

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<sup>556</sup> See Watkins, *Slavery and Sacred Texts: The Bible, Constitution, and Historical Consciousness in Antebellum America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 156.

<sup>557</sup> See, for example, Eugene Genovese, *The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitation of an American Conservatism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 41-77; Adam L. Tate *Conservatism and Southern Intellectuals, 1789-1861: Liberty, Tradition and the Good Society* (Columbia, SC: University of Missouri Press, 2005).

<sup>558</sup> For the idea of distinct religious nationalisms, see Sam Haselby, *The Origins of Religious Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), where he outlines a New England-based religious nationalism and a frontier Western religious nationalism. In my discussion of the Southern Ministers during the Civil War, I see a distinct Southern religious nationalism, which is less democratic than the Western and frontier nationalism outlined by Haselby.

<sup>559</sup> Philip Gorski describes the thought of John C. Calhoun, whom he believes is emblematic of this vision of American history, by saying, “His efforts to alloy democratic self-government with a hierarchically ordered society can be read as an uneasy amalgam of republican and reactionary ideologies.” Philip Gorski *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 84. The idea of a Civil Religion in America was famously popularized by Robert Bellah as “a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collective.” In “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96, no. 1 (Winter 1967): 8.

<sup>560</sup> Peter C. Messer “From a Revolutionary History to a History of the Revolution: David Ramsey and the American Revolution” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 22, NO. 2 (Summer, 2002), p 207.

<sup>561</sup> Despite considerable differences between Bancroft and the ideal historian in the minds of Southerners, when reduced to its simplest elements Bancroft's Philosophy of history may well have received approval in the South. Watt Stewart summed up Bancroft's philosophy of history this way “Bancroft considered history a unit, its forces constant, and their manifestations parts of an organized whole. Every individual must have his place in the picture, but in the background is

Revolution did not require a dramatic change in the nation's social or political system,” but that “the vitality of the principles themselves made them a source of continual renovation and reform.” Most Southerners would have agreed with the former statement but would not have been able to countenance the latter.<sup>562</sup> Such was the reaction of William Gilmore Simms, who declared Northern histories to be fraudulent, and in several articles in the *Southern Quarterly Review*, of which he was editor, called for native histories to be written by Southerners about the South.<sup>563</sup> As a novelist, he saw the narrative power latent in history writing for using the past to shape the contemporary world. He wrote several biographies of Revolutionary heroes and a history of South Carolina. These were romantic narratives written by a novelist intent on emphasizing the dashing chivalry that he felt was the true characteristic of the Southerners. His history of South Carolina was used in public schools and regaled a generation of children with tales of their native state, inculcating them with a sense of honor so they could carry on the principles of their hierarchical plantation society into the future.<sup>564</sup>

Southern clergy joined in this trend of using the history of the American Revolution to debate and navigate the present. As I have shown in chapter one, each of the major denominations was at pains to present themselves as particularly ardent supporters of the Revolution, providing not just the manpower but also the ideological and theological tools for its prosecution. In the Antebellum period, each denomination oversaw the publication of histories and sermons, making precisely that argument. Moreover, several leading theologians in the South meditated at length on the relationship between theology and the Revolution and the link between ecclesiastical freedom and political freedom. For instance, Thomas Smyth published his Fourth of July oration from 1847, *The True Origin and Source of the Mecklenburg and National Declaration of Independence*, and in 1848 the article *Presbyterianism – The Revolution – The Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution*. Both of these articles

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the history of the race. He stressed the idea of the continuity of history. Stated briefly, Bancroft considered history as “God's working by examples” Watt Stewart, “George Bancroft Historian of the American Republic” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 19, no.1 (June 1932), 78.

<sup>562</sup> Cheng, *The Plain and Noble Garb of Truth*, 161.

<sup>563</sup> Paul Quigley, “That History is truly the Life of Nations: History and Southern Nationalism in Antebellum South Carolina,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 106, no. 1 (January 2005), 12.

<sup>564</sup> John C. Guilds, *Simms: A Literary Life* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1992), 94, for the use of the Revolution as a commentary on contemporary sectionalism, see Charles S. Watson, “Simms and the Civil War: The Revolutionary Analogy,” *The Southern Literary Journal* 2, no. 24 (Spring 1992): 76-89. Drew Gilpin Faust has also commented upon this aspect of Simms work; she states, “A new 1860 edition of his History of South Carolina, originally published in 1840, sought to establish the early origin of sectional differences and to prove Southern responsibility for Revolutionary victory and American independence.” in Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 74. Bonner, *Mastering America*, also demonstrates Simms's attempts to create Southern History of the American Revolution, 149-161. For Simms's influence on notions of chivalry and masculinity, see John Mayfield, “The Soul of a Man! William Gilmore Simms and the Myths of Southern Manhood,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 477-500.

argued that the documents of the Revolution borrowed directly from Presbyterian theories of representation and copied liberally from the seventeenth century Scottish Solemn League and Covenant.<sup>565</sup> Subsequently, during the Civil War, the churches of the South could draw upon a long tradition of romanticizing and theologizing the Revolution to apply its lessons and morals to their members and congregations.<sup>566</sup> The Revolution was seen as a biblically justifiable war and a clear-cut case of God's cause against the cause of tyranny. The church placed the Confederate cause in line with the Revolution to make it a holy endeavor and one that was certain of victory for this very reason.

### *The American Revolution as a Point of Comparison*

The minister of Richmond's Second Presbyterian church, Rev. Moses D. Hoge's experience of war, was punctuated by comparisons to the American Revolution. In the midst of a crisis and at times of heightened emotion, this was the most natural and ready parallel that came to mind. Upon learning of the call for troops to put down the Southern rebellion made by Lincoln on April 15th, 1861, he wrote to his brother, "May Virginia, who, in the person of her own Washington, once vindicated the right of revolution against a government that refused, like ours, to recognize facts, do so again."<sup>567</sup> Almost a year later, he found himself in the position of honorary chaplain to the Confederate Congress and weighed down by preaching six sermons a week, pastoral duties, and acting as chaplain to the 14<sup>th</sup> Alabama regiment. In addition to this workload, he was required to officiate the funerals of the increasing number of dead associated with his large and prominent congregation. One such service was held on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1862, for the former United States Senator from Texas, John Hemphill, who had died in office as a delegate to the Confederate Congress just a few days earlier. Hoge preached this sermon before a congregation of the Confederacy's most influential and powerful people. In it, he railed against "the overthrow of institutions commended by the experience of ages, hallowed by the approval of the wise and good, and sanctioned by divine legislation." He accused the North of disregarding

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<sup>565</sup> *Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth D.D. VOL III*; ed. J. W.M. Flinn (Columbia: R.L. Breyers 1908): 407-432, and 435-475.

<sup>566</sup> For a representative selection of recent work in this area, see Thomas S Kidd *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2012); James P. Byrd's *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); James B. Bell, *A War of Religion: Dissenters and Anglicans and the American Revolution* (New York: Palgrave, 2008); older but still valuable is Mark A. Noll *Christians in the American Revolution* (Vancouver: Regent college publishing, 1977); for an interesting account of the loyalist clergy see *God Against the Revolution: The Loyalist Clergy's Case Against the Revolution* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2018).

<sup>567</sup> Peyton Harrison Hoge, *Moses Drury Hoge: Life and Letters* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1899), 143.

continuity with the past, an attitude he felt had caused the downfall of nations and empires in history. No such attitude was detected in the men of the Revolution, however. Seeking to leave his audience with a positive note of hope and encouragement, Hoge declared, “When men can appeal to heaven, as our fathers of the Revolution did, for the justice of their cause, and invoke the aid of the God of battles, then will a nation become as illustrious in arms as in the gentle arts of peace.”<sup>568</sup> After three more years of harrowing war, just over a month away from Lee's defeat at Appomattox, he prepared a resolution for a day of prayer and fasting, which he proposed by “gratefully remembering the guidance, support and deliverance granted to [the] patriot fathers in the memorable war which resulted in the independence of the colonies in the days of the first revolution; and now, reposing in him their supreme confidence and hope in the present struggle for civil and religious freedom.”<sup>569</sup>

Hoge's references to the American Revolution illustrate the standard way its memory was evoked in the Confederacy and by Protestant ministers. The Revolution was unquestioned as a righteous war, directed and overseen by providence and God's mercy. Such a view seemed vindicated by the simple fact of the Revolution's success and the increased Christianity and material wealth that had followed. Therefore, the memory of the Revolution could be employed to endow current events with a higher sense of significance, elevating the ongoing struggle to the level of a sacred cause. To position themselves as heirs of the Revolution was to undermine the North and boost the morale of the Southern population reared on the glorification of that conflict. This simple yet effective technique was the most common usage of Revolutionary history during the Civil War and displayed the fact that historical memories had become central to the identity of Christians in America in opposite and divergent ways. Clergy within the Confederacy felt well within their rights to speak of the continuity between the Revolution and the Confederate cause. Even though subsequent American glorification of the North's perspective of the Civil War has erased this as a legitimate connection to make, for those at the time, the parallels were clear, meaningful, and powerful.<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> Hoge, *The Christian Statesman*, 20, 23. For a sample of Hoge's Sermons and their eloquent nature, see Rev Moses D. Hoge, *The Perfection of Beauty and Other Sermons* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1904).

<sup>569</sup> Hoge *Moses Drury Hoge*, 230.

<sup>570</sup> This can be seen in the sermon of Sylvanus Landrum, where a portion of the address relied on the fact that, as he put it, “when our independence was secured, king George III. Acknowledged the colonies as “free, sovereign and independent states.” To his mind, this was a legal reality that was being contravened by the actions of Northern politicians and abolitionists. Rev. Sylvanus Landrum, *A Discourse Before the Congregation of Savannah Baptist Church on the Day of Humiliation Fasting and Prayer, appointed by President Davis, Friday, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1863* (Savannah, GA: E.J. Pursee, 1863), 10. Rev. W. H. Vernor referenced the historical precedent when preaching before the Marshall Guards in Georgia in 1861. In order to justify secession, he called to mind the reasons for the War of Independence by saying, “we were in effect suffering taxation without representation – for our representatives were powerless. And it was an amount of taxation, compared with which, the duties laid on the colonies by Great Britain were only as the dust of the balance. We thus, in fact, had the very cause for separation which our history had considered so sacred in the eye of our

There were occasions, however, when parallels between the two conflicts required a more systematic exposition. In response to the Kentucky Presbyterian Robert J. Breckenridge's criticism of South Carolina's secession from the Union, Benjamin Morgan Palmer gave a protracted defense of the principles that had led to that decision.<sup>571</sup> In this essay, Palmer turned to history on multiple occasions to make his argument to “vindicate secession.” He compiled a legal, constitutional case and informed his reader that the “South has always been content to walk in historic paths.” Central to his justification for secession was a historical argument concerning the relationship between the states leading up to and during the Revolution. The express purpose of his article was to prove the sovereignty of the states as separate entities freely able to come together in a federation and freely leave of their own sovereign accord. He asked his reader, “What then is the testimony of history?” before proceeding to catalog a barrage of facts and dates listing the free action of the states in uniting together, as well as quoting from the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation, explaining, “We recite these familiar facts to show that during the first period of our history, embracing the Revolutionary struggle, the people were accustomed to act, not as an organic whole, but as constituting separate states, and combining for common and specified ends.” Concerning individual states' independence, Palmer saw history's inexorable conclusion to be that “The fact that they combined against a common foe, and to secure their independence together, does not impeach their inherent sovereignty.” The seceding states were, in that case, not to be impugned for their action but were perfectly within their constitutional rights. This assertion would be a critical component of attempts to describe secession as conforming to the precedent of the Revolution and American constitutional and legal history. Establishing the legality of secession was a foundation-level prerequisite in order to be able to assert the righteousness of the Confederate's cause.

With the comparison accepted, the Southern clergy were free to use the American Revolution in a range of rhetorical ways in sermons, addresses, and articles throughout the war. By establishing a commonly acknowledged view of the Revolution as righteous, ministers could use it to evoke greater devotion to their own cause. As *The Southern Episcopalian*, for example, asked rhetorically, “Had our fathers one-hundredth part the cause to secede from Great Britain that we have to secede from the

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Revolutionary Fathers.” W.H. Vernor, *A Sermon Delivered Before the Marshall Guards No.1* (Lewisburg, VA: Southern Messenger Office 1861), 8.

<sup>571</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer, “A Vindication of Secession and the South,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 14, no.1 (April 1861): 134-178; latter issued as a separate pamphlet, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *A Vindication of Secession and the South from the Strictures of the Rev J Breckenridge, DD, LL. D., In the Danville Quarterly Review* (Columbia: Southern Guardian, 1861). Thomas Smyth also highlighted the legal/historical argument for large stretches without clear reference to God or the Bible, Thomas Smyth, “The War of the South Vindicated,” *Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth DD. VOL VII*; ed. J. WM. Flinn (Columbia, SC: RL Breyers 1908), 588.



North?”<sup>572</sup> Ministers could also draw on the widespread belief in the righteousness of the American Revolution to encourage the South, and sermons abounded with tales of the hardships endured by the armies of Washington, scenes of privation at Valley Forge were conjured with regularity to fortify Southern troops wearied by the length of the war.<sup>573</sup> Ministers also highlighted the role clergy had played in the Revolutionary War and how integral piety and religiosity were to the Patriot's cause, which lent their role an added layer of authority with which to pronounce lessons for the current conflict. Such pronouncements about the precise lessons to be learned from the Revolution came thick and fast. For Protestant churches across the South, the logic was irrefutable; if the Revolution was righteous, secession is righteous; if the Patriots were pious, we must be pious; if God blessed them with Victory, he will bless us with Victory.

### *The American Revolution as a Conservative Revolution*

For this view of the Revolutionary War to have the emotional impact and rhetorical power it appears to have enjoyed, some contradictions needed to be ironed out. Southerners had to hold in tension admiration for the American Revolution and disapproval of revolutionary ideology in general. Southerners broadly achieved this by arguing that the war for independence was, at its core, not as

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<sup>572</sup> “South Carolina and the Union,” *Southern Episcopalian* 7, no. 9 (December 1860), 491. Bishop Steven Elliott of Georgia expounded five reasons why the thirteen colonies' Declaration of Independence from Great Britain was “nothing like the show of right” being undertaken by the Confederacy. Firstly, he argued, “They were colonies, and assumed their independence through the right of Revolution. We were sovereign States, and asserted ours by simply resuming our rightful sovereignty.” Secondly, he contended, “They flew to arms before any legislative action had given color to their violence...We dissolved our connection with our sister States, not after war had already dipped its foot in blood, but through Conventions, constitutionally assembled, chosen freely by the people. Thirdly he saw the unity of the South being contrasted with the experience of the American Revolution;” he explained, “They rushed into their conflict with the mother country with quite a half of their fellow citizens against them. We seceded with an unanimity unparalleled in such a revolution.” following on from his third point, fourthly, “ They fought through the War of Independence with many of the very best people of the Colonies against them. We have, up to this time, conducted our conflict with our people firm, determined and united.” Lastly, Elliott asserted, “the wrongs of the government of Great Britain affected only their civil rights; the wrongs inflicted upon us, threatened our whole social condition.” His view can be summed up in his statement, “If our forefathers were right in their action, then we are right...for they had very much less to complain of than we.” Rt. Rev. Stephen Elliott, *Ezra's Dilemma: A Sermon Preached in Christ Church, Savannah, on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1863, Being the Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, Appointed by the President of the Confederate States* (Savannah, GA: George Nichols, 1863), 9.

<sup>573</sup> “Let me illustrate it by an example taken from our own history. The darkest hour of our Revolutionary contest was during that memorable winter when the little army of Washington crouched naked and starving upon the bleak snows of Valley Forge.” he then paints a vivid picture of the privations undergone by those troops that winter but concludes, “yet they stood unflinching at their posts, believing it was their duty to stand there, and feeling that in some way, they knew not how, God would give triumph to the right.” Randolph made his point and drove it home; he concludes that “examples teach us that it is the righteousness of a cause which in the end must decide every contest between individuals and nations, no matter what may be the disparity in numbers and external resources.” Alfred Magill Randolph *Address on the Day of Fasting and Prayer Appointed by the President of the Confederate States, June 13, 1861: Delivered in St. George's Church, Fredericksburg, Va* (Fredericksburg, VA: Reorder & job, 1861), 10.

revolutionary as other revolutions. This was the position taken by the South Carolinian Lawyer William Henry Trescott, whose history, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (1852), made the point that conservative principles had guided the Revolution.<sup>574</sup> Southern ministers quickly adopted his view. Historian Adam Smith has convincingly argued that political discourse in nineteenth-century America strongly emphasized conservatism and that appeals to be conservative were widely used in the North and the South. He describes this phenomenon in the North as a “political culture that placed the highest moral value on defense of the Constitution and the Union.”<sup>575</sup> For the South, though, there could be, in effect, a double conservatism; what if the thing that was to be conserved (the heritage of the American Revolution) came itself from an act of conservation of earlier existing principles and rights? This is precisely what the South believed they were doing in the Civil War; simply preserving the rights and political arrangements bequeathed to them by their ancestors, who had, in turn, been preserving and protecting the rights and principles they had received. They saw the Revolution as a conservative war and their own conflict in the same way. Thus J.D. Renfroe explained, regarding secession and the subsequent outbreak of hostilities, “It was necessary for the preservation of our institutions and social systems; it was necessary for the maintenance of that form of government transmitted to us by the patriots of the first American Revolution; it was necessary for the defense of our own Constitutional liberty, and the liberty and happiness of our posterity for generations to come.”<sup>576</sup>

Crucial to this conservative view of the Revolution was the idea that the patriots of 1776 were not engaged in an overthrow of accepted legal and social norms, not doing anything exceptionally “revolutionary,” but were fighting for their chartered rights, what they already should have had by right of being Englishmen. The parallel could then be drawn from the Revolution to the South's struggle for independence, that they did not see themselves as “rebellious” but rather simply acting within constitutional bounds and were also involved in conserving their rights. Benjamin Morgan Palmer voiced this view by saying, “Eighty-five years ago, our fathers fought in defense of the chartered rights of Englishmen, that taxation and representation are correlative. We, their sons, contend today for the great American principle that all just government derives its powers from the will of the governed.”<sup>577</sup> He was echoing the received political wisdom of the day Jefferson Davis himself had said, “After the

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<sup>574</sup> William Henry Trescott, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution: An Historical Study* (New York: D Appleton, 1852), cited in Genovese, *The Slaveholders Dilemma*, 72.

<sup>575</sup> Adam I. P. Smith, “The Emergence of Conservatism as a political concept in the United States Before the Civil War,” *Civil War History* 66, no. 3 (September 2020): 231.

<sup>576</sup> Renfroe, *The Battle is God's*, 6.

<sup>577</sup> Thomas C. Johnson, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1906), 238.

struggles of ages had consecrated the right of the Englishman to Constitutional Representative Government, our colonial ancestors were forced to vindicate that birthright by an appeal to arms. Success crowned their efforts, and they provided for their posterity a peaceful remedy against future aggression."<sup>578</sup> This remark from Jefferson was quoted with approval in the Christian press and was widely adopted by ministers keen to hold in tension their insistence on God-ordained authority structures and their right to leave the union. This narrative provided a way for the South to maintain claims to righteousness and maintenance of hierarchy amid political change.

However, the consistent reference to the Revolution in this manner was undergirded by a more fundamental need to disavow what was seen as a dangerous challenge to the hierarchy of racial slavery. Despite glorifying the American Revolution, subsequent revolutions such as the French, the Haitian, and those of 1848 had scared Southerners, who had begun, in the words of Mitchel Snay, to "forge an impregnable union between religion, morality, and slavery."<sup>579</sup> To allow the fact that universal liberty or innate human rights lay behind the American Revolution would be, for them, to open the door to multiple threats against the foundations of slavery. The formation of the Confederacy was thus to be seen as a continuation of the principles of inherited rights fought for in the Revolution, not a rebellion or an insurrection as the North was wont to refer to it. Thomas E Peck wrote of the South, "We are not Jacobin destroyers, despising the wisdom of the past, but...like Washington and the glorious fathers of the first war of independence, it is our mission to "maintain and restore."<sup>580</sup> James Henley Thornwell went further, insisting that "We are not revolutionists - we are resisting Revolution...We are conservative. Our success is the triumph of all that has been considered established in the past."<sup>581</sup>

However, it was acknowledged that the American Revolution contained radical elements, and some had pursued it too far. Southerners argued that the Revolution's radical elements were an excess, separate from its true meaning, and located predominantly in the North. It was, from the Southern point of view, Northerners who had betrayed the American Revolution. Preaching in Richmond during the War, Rev. William Hall argued that "The theory of 'human rights,' which Thomas Paine sowed deeply over the receptive North, after the first Revolution, was derived from the French atheism."<sup>582</sup> Hall was enunciating a theory that was widely accepted in the South, that the first Revolution had been Godly and righteous, but that its immediate aftermath and memory had been hijacked by infidels who had

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<sup>578</sup> "Inaugural Address," *Richmond Christian Advocate* February 27, 1862, 2.

<sup>579</sup> Mitchel Snay *Gospel of Disunion*, 78.

<sup>580</sup> Thomas E. Peck, "Church and State," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 3, no. 2 (October 1863), 130.

<sup>581</sup> Thornwell, *Our Danger Our Duty*, 5.

<sup>582</sup> Hall *the Historic Significance of The Southern Revolution*, 17.

imbibed too much fanaticism, repudiated too much, and neglected to acknowledge God in any meaningful way. Preaching before the Georgia General Assembly in 1863, the Confederate chaplain Isaac Taylor Tichenor expressed shock that the United States Constitution contained “no mention of the name of God, had no recognition of his existence” when it was considered that this came “after a war in which God's hand had been almost as manifest in their deliverance as though he had led them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night” This mistake was, for Tichenor, tantamount to a fatal error.<sup>583</sup>

It was an error that the Southern clergy urged the Confederacy not to make again, and many ministers showed pride in the fact that the seal of the Confederacy contained the words, *Deo Vindice* “God my vindication.” Including these words indicated to ministers such as Stephen Elliott that the Confederacy had its house in order and was not repeating the mistakes made in the wake of the first Revolution. He feared that the Revolutionary War had begun for the right reasons but had been diverted by “atheism and a desire to overthrow natural order in society.” He put it this way, “The principle upon which we rested our Revolution ... was clearly true... but there was no necessity to cast to the winds all conservatism.” He worried, “carried away by our opposition to monarchy and an established church; we declared war against all authority and against all form.”<sup>584</sup> This rejection of God-ordained authority struck at the heart of Southern fears. Keen to assert their rights, they could not countenance that they might be advanced to others who did not enjoy them. Thomas Smyth, who prior to the war had been a proud admirer of the Declaration of Independence, came to view it as responsible for much confusion over the idea of “rights” leading to the upending of natural hierarchy. Now that the Civil War had thrown historical documents into stark relief, he saw that the Declaration of Independence was too deist and criticized it for not acknowledging Christ. He commented, “Though God is here introduced, the Declaration is God-less. God is introduced to give dignity and emphasis; to create man, and to ordain government; and then He is banished. The scepter is torn from his hands, and fictions are substituted for facts. All men are not born equal.”<sup>585</sup> Southern clergy, then, can be seen as walking a tightrope of admiring the American Revolution but disavowing some of its central claims about the equality of men. They desired to have their cake and eat it, and so emphasized the conservative nature of the Revolution. Anything that did not conform to the simple maintenance of inherited rights was, therefore, not of the

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<sup>583</sup> Dill *Isaac Taylor Tichenor*, 101.

<sup>584</sup> Rt Rev. Stephen Elliott, *New Wine Not to be Put in Old Bottles: A Sermon Preached in Christ Church, Savannah, on Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1862, Being the Day of Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer, Appointed by the President of the Confederate States* (Savannah, GA: Cooper & Co, 1863.), 10.

<sup>585</sup> Thomas Smyth, “The War of the South Vindicated and the War of the North Condemned,” *Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth DD. VOL VII*, ed. J. WM. Flinn (Columbia, SC: R. L. Breyers 1908), 545.

Revolution but could be put down to the encroachment of infidelity, which was ultimately seen as a Northern problem.

### *George Washington*

No man seemed to embody the conservative nature of the American Revolution more than the slave-owning Southerner and General of the Continental Army, George Washington. It was a great delight of the Confederacy that they could claim him as one of their own, reflected in the decision to depict him on the seal of the Confederacy. It became a source of amusement and sarcastic mockery when the North attempted to appropriate his memory.<sup>586</sup> His entire character seemed to exude the gentlemanly, chivalrous honor so highly prized in Southern culture. His plantation, Mt Vernon, sat overlooking the Potomac River in Northern Virginia, and his life combined the classical dignity of a Cincinnati and the ordered hierarchy of a biblical patriarch. He was a slaveholder, aristocratic, able to boast an honored lineage, and at the same time, he represented none of the free-thinking that made Thomas Jefferson such a divisive figure for mid-century Southerners. All these factors made him the perfect candidate for adulation and admiration in the South. One aspect of his character that Southern clergymen consistently referenced was the fervor of his piety.<sup>587</sup> However, this was a fact of his life upon which the most common biographies at the time were not unanimous, and his religiosity remains a debated issue among historians. Most accounts of his life acknowledged a general bent towards religion and morality rather than an obvious Christian faith that fitted an evangelical conception of piety.<sup>588</sup> Nevertheless, in

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<sup>586</sup> *The Richmond Christian Advocate* recognized that George Washington was held in high rearguard by the North also, but sarcastically joked about Northerners referring to their soldiers and leaders as in any way like George Washington. It seemed to the writer that the North had “[forgotten] that Washington was a slaveholder and a Virginia rebel” “Northern Religious Papers,” *Richmond Christian Advocate*, October 30, 1862, 2. Faust, *Confederate Nationalism*, 14.

<sup>587</sup> Kieran O’Keefe introduces the debate in his article “Faith Before Creed: The Public and Private Religion of George Washington,” *Journal of Religious History* 43, no. 3 (September 2019), 400-418. He comments, “Scholars have argued that he was anything from a devout Christian to a Deist.” O’Keefe takes the position that the truth is somewhere between those two polls.

<sup>588</sup> David Ramsey does not mention the religion of Washington in his biography other than in moralistic terms, commenting that, “He had religion without austerity, dignity without pride, modesty without diffidence, courage without rashness, politeness without affectation, affability without familiarity” also at his death Ramsey writes, “He submitted to the inevitable stroke with the dignity of a man, the calmness of a philosopher, and the resignation and confidence of a *Christian* (my emphasis).” David Ramsey, *Life of George Washington: Commander in Chief of the Armies of the United States, in the War Which Established Their Independence and First President of the United States* (London: Hanford & Sons, 1807), 420 and 40. George Bancroft does not comment upon the religiosity of Washington in his *History of the United States*, and Aaron Bancroft’s biography contains nothing of Washington’s piety either but does include several appeals to religion in general made by Washington during his lifetime. Aaron Bancroft, *The Life of George Washington, Commander and Chief of the American Army, Through the Revolutionary War: and the First President of the United States* (Boston: T Beddington, 1837), 45,175,182 and 184. Washington Irving does give weight to religion as a forming influence on George Washington’s character in Vol I of his biography. 15 and 17. In volume II Washington urges his

the South during the Civil War, Washington's references to religion were taken in the most orthodox Christian sense.<sup>589</sup> Furthermore, if Washington was mentioned in a sermon or religious newspaper, invariably, his Godly character and moral uprightness were to be the focus of the reference. Henry Niles Pierce praised the “great, good and pure-hearted Washington,”<sup>589</sup> While Rev J. S. Harris, in his series of letters to Christian soldiers, saw prayerfulness as the key to Washington's successes, “In view of the almost miraculous preservation of Washington, amid all the dangers of a hundred fields of battle, the wonderful victories that marked his leadership... the power and benefit of prayer are exhibited.”<sup>590</sup>

The life of Washington was a treasure trove of anecdotes from which to choose when making a moral point; such was the stature of the reputation of his unassailable character. The Methodist Chaplain John Cowper Granbury was keen to point out, “Our own Washington, the patriot, soldier, sage, bowed in holy reverence and trust before the Lord of lords” and that not only was he a man of prayer but that “he was a morally pure a leader as has been seen on the pages of history which permeated down to the rank and file of his army.” Granbury showed examples intended to be illustrative of the character which would win the war for the South; “in several of his orders Washington reproved his army for their profanity and other sins, and asked how they could expect God to crown their arms with success, while they daily blasphemed his name.”<sup>591</sup> Southern ministers were eager to stamp profanity out in their own army, and having such an illustrious figure as Washington himself speaking against such acts was an arrow in the quiver of arguments against such behavior.

Historical facts about Washington were used to advance any particular cause or policy that the church was interested in propagating. The *Richmond Christian Advocate* published a letter from George Washington to a congregation in Woodstock, Connecticut, in which he praised the services of a

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officers to behave like “*Christian Soldiers*.” Other than this, religion and Christianity do not feature prominently in Irving's work. Washington Irving, *Life of George Washington* Vol. I-IV (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855) Jared Sparks, on the other hand, comments upon Washington's personal piety more and concludes that as “A Christian in practice he was habitually devout,” and “to say that he was not a Christian, or at least that he did not believe himself to be a Christian, would be to impeach his sincerity and honesty.” Jared Sparks, *Life of George Washington* Vol. I-II (Boston: F Andrews, 1839), 520 and 98. In 1836 the Virginian E. C. McGuire published an entire volume dedicated to the religious opinions of George Washington, E.C. McGuire, *The Religious Opinions and Character of Washington* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1836). Anna Reed published a biography of Washington for the Sunday School Union, which understandably, given its audience, highlighted the role of prayer in George Washington's life, his religious character, and the providence of God in many events of his life. Anna Reed, *Life of George Washington* (American Sunday School Union, 1847).

<sup>589</sup> Henry Nile Pierce, *Sermon preached in St. John's Church, Mobile, on the 13th of June, 1861: The National Fast Appointed by His Excellency Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America* (Mobile, AL: Farrow & Dennett, 1861), 5.

<sup>590</sup> Harris, *The True Soldiers Spiritual Armor*, 6.

<sup>591</sup> John Cower Granbery, *An Address to the Soldiers of the Southern Armies* (Richmond, VA: The Soldiers Tract Association, 1861), 4-6.

chaplain from that town. The letter is brief, but it was published with a paragraph of commentary that interpreted the general's short words, highlighting the "great interest that Washington felt in the moral well-being of his army and the importance of good chaplains to secure that end."<sup>592</sup> The supply of chaplains for the armed forces was an issue about which ministers felt strongly. Ministers described the army as the most significant mission field in the world and experienced anxiety over the temptations likely to befall impressionable young men off to war.<sup>593</sup> Since Southern clergy believed sins committed by an army to be the cause of national setbacks and military defeat, this became a life and death issue, and having the greatest hero of American memory, George Washington, praising the role of chaplains was a boost to the campaign to raise more for the Confederate forces. The same newspaper also published orders from George Washington outlawing the use of oaths and gambling by men under his command. These were hot-button issues for ministers in the South and one of the favorite sins they were wont to point out to the Southern soldiery. The extracts were printed with the opening line "How we succeeded at the Revolution"; the logic was self-evident, the more morally upright the army, the greater the likelihood of victory.<sup>594</sup>

As the quintessential Southern gentleman, the comparison to another Southern gentleman from Virginia with an aristocratic heritage, Robert E. Lee, seemed almost natural. Rev. John Paris made the equivalence, acknowledging that the two men's godliness was the source of the likeness between them. Paris believed God provided these great men for their respective causes. "He gave our fathers a Washington, a man who feared God, to guide them through the Revolution of 1776. He has given to us a Lee, a man of like faith and of like hopes, to be our leader in these dark days of trial, and we all love to follow where he leads."<sup>595</sup> However, the parallels with a man like Washington could also take a democratic tone, as ordinary soldiers were called upon to imitate his life. Rev. R. N. Sledd flew into flights of rapturous praise of Washington before the Confederate cadets in the Methodist Episcopal Church of Richmond, admonishing them to,

"Take as your model 'the father of his country,' our Washington—him to whose memory poetry and eloquence delight to pay the tribute of their homage, and to perpetuate whose fame the canvas glows and the marble speaks. In him you find an inflexibility of will which seven years of doubtful experiment could not swerve from its purpose: an iron nerve which the prospect of danger but strung to a higher tension: a fortitude which

<sup>592</sup> "Gen. Washington's Estimate of Chaplains," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, May 29, 1862, 1.

<sup>593</sup> Rev. A. W. Miller, *The Confederate Army and Navy Bible and Tract Depository: Ministering to the Spiritual Need of our Noble Defenders* (Richmond, VA: [unknown] 1861).

<sup>594</sup> "Gen. Washington's Orders," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, October 9, 1862, 1.

<sup>595</sup> Quoted in Chesebrough, *God Ordained this War*, 273.

disaster and defeat, which the unspeakable sufferings even of a Valley Forge could not overcome: and above all an integrity and a devotion to right which no lure of ambition, no prospect of personal aggrandizement and glory could tempt to a violation of justice and mercy.”<sup>596</sup>

These notable characteristics were within the power of the rank-and-file cadets in the congregation. Sledd urged them, “Be this your courage. Be his virtues the fire that shall warm your heart, the power that shall invigorate your arm and the light that shall guide your steps. Be his renown your highest ambition, and his laurels your coveted reward.” Washington, then, was a safe name that could be evoked from the legendary era of the countries founding, no one had a greater claim to represent the true nature and meaning of the Revolution and America than he, and Southerners did not have to work hard to create his memory in their image.

### *Sacred Geography Hallowed by the Past*

It was central to the identity of Southern ministers that they were those who conserve and maintain, and as we have seen, they had their sacred trust of inherited rights to conserve, and they had their hero to embody their conservative values. They also had a sacred space to preserve. Clergy from across the Confederacy actively perpetuated the hallowed memory of the physical landscape in which they lived. The South saw warfare on its own soil from the first shots fired upon Fort Sumter, through the fall of New Orleans, and to the infamous march to the sea undertaken by Sherman. For many, the fighting was close to home, and its disruptions were part of a shared experience that bound the would-be new nation together. The experience of invasion allowed ministers to employ pathos and emotive language that focused on the most sacred elements of life for which one could consider it worth fighting. As J. W. Tucker reminded his hearers, “You are fighting for everything that is near and dear, and sacred to you as men, as Christians and as patriots; for country, for home for property, for the honor of mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, and loved ones.”<sup>597</sup> This sense of defilement of home and desecration of the sacred was created by crafting historical narratives emphasizing the South's heritage and its role in the Revolution. Through the historical events that had taken place there and the families that had lived and died there, the ground and the physical geography had become imbued with memory. The Northern

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<sup>596</sup> R.N. Sledd, *A Sermon Delivered in the Market Street, M. E. Church, Petersburg, Va.: Before the Confederate Cadets, on the Occasion of their Departure for the Seat of War, Sunday, Sept. 22d, 1861.* (Petersburg, VA: A. F. Crutchfield & Co., 1861), 10.

<sup>597</sup> Quoted in Chesebrough, *God Ordained this War*, 236.



troops were represented as men who had neglected their history and had no regard for the past; they had adopted new and dangerous ideologies and wandered from the tried and tested paths in both church and society. Therefore, their footsteps through a hallowed land suffused with the remnants of a rich past became an act of historical destruction. This act of defilement led Edwin Winkler to ask, “Is it right that the sacred spot where the first great battle of the Revolution was fought should be turned into a smoking desolation, and that we, who breathe its air and inherit its fame, should be silent?”<sup>598</sup>

As the fortunes of the South waned and defeat and reversal became a daily reality, the use of history took on new meanings in the minds of Southerners, who were beginning to taste the realities of war. In 1864, as the armies of the North marched through the Southern states, Bishop Stephen Elliott sought to rally the spirits of Georgians. He acknowledged the facts of defeat and reversal and set them in the context of divine meaning derived from a grand narrative of history. The past and a sense of the Southern state's position in the world were sacralized, as Elliott says regarding the experience of Virginia. “Her churches, sacred relics of the past, around which are clustered the graves of generations, have been burned with fire; her archives, memorials of the long line of her heroes, and statesmen, a loss irreparable, have been rifled and destroyed.”<sup>599</sup> As Elliot saw them, these totems of the South's past glories were elevated to a sacred status and were being desecrated by the invading armies of the North. Here history and its physical remnants were to be preserved, and material remains fought for and protected as they embodied the spirit of a people for the benefit of future generations. Elliott was aware, however, that the ongoing conflict with the North was part of that history and would, in time, come to be looked upon by Southerners as equally glorious as that which had proceeded it. With this in mind, he encouraged his listeners that the hardships and indignities of invasion were not simply a cause for lament but an opportunity to store up history for posterity. He feared that if Georgia were to “Come out unharmed, they would come out without a local history” and with nothing for “tradition to hang her glory upon,” indeed, “without those scars which designate the veteran hero.” Then came an almost predictable reference to the Revolution, “All the states which in the old Revolution bore the brunt of the British fury, have to this day maintained their reputation...their battlefields made them historical.”<sup>600</sup> Elliott was, therefore, able to cast his hearer's minds simultaneously backward to heroic deeds of old

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<sup>598</sup> Winkler, *Duties of the Citizen Soldier*, 8. He is referring to the Battle of Sullivan's Island on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1776. The commanding officer on the American side was William Moultrie, after whom the regiment of soldiers Winkler was addressing was named.

<sup>599</sup> Rt Rev. Stephen Elliott, *Vain is the Hope of Man: A Sermon Preached in Christ Church, Savannah, On Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1864, Being the Day of Fasting, Humility and Prayer Called by the Governor of Georgia* (Macon, GA: Burke, Boykin & Co, 1864), 5.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

and forwards to a time when theirs may be viewed in the same light. He completed this line of thinking with the words, “their past requires a present which shall be correspondent with its form.” Thus, the past was to be emulated, that his generation may too be looked upon in a heroic light.

The Southern theater of the American Revolution had been the scene of many significant battles in the War for Independence, and in the years prior to the Civil War, William Gilmore Simms had attempted to prove that it was the Southern states that were responsible for victory in the Revolutionary War.<sup>601</sup> Ministers were not ignorant of this fact and were well aware of the significance this could have for the messages they wished to give to their congregations. The reason for the Revolution's many Southern battles and victories was readily attributed to the Southern character. C. S. Vedder felt that “Nature has given that stern sense of right: that chivalric courtesy and lofty self-sacrificing patriotism which has made the Southern name a synonym for honor, hospitality and valor.”<sup>602</sup> And R. S. Gladney, writing in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* about the South and the American Revolution, proclaimed, “Their orators, their statesman, their warriors, were ever foremost in vindicating the national honor...they did the greater part of the fighting and paid the greater part of the expenses whilst the Northern people reaped the greater part of the benefits.”<sup>603</sup> The list of battles that took place on Southern soil was impressive; Yorktown, Cowpens, and Kings Mountain, to name a few. Benjamin Morgan Palmer liked to point this fact out, saying of the South, “During the Revolutionary struggle, overlaid by the British forces, she passed through unparalleled sufferings; and contributed her full proportion of blood and treasure to the common cause, as the numerous battlefields which dot her soil abundantly show.”<sup>604</sup>

The created sense of the South as a particularly historic region has a long history, including a literary tradition that stretched out decades before the Civil War.<sup>605</sup> During the war, evoking this tradition could be relatively simple. The consistent use of the term, “old dominion” for the state of Virginia, or referring to it as “our honored commonwealth,” as did Rev. Wheelright, reinforced the venerable nature of the territory that the North was now dishonoring. As Wheelright said in the same

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<sup>601</sup> See Faust, *A Sacred Circle*, 74. “A new 1860 edition of his History of South Carolina, originally published in 1840, sought to establish the early origin of sectional differences and to prove Southern responsibility for Revolutionary victory and American independence.”

<sup>602</sup> Rev C. S. Vedder, *Offer unto God Thanksgiving: A Sermon Delivered in the Summerville Presbyterian Church on Sunday, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1861* (Charleston: Evans & Cogswell, 1861), 10.

<sup>603</sup> Rev R. S. Gladney, “The Downfall of the Union,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 16, no. 1 (July 1863): 38.

<sup>604</sup> Rev Benjamin M. Palmer, “Secession Vindicated,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 14, no. 1 (April 1861): 19.

<sup>605</sup> For some of the dynamics of how an image of a historical South was created in literature, see Taylor, *Caviler and Yankee*, and Rollin G. Otterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South* and Luis D. Rubin, *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study in the Literature and Society of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

sermon to troops stationed at Gloucester, Virginia, “Nothing indicates a more degraded, disgusting moral state than lack of reverence for things venerable through age or associations.”<sup>606</sup> Virginia, in particular, could boast impressive historical associations, and Stephen Elliott quickly took advantage of that fact. He exhorted his hearers, “The Mother of States—the nursery of heroes, orators, and of statesmen—the shrine which contains the ashes of Washington—summons you to her defense.”<sup>607</sup> This employment of language in elevating places and spaces could also take the form of descriptive passages in sermons. For example, Rev J. H. Elliott preached to his congregation about the first battle of Fort Sumter: “Well do we remember the solemn hour which some few of us spent within this house of God, according to our usual custom, upon Friday the first day of the bombardment. The shades of a stormy night were gathering about its dim and *ancient* aisles as we knelt in prayer.”<sup>608</sup> He was referring to St Micheal's Church in Charleston, completed in 1761. At the outbreak of the Civil War, it was 100 years old, which was admirable for the architecture of the Southern states. In a phrase so innocuous and commonplace, he makes this relatively young church reminiscent of a ruined abbey in a Walter Scott novel; the invoking of the romantic view of time makes the place feel all the more to be revered, guarded, and cherished.

This rhetoric also relied upon the familial connection and the idea of heritage, inheritance, and natural descent.<sup>609</sup> Rev. George Armstrong felt that “the impression is wide-spread, if not universal, among our people that God, even the God of our fathers, is with us in the contest.”<sup>610</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer railed against the occupation of New Orleans in typical form, “They have placed the heel of oppression upon the queenly city which,...whose ancient families handed down from father to son a proud, ancestral name.”<sup>611</sup> The usage of this familial trope can be seen as evidenced in the common quotation of a poem by the Northern poet Fitz-Greene Halleck, which contained the stirring lines.

"Strike--till the last armed foe expires;  
Strike--for your altars and your fires;  
Strike--for the green graves of your sires;  
God--and your native land!"

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<sup>606</sup> Wheelright, *A Discourse Delivered to the Troops Stationed at Gloucester Point VA*, 8.

<sup>607</sup> Rev. Stephen Elliott, *The Silver Trumpets of the Sanctuary: A Sermon Preached to the Pulaski Guards in Christ Church Savannah, On the Second Sunday After Trinity, Being the Sunday Before Their Departure to Join the Army of Virginia* (Savannah, GA: Cooper & Co, 1861), 9.

<sup>608</sup> Rev. J. H. Elliott, *The Bloodless Victory. A sermon Preached in St. Michael's Church, Charleston, S.C., On Occasion of The Taking of Fort Sumter* (Charleston, SC: A.E Miller 1861), 5.

<sup>609</sup> Renfroe, *The Battle is God's*, 23.

<sup>610</sup> Armstrong, *The Good hand of our God Upon Us*, 4.

<sup>611</sup> Palmer *A Discourse Before the General Assembly of South Carolina*, 6

This poem was originally written upon the death of Marco Bozzaris, a hero of the Greek War of Independence. However, the stanza in question was largely lifted from its original meaning and repurposed as its content is universally applicable. It struck a chord with Southerners, particularly in sermons, as it seemed to bring together the home, family, history, death, and God in a militaristic call to Arms and action.<sup>612</sup>

### *Theological Grounds for the Right to Rebel*

One of the most cited biblical texts in the Civil War from Northern pulpits and in their religious press was Romans 13, which included the command of St. Paul to be subject to the higher authorities. This passage seemed to strike at the very heart of the Southern claim to be conservative and Northern ministers could and did point out the hypocrisy of the South's sinful rebellion. They wielded the verses of Romans against the South, arguing that they had departed from tried and tested ways of the past and were engaged in the radical destruction of legitimate authority. This charge gave the South an instant retort, as this had also been a favorite tactic of the loyalists during the War for Independence.<sup>613</sup> Nevertheless, as far as the criticism of disobeying this command in Romans 13 was leveled against the South, several ministers did feel the need to defend themselves and did therefore engage in explaining the right to remove governments or replace them as the need arose, a right they claimed had been used legitimately in the Revolution.

Most Protestant churches in the South at the time of the Civil War were heavily influenced by connections to the Reformed tradition of Protestant Christianity.<sup>614</sup> Regardless of their affinity with the more famous interpreters of that tradition, such as Calvin, or doctrines that are most commonly associated with it, such as predestination, the four main denominations of the South all subscribed to one doctrine that arose historically primarily in the Reformed tradition, namely the right of civil resistance. Sarah Morgan Smith and Mark Hall have demonstrated how the right of the lower magistrates to challenge higher authorities instituted by God when they were not fulfilling their God-

<sup>612</sup> For examples of this poem being quoted, see Vedder, *Offer unto God Thanksgiving*, 10, and Vernor, *A Sermon Delivered Before the Marshall Guards*, 14.

<sup>613</sup> Byrd, *A Baptism of Fire and Blood*, 305.

<sup>614</sup> Methodism could be argued to be the exception to this rule. If Reformed is taken to refer primarily to a particular view of soteriology, codified in the Canons of Dort, colloquially known as TULIP, or the doctrines of grace, then Methodism would fall without that category. However, if Reformed is taken broadly to mean any Protestant group tracing its lineage back to the Reformation to the tradition coming from Zwingli and Calvin and neither Lutheran nor Anabaptist, then Methodism has a claim to being called reformed. It is true that Methodism was heavily influenced by Lutheran pietism. However, it came out of the Church of England, a body that consistently believed itself to be a "Reformed" church and used that language.

ordained function was to be found in sixteenth-century Geneva. This view influenced English Puritanism and Scottish Presbyterianism, and classic texts such as Samuel Rutherford's *Lex Rex* (1644) developed the theory of the subordination of human government to the higher authority of God's law. These principles were seen to have contributed to the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution of 1688, both events widely celebrated and admired by American Christians, including those in the South. By the time of the American Revolution, an intellectual milieu that combined Enlightenment democratic principles and this Reformed tradition gave the people a basis for a right to rebellion against tyrannical rule.<sup>615</sup> At the time of the Civil War, this last stage of the development of Reformed resistance theory was widely accepted in America, North and South. Charles Hodge of Princeton Theological Seminary, an influence on many Southern Presbyterian ministers, wrote in his commentary on Romans 13 concerning the civil magistrates, "The extent of...obedience is to be determined from the nature of the case. They are to be obeyed, as magistrates, in the exercise of their *lawful* authority."<sup>616</sup> (emphasis mine) The Southern Baptist minister Sylvannus Landrum put it starkly, "It has long been regarded as a self-evident truth, that governments are established for the security, prosperity and happiness of the people. When therefore, any government is perverted from its proper design, becomes oppressive and abuses its power, the people have a right to change it."<sup>617</sup>

This is a view that Charleston's Thomas Smyth would have affirmed. He was one of the most prominent ministers to provide a developed argument for the theological defense of the right of secession, which was invariably done with reference to the American Revolution. He had already mused upon these themes in sermons and addresses prior to the war, where he teased out the main

<sup>615</sup> For the Protestant foundations of resistance theory, see John Witte Jr., "Rights, Resistance, and Revolution in the Western Tradition: Early Protestant Foundations," *Law and History Review* 26, no. 3 (Autumn 2008): 545-570; and for the development up to the American Revolution, see Sarah Morgan Smith, Mark D. Hall, "Whose Rebellion? Reformed Resistance Theory in America: Part I" *Unio Cum Christo* 3, no. 2 (October 2017): 169-184; and Sarah Morgan Smith, Mark D. Hall, "Whose Revellio? Reformed Resistance Theory in America: Part II," *Unio Cum Christo* 4, no. 1 (April 2018): 171-188.

<sup>616</sup> Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1836), 307. George Fredrickson comments that "prewar sermons...[invoked] Romans 13 and used it to condemn...the right to rebel against who ruled without the "consent of the governed." However, "The absolute denial of the right of Revolution that was often implicit and sometime explicit in these sermons echoed strangely in a nation with a revolutionary past" George M. Fredrickson, "The Coming of the Lord: The Northern Protestant Clergy and the Civil War Crisis," *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall Miller, Harry Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 120. Also, the South displayed an inconsistency brought about by the presence of slavery and the need to maintain order; in 1849, the Northern minister Frances Wayland had written, "Governments have only limited authority, conferred for definite and specified objects, and these objects to be achieved within innocent means. Within these limits, we must obey; beyond them, we may, and perhaps must disobey." This sentiment may have been met with approval by the South during the Civil War. However, at that point in the antebellum South, it raised alarm bells, and the reviewer in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* took issue with what this would mean in the context of slavery and against the backdrop of the European revolutions. "Critical Notices," *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 2, no. 4 (March 1849): 599.

<sup>617</sup> Landrum, *A Discourse Before the Congregation of Savannah Baptist Church*, 8.

principles of moral government that became integral to the way in which ministers of the Confederacy justified the secession of the Southern states: Namely that God was the originator of all government, and that it was ordained in order to restrain sin, no particular form of government was divinely constituted but that which followed the biblical reasoning for government, i.e., “for good” through the dissemination and encouragement of the Christian religion.<sup>618</sup>

During the war, Thomas Smyth, who, prior to the outbreak of hostilities, had already been a regular contributor to the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, became one of the foremost interpreters of current events for that publication; several of his sermons were chosen to be printed out of the myriad fast-day addresses preached throughout the South.<sup>619</sup> One such address, which appears in an extended form in his works, was reproduced in the April 1863 edition. After outlining several heads under which he “vindicates the secession of the South,” he turned to the topic of the “divine right of secession.” He began with the premise, “Christianity requires...obedience to civil government as to ecclesiastical authority, and [God] has made civil governors a terror to evil-doers, and his appointed revengers, to execute wrath upon the disobedient.” Smyth believed the North had falsely deduced from this that “the secession and defensive war of the South is rebellion and treason against God's ordained Government.” Smyth accused the Northern view as containing a “monstrous sophism, as baseless as it is brutal, and futile as it is fiendish,” as in his view, the Lincoln government had flouted the original intent of the Constitution as an agreement freely entered into by sovereign parties. After listing the contradictions and assumptions in the policy of the North, Smyth concluded that “If [their] argument is correct...then every principle of American liberty is a delusion of Satan...and the signers of our Declaration of independence, and our patriot fathers, and ministers of the Gospel, were all arch-traitors and heretics, and deserving only of the gibbet or the stake.”<sup>620</sup>

Smyth then shifted his argument to assert that the Confederacy is itself a “power that be” in the terms St. Paul outlines in Romans 13 and therefore is itself deserving of obedience, and Northern aggression against it is defiance of a God-ordained government and open to the charge of falling foul of St. Paul's injunction “wherein thou judgest; judgest thy thouself.”<sup>621</sup> Smyth moved then to what he saw as a correct interpretation of scriptural teaching about government and the Christian duty of obedience thereunto. It was key to the flow of Smyth's argument that government is not ordained of God,

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<sup>618</sup> Smyth, *National Righteousness*, 25-36.

<sup>619</sup> For example, see “The Battle of Fort Sumter: Its Mystery and Miracle—God's Mastery and Mercy,” in 14, No. 3 (October 1861):365-399; and “The Victory of Manassas Plain,” 14, no. 4 (January 1862): 593-618.

<sup>620</sup> Smyth, “The War of the South Vindicated,” 502-504.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid*, 504.

“directly, nor in any particular form, *but through the instrumentality of man* (my emphasis)” and that man in his agency in setting up a government, is free, under “[Gods] Word and providence.” The end for which government is ordained is “the security and happiness of the good, and as a terror to evil,” and as long as in this respect the government is “faithfully and purely administered, [God] approves of it.” It is to such a government that Smyth believed Christians owe loyalty.<sup>622</sup>

Smyth went on to explain that “Government is designed by God as much for those that rule as those under their rule,” which restricts the use of authority to the extent that any arbitrary administering of it is a rebellion against God's law. For Smyth, where man has been permitted to form a government of constitutional liberty, it is the duty of all to preserve the liberties under that form of government and to act against them is to be like Esau and sell one's inheritance for a bowl of pottage. He then cited Charles Hodge, an acknowledged Northern authority on biblical exegesis, who wrote that “only within the sphere of legitimate authority” is government to be obeyed. In the case of the United States, Smyth contends this legitimate authority is constitutional authority “given to the Federal government from each state, and can be withdrawn.”<sup>623</sup> To disagree with these propositions and ascribe a transcendent authority to the Lincoln administration, Smyth proclaimed, was to fall into the trap of the “Romish Church” and “insist on implicit passive obedience.” This was also the view of the loyalist clergy of the American Revolution, which Smyth proved with quotations from various sermons preached during that conflict. Therefore, Smyth accused the North of hypocrisy in deviating from the faith they purported to hold when celebrating the American Revolution.<sup>624</sup>

Smyth also discussed Romans 13 in a later article published in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* on the “Character and conditions of liberty.” He argued that,

“Rulers are God’s ministers to the people...for the single purpose of securing to them...Good, by the faithful and impartial administration of the constitution and the laws under which they exist, and by which they are restrained and limited...their power is to be exercised so as to secure the happiness of those who “do good” by acting in conformity with the constitution and laws as they may exist... and to execute wrath upon those who 'do evil' by acting in an unconstitutional and illegal manner.”

He concluded, therefore, that government is not an *end* but a *means to an end*. Therefore, the right to

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<sup>622</sup> Ibid, 505.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid, 506.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid, 507-508.

remove oneself and form a government to achieve these ends is maintained.<sup>625</sup>In this regard, the clergy of the South could claim to be in line with their forebears in the Revolution, and the North was inadvertently playing into their hands by repeating the role of the British, the villains of the piece.

Virginian Episcopal minister and Confederate chaplain Philip Slaughter also repudiated the claim of the North that the South was guilty of rebellion according to the scriptural injunctions to obey civil authorities. He argued that “the scriptures rightly interpreted give no countenance to the doctrine of passive obedience, now revived by the divines of the North.” Instead, he argued that God “does not prescribe any particular form of government, as monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy” since, he argued, it is a historical fact that “governments are constantly revolving and appearing in new forms.” He acknowledged that it is sometimes a difficult question which of the rivals is the “higher power to which we owe obedience.” However, in the case of the Civil War, the difficulty was apparently not so severe. He complained that “the dishonoring word, rebellion, has been used to brand some of the holiest causes and to stain some of the purest names that ever illustrated the pages of history.” The specific example he has in mind is calculated to strike at the heart of the North's pride and enthuse Southerners. “The American Revolution furnishes another example of the same truth. Our fathers were denounced as rebels...they fired a train that has been exploding ever since, overturning many a hoary despotism, and which is destined to illuminate...every kingdom and people.” Slaughter then twists the knife of his argument against the North, saying that they “[have] repudiated these principles, and [are] about to put out the light which our ancestors kindled upon this continent.” Thus, secession is justified, and the North is hypocritically leaving behind the faith of the patriot fathers and now assuming the role of the tyrannical British in demanding obedience and loyalty from the free and sovereign South.<sup>626</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Ministers of the South felt that the hierarchical nature of Southern society, primarily expressed in slavery, was biblically justifiable and often went as far as proposing it was ordained of God for a positive good. At the same time, they had a vested interest in glorifying the American Revolution, an event that could present a problematic challenge to inherited power and traditional forms of authority.

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<sup>625</sup> Rev. Thomas Smyth, “The Character and Conditions of Liberty,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 16, no. 3 (April 1864): 205-208.

<sup>626</sup> Rev P. Slaughter, *Coercion and Conciliation: A Sermon, Preached in Camp, at Centerville, Virginia, by the Rev. P Slaughter, Chaplain of 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment Virginia Volunteers, Condensed, by Request, into A Tract for the Times* (Richmond, VA: McFarlane & Fergusson 1862), 1-3.



In order to hold these two seemingly contradictory positions in tension, Southern ministers held a conservative view of the American Revolution that emphasized continuity rather than disruption and change. It was a view of the Revolution which went hand in hand with their own self-conception as conservative Christians, maintainers, and preservers. Furthermore, it resonated with Christian identities, which highlighted particular denominational contributions to the fundamental principles of the American Revolution. In so doing, they could also claim the same of themselves concerning secession and the Civil War, effectively that the patriots had acted as consistent Christian men of honor who laid claim to their legal rights as Englishmen. The Confederacy followed that precedent, simply enacting their legal right to self-government and state sovereignty. This interpretation also enabled Southern ministers to highlight the sins and errors of the North and put forth an argument that they had deviated from the high ideals of the Revolution. This went hand in hand with another view of Southern clergymen in general, namely that the North had deviated theologically from a pure reformed tradition or evangelical Puritan piety into a deformed and errant spirituality, hopelessly corrupted by German idealism and French democracy. Thus, utilizing the American Revolution enabled Southern ministers to combine religion and political theory to show that the South was correct on both accounts and the North was deviant on both, the one affecting and corrupting the other and vice-versa.

By examining the Southern Churches' use of the American Revolution during the Civil War, we begin to appreciate the authority of the past held by the four major denominations in that region. An image of churches obsessed with history and constructing its meaning at every turn of the war emerges. They desired to paint themselves as conservers of tradition and all that is tried and tested. This applied to the legality of secession, the orthodoxy of their theology, the righteousness of slaveholding, the preservation of true republicanism, and regulated liberty. These factors all intertwined to form the strong chord of Confederate nationalism, readily supported and encouraged from pulpits and religious presses across the South. By engaging in this process, one that had antebellum precedents developed and matured in the war, Southern ministers strengthened the relationship between correct piety, belief, and correct political and social opinions so that when the North transgressed one, all were transgressed with the result that the sins of the North multiplied and diversified with a ferocious intensity in the minds of Southern ministers and Christians.



## Chapter Seven: Republics, Good and Bad

Historians of the antebellum South have been aware for some time that Southerners constructed an idea of republicanism that they believed to be compatible with, and even beneficial to, the existing system of slavery by defending “regulated liberty” from the “despotism of the masses on the one hand, and the supremacy of a single will on the other.”<sup>627</sup> Furthermore, historians have seen that during the Civil War, this idea of the nature and purpose of a republic was formative for the development of a Confederate identity that distinguished itself from the North, who, through the corruptions of wealth and avarice, was seen as having fallen from true republican ideals.<sup>628</sup> Manisha Sinha has cautioned that the near “hegemonic interpretative status of republicanism in contemporary American historiography” has led to overstating the importance of a true republican ideology to secession, which has, in turn, obscured the pro-slavery roots of the Southern desire to withdraw from the Union.<sup>629</sup> While this is true, regardless of the coherence and consistency of any political philosophy of republicanism, which may or may not have been held by Southerners, republican rhetoric was rife in public discourse and was also used by Southern ministers during the War. What remains unexplored is the extent to which this discourse surrounding republicanism was historicized and the ways in which historical examples were brought to bear on the nature of a perceived difference between Confederate republicanism and Northern republicanism. Crucially what is also lacking is a true sense of how the Civil War, as I have repeatedly argued, intensified the usage of history in Southern pulpits.<sup>630</sup> Addressing this lack in the historiography will form one purpose of this chapter. The second is to demonstrate that Southern ministers had a specific intention in their interpretation of republicanism that can be seen clearly through their use of history. Their aim was always, first and foremost, to highlight the necessity of Godliness, piety, and correct religion in any conception of how a republic could and should flourish.

This was not necessarily a distinct or separate idea from notions of republicanism at large in the

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<sup>627</sup> James Farmor, *The Metaphysical Confederacy*, 222.

<sup>628</sup> Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 31-33.

<sup>629</sup> Manisha Sinha, *The Counter Revolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>630</sup> Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, are the exceptions to this rule, as their *Mind of the Master Class* argues for the centrality of the historical imagination of the elites of southern society in appreciation for classical history and abhorrence at French radical republicanism. However, their work differs crucially from this chapter in three respects. 1. their work spans a larger time period, so the chapter on French history contains more contemporary comment and thus is less historical as the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars appeared by 1860. 2. Their work is on Southern elites as an entire group, which includes many clergymen and many Christians, which I believe blurs some of the nuances of the church's specific uses of history as opposed to Southern society as a whole. 3. Their work does not focus on the Civil War, which, as I have repeatedly argued, changed and intensified the usage of history.

South more broadly. Rather, looking specifically at what ministers preached and wrote on this issue reveals what they believed their role in society to be. In addition, it can clarify how the surrounding culture and theological and religious concerns simultaneously determined their priorities. For example, the Christian character of the Confederacy was constantly held to be more integral to its functioning and success as an independent republic than the mere maintenance of slavery without the ameliorating presence of true piety. Clergy, therefore, looked to historic Republics to demonstrate the benefits of piety and the dangers to a republic of its citizen's failure to acknowledge God personally and publicly. Ultimately the strength of the appeal to the history of Republics was that it aligned with Southern ministers' conservative historical identity. The lessons ministers derived from historic republics matched their obsession with continuity and preservation and necessitated change be resisted.

When the thirteen colonies of North America threw off their allegiance to the British crown and declared their independence, the resulting nation was constituted as a republic.<sup>631</sup> The precise nature of what a republic should and could be was fraught with diverse interpretations, and the project was invested with competing meanings that diverged and interacted as the new country grew and matured into the mid-nineteenth century. While the perceived novelty and uniqueness of the American experience of self-creation has been a crucial founding myth in the country's identity, historians have long realized that the revolutionary fathers and framers of the Constitution were drawing on precedents and political theories from earlier republics around the world and throughout history. Most recently, the impact of Hebrew republicanism has been rediscovered by the work of Eran Shalev and Eric Nelson.<sup>632</sup> More commonly understood is the influence of classical Roman political theory and history on the development of America demonstrated in Shalev's *Rome on Western Shores*, in which he argues that the influence of classical Rome did not fade with the Revolution but persisted as a consistent source of inspiration and model to reinterpret and redeploy for the modern world throughout the early republic.<sup>633</sup> Moreover, Caroline Winterer has shown that in the antebellum period, the influence of ancient Greece on American intellectual life began to overtake that of Rome.<sup>634</sup>

The same process of contesting the meaning of republicanism through historical example and

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<sup>631</sup> Although Eric Nelson has recently argued that the struggle was primarily against the English Parliament, rather than King George III and subsequently, royalist theory had a more significant impact upon the role of the President than historians have previously realized, the reality remained that the trappings of the hereditary monarchy with much of its protocol, ritual, and fanfare were dispensed with. Eric Nelson, *The Royalist Revolution: Monarchy and the American founding*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>632</sup> Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*, and Shalev *American Zion*.

<sup>633</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, and Richard, *The Founders and the Classics*.

<sup>634</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 4, 76.

precedent also took place in the South, where, for example, debates over the utility of classical education raged as the country moved through the antebellum period and into the Civil War. Advocates of traditional classical learning viewed knowledge of Latin and Greek as central to forming a patrician class of virtuous republican men who would govern and rule in the South with the qualities they had learned and gleaned from the best of ancient literature.<sup>635</sup> When the Confederacy was formed following the slew of secessions from the Union in 1860-61, it was also constituted as a republic. However, it was envisioned as a republic in accordance with Southern concepts of state rights and federal authority. The centrality of racial slavery to Southern society meant that any view of a republic had to take account of the continuing existence of hierarchy, order, and the continuation of the status quo. Southern republicanism prized the freedom of representatives rather than direct democracy; national rights over human rights; conservative Protestant civic virtue, honor, and the maintenance of property law (including ownership of human labor), particularly as it pertained to inherited rights.<sup>636</sup> The South could look back on historical examples of republics in the past and see elements to be emulated or warnings to be avoided. In this way, it was believed that their own enterprise could have the world's most effective and correct system of republicanism. Now that the Confederacy had severed itself from the Union, it had the chance to put into practice the beliefs regarding its distinctive form of republicanism prior to the War.

The Protestant Churches of the South echoed this Southern self-perception which enshrined republicanism as the best form of government when administered according to Southern values and norms, including the institution of slavery.<sup>637</sup> They struck at the chance to influence the moral character

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<sup>635</sup> For the contemporary debate, see "Classical Learning," *Writings of Hugh Swinton Lagaré Vol II* ed. Mary Swinton Lagaré (Charleston: Burges and James, 1845), 5-51; and "The Necessity of the Classics," *The Southern Quarterly Review* 10, no. 13 (July 1854): 145-167; and "A Plea for Classical Learning," *Southern Literary Messenger* 12, no. 1 (January 1846): 30-33. For the role of classics in creating an elite for republican rule, see Wayne Durrill's "The Power of Ancient Words: Classical Teaching and Social Change at South Carolina College, 1804-1860," *The Journal of Southern History* 65, no. 3 (August 1999): 469-498; and Timothy Williams, *Intellectual Manhood: University, Self and Society in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University North Carolina Press, 2015).

<sup>636</sup> The literature on republicanism in the South is extensive. Important works emphasize the agrarian nature of republicanism and the stress laid upon property ownership in opposition to Northern republicanism's industrial and free labor vision. Yeoman small landholders have been seen as particularly important in insisting on "Black slavery as the basis for White freedom." See Lacy K. Ford Jr, *The Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 52 and Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Harry L. Watson, "Conflict and Collaboration: Yeoman, Slaveholders and Politics in the Antebellum South," *Social History* 10, no. 3 (October 1985): 273-298; and Stephanie McCurry, "The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Pro-Slavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina," *The Journal of American History* 78, No. 4 (March 1992): 1245-1264; and *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>637</sup> In *American Covenant*, 18, Philip Gorski has described the difference between American Civil Religion and Religious

of the new would-be nation. The four major Protestant denominations of the South were each proud of the fact that their clergymen had been patriots in the American Revolution and had theologized and rationalized the removal of monarchy and the enthronement of republican ideology from the inception of America's history as a politically independent nation.<sup>638</sup> As a result, the four largest Protestant denominations in the South were fully vested in defending and upholding republicanism when the Confederacy was formed and the Civil War progressed. Southern ministers, as did statesmen and politicians, looked to former examples of republics to draw upon when conceiving their own notions of what a true republic should look like and how it should behave and function. In doing so, they helped form a usable past that worked as an example or heralded as a dire warning. In the past, republics had failed, which was a concern for intellectuals across the country, North and South. They feared the cycle of rise and decline experienced by historic republics and theorized how this could be avoided through slavery, moral virtue, or social reform.<sup>639</sup> Southern ministers joined in these conversations but relied on their knowledge of Biblical concepts of God's providence in punishing sins rather than classical cyclical ideas of history.

In this chapter, I will look at the Protestant minister's use of the classical republics, the Dutch Republic, and Revolutionary France.<sup>640</sup> This task requires several introductory observations before the chosen examples can be adequately examined. Firstly, the clergy was invested in republicanism, but only secondarily to their larger purposes as Christian bodies established for the worship of God and the furtherance of his Kingdom. Thus, while rhetoric regarding the position of the South in God's plans and the importance of the South in maintaining true republicanism could soar to dizzying heights of grandiosity, it was always rooted in a Christian interpretation of what a republic was or could be. Thus,

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Nationalism. "The American civil religion is fed by biblical as well as philosophical sources, specifically prophetic religion and civic republicanism," but that "religious nationalism draws only on biblical sources, particularly biblical tales of conquest and apocalypse." The nationalism espoused by Southern clergy was religious nationalism, but civic republicanism, historic republics, and the Bible also inspired it.

<sup>638</sup> Even the Episcopal church, which labored under the stigma of being the colonial established church in several Southern states and tending to have the most clergymen support the royalist cause, were beginning to overcome this negative legacy in the mind of Southern churchgoers and were beginning to see growth in the decades leading up to the Civil War while also being able to boast many decedents of prominent actors in the Revolution as clergymen in high profile leadership positions within their fold. Prominent examples include Francis Huger Rutledge, the First Bishop of Florida and a nephew of a signer of the Declarations of Independence. Christopher Edwards Gadsden, bishop of South Carolina during much of the antebellum period, and grandson of Christopher Gadsden, member of the continental congress and Brigadier General of the continental army, as well as the son and grandson of Robert Gibbs Barnwell, prominent South Carolina Politician and Revolutionary war lieutenant colonel.

<sup>639</sup> Dorothy Ross, *Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 31-32.

<sup>640</sup> Other historical republics were illustrative and informative for Southern discussions about the nature of the Confederacy, most significantly the republicanism of the German Revolution of 1848. However, this will only receive passing mention in this essay for reasons of scope. The Classical examples far outweigh other comparisons, and French and Dutch examples provided particularly fruitful sources of rhetoric. 1848 appears less often in sermons.

the simple political idea of a republic was not what clergy, broadly speaking, were intent on encouraging. Instead, they wanted to emphasize the Christian character of the people that made up the political entity of a Nation.

This leads to the second observation, ancient Greece and Rome (in at least their truly republican stages) existed before the New Testament expanded the gospel to the Gentiles and, thus, were pagan nations with “idolatrous” religious systems. This presented a potential problem for those whose primary desire was to inculcate Christian faith in the people of the Confederacy. This obstacle was approached in various ways, and consequently, there is some divergence in the use of the history of the classical republics. Rather, there were various attempts to deploy Roman and Greek history within a Christian framework where the lessons to be learned could be derived from the various roles within historical narratives assigned to different contemporary groups at different times. For example, the North could be a stand-in for the Vandals or corrupt Rome, depending on the point being made. Also, the morality of the pre-Christian world received differing responses depending on the desired point to be made. Therefore, Moses Hoge could say to his congregation, “there was such a thing as patriotism, integrity, and honor among the citizens of the ancient republics, long before Christianity began to diffuse its benign influences over the earth.” He believed that there were “classical and even Pagan names which stand forth prominent and luminous on the historic page, commanding the admiration of all generations.”<sup>641</sup> While George Howe, from the same denomination as Hoge and with remarkably similar theological and social views, could draw the opposite point to make for his congregation. “You would blush at the morals of Cato, the Senator, and Socrates, the wise. In Christian countries, there may be vile pollution, but it is not sanctioned by our religion. Not so in pagan lands.”<sup>642</sup>

This conundrum was often set aside as the lesson to be learned from classical antiquity focused not on these pagan republics' specific beliefs but rather the concept of the relatedness of the state and religion or the inter-relatedness of the actions of a people and their god. Issac Taylor Tichenor exemplified this when he argued, “For centuries the governments of Christendom have been more godless than the heathen empires of antiquity. They consulted the will of their imaginary gods in the affairs of state. Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome sent forth their thronging legions in obedience to the will of their gods.” This was something worthy of emulation for Tichenor, he continued, “But nations professing to be Christians have made war for the most unholy purposes, and with-out the

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<sup>641</sup> Hoge, *The Christian statesman*, 9.

<sup>642</sup> Rev. George Howe, *Proceedings of the State Bible Convention of South Carolina, held at Columbia, Sept. 17 and 18, 1862, with a sermon preached before the convention* (Columbia, SC: Southern Guardian Steam-Power Press, 1862), 28.

slightest reference to the will of God.”<sup>643</sup> It is, therefore, the republic from the past that relates its actions to its faith that is being held up as an example.

Finally, the jump from Greece and Rome to modern examples, primarily France, may seem arbitrary. However, to the Southern mind, it was not so; *The Central Presbyterian* of Jan 1864 informed its readers that the North had a “government akin to that of Rome under the Caesars or France under the Directory, nominally a radical democracy, actually ruthless and bloody military despotism.”<sup>644</sup> The empires of Rome and France were often listed next to each other, and their dictators, Caesar and Napoleon, were cited together as a regular trope. The emphasis on republics in history tied into another revealing element of the psyche of the Southern churches; in their fear of anarchy, and loss of stability and order, they saw in history the continual patterns of rise and fall, a cycle of growth and destruction. The causes of the rise and fall of societies were faith and obedience to God on the rise, but then sin, decadence, abuse of power, or disobedience to God on the decline. France and Rome displayed the dangers of republics unguarded by true faith and principle. Both went too far and, as a result, fell apart into something altogether undesirable. Thus, the Southern churches' belief in the rise and fall of republics and what their belief in the cyclical nature of history can reveal about the church and its place in conceptualizing the Confederacy will form another section in this chapter.

### *The Influence of Classicism*

Writing about the influence of Rome in the Revolutionary period of America's history, Eran Shalev has observed for the founding generation, “the world of the ancient Mediterranean was as vivid and recognizable as the world in which they were living; that classical heroes such as Cincinnatus and Cicero and villains such as Catiline and Jugurtha were meaningful and familiar figures.”<sup>645</sup> Thus the classical republics enjoyed a level of historical authority, Shalev argues.

“Patriots constructed their revolutionary present through the histories of Greece and Rome in remarkable ways, in various contexts, and to diverse ends. Revolutionaries referred to the venerated ancients in their private moments and public performances. They appealed to the classics for consolation, justification, and validation as they experienced an intense intellectual and emotional relationship with the narratives and heroes of antiquity. Invoking the inspiring examples of ancient republics was a vital tool

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<sup>643</sup> Dill, *Isaac Taylor Tichenor*, 100.

<sup>644</sup> *The Central Presbyterian*, January 7, 1864, 1.

<sup>645</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, 2.



for American orators and writers, who provided examples of the virtuous ancients and emphasized their relevance to the American situation.”<sup>646</sup>

This vivid and lively relationship Americans had with the classical world was traditionally seen to be a facet of the Revolutionary and Enlightenment world inhabited by the generation of the founding fathers, that then decreased in significance as, in the course of the early nineteenth century, the country moved its attention towards its own national myths. However, recently, C. J. Richard has called the antebellum period the *Golden Age of Classics in America* and argued that “The truth is that antebellum Americans of all sections of the country continued to use the classics in the same way that the founding generation had used them, as a favored source of symbols, knowledge, and ideas.”<sup>647</sup> Edwin Miles has further argued that this was true nowhere more than in the old South.<sup>648</sup>

Ministers were also involved in the “construction of their...present through the histories of Greece and Rome.” What is more, ministers were in a privileged position to do so. Schools and colleges which many prominent ministers would have attended in the influential years of youth were said by C. J. Richard to have “resounded with the echoes of Homer, Virgil, and Horace.”<sup>649</sup> The requirements for Presbyterian and Episcopal clergy included the knowledge of classical languages.<sup>650</sup> By the Civil War, Methodists and Baptists were beginning to place a higher premium on a similar level of knowledge for the education of their ministers. Furthermore, the church histories used in seminaries often involved extensive excursions into the culture and world of the classical world in which the New Testament was composed.<sup>651</sup> The renaissance of interest in the classics in the South was reflected in the

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<sup>646</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>647</sup> Carl J. Richard, *The Golden Age of the Classics in America, Greece, Rome, and the Antebellum United States*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>648</sup> Edwin A. Miles, “The Old South and the Classical World,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 48, no. 3 (July 1971): 258–75. I follow this belief and the proposition of Reinhold Meyer that it is the “*Function*” of this classical knowledge in society, more than merely noting its existence, which is the historian's task. Reinhold Meyer. *Classica Americana: the Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 19.

<sup>649</sup> Richard, *The Golden Age*, 3.

<sup>650</sup> *Catalogue of the officers, Students and alumni of the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia, Fairfax Co., Virginia* (Alexandria: J. B. Chandler printer, 1843), 8; *Columbia Theological Seminary Catalogue 1858* (Columbia: Theological Seminary 1858), 16-17.

<sup>651</sup> The *Southern Presbyterian Review* of July 1862 contained an article by the Rev. B.H. Boccock entitled *The Divine Purpose in the Classics*. He argued that the “classics seem to be an interlude between the two testaments...if we regard the rise of the nations of the world as arranged in a scheme of divine providence, it is difficult to believe that this exquisite classical culture, which arose in Greece and Italy during this period...had no meaning in such [a] scheme.” Aware that this view could be open to misinterpretation, he did make clear that “true the Hebrews were the chosen people, the Greeks were not. “However, this did not mean that God was not working through them; rather, he went on, “all nations, then, as now, rightly belonged to Jehovah.” Boccock even suggested it is better to devote oneself to “Sophocles and Euripides than to Byron or Scott,” and claimed there was “little more idolatry taught, and not half as much apt to be imbibed, from the pages of these two Greeks, than from the pages of these two Britons.” In taking this viewpoint, Boccock imbued the classics and the world of the period in which they were first composed with authority, not

architecture in which the Protestants enacted their most sacred patterns of worship.<sup>652</sup> Rollin Osterweis has observed that “Between 1835 and 1860, Charleston adopted the classic columns with enthusiasm—the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians all erecting Greek temples for their houses of worship.” He sees this as a “response to a romantic mood, in which the enthusiasm for Greece and the cult of the Athenian democracy were ever present.”<sup>653</sup>

The classical world also had relevance to the South because it was a slave society. C. J. Richard has shown that “Antebellum Southerners appealed to the classical heritage in support of slavery” and that they “relied on Aristotle’s defense of slavery and on the argument that the institution had served as the foundation of classical civilization to convince both themselves and others that slavery was not just a necessary evil but a positive good.”<sup>654</sup> Yet, the use of the classical world in defense of slavery was sometimes ambiguous and inconclusive. The empires of the classical world had fallen after all, despite their maintenance of slavery, a point made by the Episcopalian Charles Pickney made when preaching in Charleston in 1861. He informed his congregation that, “The Chaldean monarchy, the Roman empire, the Greek republics...were all slave-holding countries. But they have all fallen to pieces notwithstanding.”<sup>655</sup> He believed this demonstrated that the faithfulness to God’s word of any given society is the indicator of a successful system of government, not necessarily or simply the presence of slavery. The racial nature of Southern slavery also set it apart from slavery as practiced in the classical world. Thus, direct comparisons were fraught with potential difficulty, a fact which did not always deter pro-slavery advocates.<sup>656</sup> The classical world remained at the forefront of the historical consciousness of the South. Southern clergymen were part of this culture and thought within it, and as a result, used the republics of the classical world in their sermons and literature. The turn to the classical

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quite inspired, but under the direct hand of God and for his purposes. Rev J. H. Bocock, “The divine purpose in the classics,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 15, no. 1 (July 1862): 31, 39.

<sup>652</sup> Richard Lounsbury, “Ludibria Rerum Mortalium: Charlestonians and their classics,” *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston*, ed. Michael O’Brian and David Moltke-Hansen (Knoxville, TN: University of Knoxville Press 1986), 325-372.

<sup>653</sup> Osterweis, *Romanticism, and Nationalism in the Old South*, 122.

<sup>654</sup> Richard, *The Golden Age*, xii.

<sup>655</sup> Pickney *Nebuchadnezzar’s Fault and Fall*.

<sup>656</sup> James Warley Miles argued that classical slavery and contemporary slavery simply could not be equated, so drawing lessons from the ending of one for the other were impossible. He reasoned that “Greek and Roman slaves were White so naturally when freed they bettered themselves, not so with the St. Domingos” he argued, “They degraded back into barbarism.” Late in his discourse on *The Relation Between the Races at the South*, he explained “The servitude of the negro to the white race is a relation tending to, and involving the mutual attachment and benefit of both races.” As evidence of the truth of this claim, and the fact that it was a natural state of affairs, he asked his readers to “compare the history of the untrusted helots with that of the faithful Carolina Negroes during the Revolutionary War” the trustworthiness of the Black population in the South was proof enough for Warley-Miles that the Southern form of slavery was superior to the institution’s ancient incarnations. James Warley Miles, *The relation between the races at the South* (Charleston, SC: Presses of Evans & Cogswell, 1861), 8-11.

world had a further benefit to clergy in the fact that its use contained a streak of antimodernism, the continued use of classical languages and knowledge of classical literature and history was seen as a bulwark against the excesses of modernity, and a way to tether society back to its tried and tested forms of knowledge. It was another way for clergy to navigate the world of change by appealing to something old, reassuring, and non-threatening.<sup>657</sup>

### *The Roman Republic*

Of all the republics that have existed in the course of world history, Rome has loomed the largest in the historical imagination. It was admired for its statecraft, political power, military might, and artistic and engineering achievements. Rome's relevance to the American nation is immediately apparent in its visual culture, arts of all forms, and political theory. Rome had produced the model and the archetype of many of the things that Americans could conceptualize and use in discourse. Lawmakers and codifiers, rhetoricians and orators, historians and poets, generals and soldiers, villains and tyrants, betrayers and conspirators. The examples to choose from when making an illustration or moral point were seemingly endless. Moreover, they were widely accepted and known and acted as a shared set of stories and characters upon which to draw. The near-ubiquitous consumption of a book like Gibbons's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* points to this reality.<sup>658</sup> Furthermore, cheap editions of translated works were beginning to be readily snatched up by an eager reading public, meaning that the classics were no longer reserved for those with the elite learning required to read them in their original languages.<sup>659</sup>

Paul Quigley, in his work on Southern nationalism, has demonstrated that the South saw warnings to be heeded from Rome and the fall of nations.<sup>660</sup> I contend that the churches, in particular, had a complex and seemingly conflicting relationship with the Roman Republic. Rome's Republican heyday had occurred long before it was Christian, and thus churchmen found themselves drawing lessons about virtue from a pagan society. Thus, during the Civil War, ministers did not turn to Roman history in a uniform or homogeneous way. Instead, the uses ministers found to make of the many

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<sup>657</sup> Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 4, argues that the classics could function as a form of antimodernism.

<sup>658</sup> O'Brian's *Conjectures of Order* charts multiple instances of Gibbon being recommended, read, discussed, and praised in the Antebellum period. For a critique from a clergyman of Gibbons's negative view of Christianity, see T. V. Moore's "Christianity and the Fall of the Roman Empire," *Southern Literary Review* 20, no. 1 (January 1854): 1-5.

<sup>659</sup> Richard, *The Golden Age*, xi.

<sup>660</sup> Paul Quigley, *Shifting Grounds: Nationalism and the American South, 1848–1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

aspects of Rome's past were multifaceted and could be almost contradictory, but were always interpreted in a framework that highlighted a desired public religiosity as well as God's agency in history. Uses of Roman history centered around the need for the Confederacy to maintain its proper relationship with God to succeed and flourish.<sup>661</sup> The South Carolina preacher, Edward Reed, demonstrated this in a sermon delivered in 1861 entitled *A People Saved by the Lord*. He argued that all peoples “whose history is the worlds, were eminently religious.”<sup>662</sup> Religion and religiosity are praised in the abstract; Rome is seen as a worthy nation that made history because it had the proper relation of religion to the state and the right place of religion in its culture and, presumably, the daily lives of its population. This is Reed's point even though the religion being practiced was not Christianity. For Reed and other Southern clergymen, therefore, Rome can be seen as a type that was fulfilled in the Confederacy; in this logic, Rome was good for its day in its religiosity, but that virtue is fulfilled and perfected in the Christian nature of the Confederacy that can be the more perfect and righteous version of Rome by being a Christian republic that does not fall or fade.

Rome's pagan yet somehow virtuous past could also work in another way for ministers in the South; to shame the Christian South into outperforming the virtue achieved by the non-Christian Romans. Thomas Atkinson, Episcopal Bishop of North Carolina, employed this technique when he opined upon the causes of the Confederacy's “national troubles” by reminding his hearers that “Divorce, even in heathen Rome, was not known for five centuries of its history; but in some of the States of our Christian country divorces may be obtained for any cause, or for no cause.”<sup>663</sup> This was a call for the Confederacy to do better; if even pagan Rome could outlaw divorce, how had the Confederacy sunk to a level lower than a pagan nation? Atkinson wished his audience to understand that no republic with such low moral standards could expect to enjoy God's favor for long. Stephen Elliott engaged in a similar technique when, in his sermon *Ezra's Dilemma*, he compared the early days of the Confederacy to early Republican Rome. He retold a story of a gaping chasm that appeared in the forum due to Rome's pride and sins. The wrath of the gods was kindled against them, and a pure sacrifice was demanded. This event had a lesson for the South; in the words of Elliott, “Has not this

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<sup>661</sup> This use of Rome's past was perpetuated at a time of archaeological discovery and advancement in the understanding of the history of the Mediterranean world, enthusiastically consumed by the church, as is seen in the Central Presbyterian of the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1864, which ran an article about the recent findings at the archaeological site of Pompeii displaying an antiquarian interest that ran deeper than mere curiosity. What was on display was a desire to bring alive the world of the early church and perhaps even get a glimpse of the times in which Jesus himself operated “Relics of the Past,” *The Central Presbyterian* September 1, 1864, 4.

<sup>662</sup> Reed, *A People Saved by The Lord*, 6.

<sup>663</sup> Thomas Atkinson, *“On the causes of our national troubles”: A Sermon, Delivered in St. James' Church, Wilmington, N.C.* (Wilmington, NC: Printed at the “Herald” Book and Job Office, 1861), 13.

legend of ancient Rome... a deep and rich moral for us at this critical moment! We have freely cast into the black abyss of this war our wealth, our treasures, our children, but have we sacrificed ourselves?"<sup>664</sup> Elliott was able to take this pagan myth and, without too much reinterpretation, convert it for use in a Christian sermon. The lesson was clear for his audience, self-sacrifice and the need for atonement for sins could translate from classical to biblical metaphors. The equating of Republican Rome and the Confederacy also revolved around themes of purity and sinfulness; the innocence of early republics was a constant preoccupation, as we will see below, that needed to be preserved through self-sacrifice in order to stave off judgment for sins.

At its heart, Rome was a military nation, martial and severe, with examples of victories and heroic exploits on every page of its epic history. The distance in time and the status of the literature of the Latin tongue, as well as visual art styles, meant that Roman violence was sanitized, safe, reassuringly dramatic, and heroic. In the context of ongoing warfare, which was brutal, impersonal, and devoid of the pathos of classical drama, the Roman examples could provide a way to elevate the position of martial practices in the Southern mind. Charles Minnigerode is an example of a Southern minister who used Roman military history liberally. In his sermon *He that Believeth shall Not make Haste*, delivered early in 1865, he still saw the hope of Confederate victory. He turned to the example of Rome in the face of defeat by Pyrrhus and was nearly convinced to surrender by Cineas; it came down to the heroics of oratory. Minnigerode explained that "The dying patriotism of Appius saved Rome. May his spirit descend upon our Senate, our rulers, our people!" Here he modestly called upon others to have Appius spirit, although he clearly sees himself filling that role as one giving an oration. Roman history was replete with examples of oration and rhetoric forging the course of significant events in melodramatic scenes. These were ripe for self-conscious imitation; clergymen, who had little in common with the pagan nature of Rome, could still admire and emulate heroes of Roman antiquity through their shared role as public speakers. Minnigerode also gave examples of martial valor and masculine honor from the annals of Roman history that were calculated to rouse the pride of the South and stir them on to victory. He declared, "[Rome's] stern and unyielding patriotism in the best days of the Republic, and when struggling for her existence, has never been surpassed." which was followed by a lengthy and detailed recounting of the Roman experience in the Punic wars, designed to draw out parallels and lessons for the Confederacy.

History also recorded fierce enemies of the Roman Republic, so any narrative that placed the

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<sup>664</sup> Elliott, *Ezra's Dilemma*, 19.

Confederacy in the position of the Romans as the heroes of history could very easily find a part to be played by the North if the form of the villains of the piece. The conceit was given more credence by the fact that many of Rome's enemies were also invaders or could be portrayed as aggressors. Rome's early arch-enemy, in the prime of its republican glory, was Hannibal, the Carthaginian who famously made it across the Alps and to the gates of Rome. There was an obvious parallel in the Southern mind as Northern Union troops pushed further into their territory during the latter stages of the Civil War. The *North Carolina Presbyterian*, in early 1864, ran an article titled *Occupation, not Conquest*, which encouraged its readers with the historical fact that Hannibal managed to get as far as Rome itself, the eternal city but was still defeated.<sup>665</sup> The article, therefore, invites the reader to see in current events the repetition of past glories that can and will be recreated by the Confederacy, who can rise to the heroic, virtuous victory exemplified in the past by Rome. It was also an easy rhetorical technique deployed frequently in the South to compare the North to “barbarians.” Stephen Elliott compared the North to the forces of Attila the Hun and Thomas Smyth called the North Goths and Vandals.<sup>666</sup> This is a representative sample of a nearly constant phenomenon. By making the equivalence between the barbarian invasions of the past and the North, Southern ministers could evoke centuries of myth-making and image curation that made Vandals, Huns, and Goths a byword for barbarity. In the ear of the hearer, it immediately conjured up the exact image of the North as ruthless invaders, devoid of humanity, made into a caricature of all that is bad in contrast to the excellent and noble Confederate Romans. Moreover, the barbarians of history were pagan, or at best heretical Christians; this also played into the Southern narrative of Northern infidelity seeking to subdue and destroy Southern biblical Christianity. by imitation of the Romans and performing its patriotic duty, the South, it was argued, could rid themselves of the foreign invader and continue their own *Pax Romana* and pursue civic virtue in their slaveholding society.

Presenting the Confederacy as the new Rome did not only mean equating the glories of the one with the other but also entailed warnings and potential errors to avoid. According to standard Victorian opinions about classical history, Rome had fallen due to its increasing degeneracy. Stephen Elliott cautioned Christians across the South “It is true that Nero fiddled while Rome was burning; ...that petty court quarrels occupied the time of the degenerate Romans of the Western Empire while Alaric was sweeping over Italy and ravaging up to the very gates of the eternal city!” Then he asked them, “Are

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<sup>665</sup> “Occupation not Conquest,” *North Carolina Presbyterian*, Feb 17, 1864.

<sup>666</sup> Elliott *Ezra's Dilemma*, 25. Smyth, *The Battle of Fort Sumter*, 380, 387.

we about to imitate these wretched examples?”<sup>667</sup> The true course of action for the South should instead be reliance on God and strong resistance to the invading force. Rome had made a fatal error; decadence, petty squabbles and infighting, and sins of various kinds were all responsible for its decline and subsequent demise; in order to avoid the same ends, Southern ministers could offer their council, in imitation of classical orators of old, to point to a way through the war and out safely to victory and the continuance of God’s plan for the Christian people of the Confederacy.

When relying on Roman precedents, the roles could be reversed, and Rome could become a stand-in for overbearing power, tyranny, oppression, corrupt politicians, military dictatorship, and instability. *The Richmond Christian Advocate* equated the throwing of a ball by Mrs. Lincoln with the infamous frivolous neglect of duty displayed by the arch-villain Nero with the title “Fiddling Nero and Burning Rome.”<sup>668</sup> This simple equation highlighted the self-absorption, lack of sensitivity, decadence, and ineptitude of the North in one sentence. The most common way to use Roman history in defaming the North was to turn to how the Roman Republic was overtaken by dictatorial power and degenerated further as the centuries went on and emperors were beholden to the violent will of the praetorian guard. Benjamin Morgan Palmer reminded Robert J Breckenridge “that one Rome is enough for the world” after recalling the usurpation perpetrated by the praetorian guards. At another time, he warned the South Carolina Assembly that if the South failed to do all it could to win the war, then “the history of ancient Rome's subjection to the Praetorian guards will be reenacted, amidst the scorn and derision of all mankind.”<sup>669</sup> Moses Hoge saw in the North a parallel with the fact that “The forms of the Roman Republic...its Senate, its Tribunes, and its Consuls remained for ages after the Government had passed into the hands of an absolute Executive, supported by Praetorian Guards.”<sup>670</sup> In his view, the same thing had occurred in his day; the North claimed to be a republic but had fallen into despotism.<sup>671</sup> The only way to avoid this slide in the minds of Southern ministers was to maintain a vital and fervent piety in the population and to populate the offices of power from a Christian class of educated land-owning elites.

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<sup>667</sup> Stephen Elliott *Gideon's Water Lappers*, 15.

<sup>668</sup> “Fiddling Nero and Burning Rome,” *Richmond Christian Advocate*, April 24, 1862, 1.

<sup>669</sup> Palmer, *A Discourse before the General Assembly of South Carolina*, 12.

<sup>670</sup> Hoge, *The Christian Statesman*, 16.

<sup>671</sup> Lest the South be complacent, Edwin T. Winkler admonished his congregants that they should be vigilant against allowing this to happen to themselves, but it was too late for the North. He argued, “All history proves that in military affairs a willful self-conceit, and a mutinous insubordination, involve ruin— a disorganization and defeat to the army itself— and to the nation a Praetorian tyranny worse than pestilence or famine.” *Duties of the Citizen Soldier*, 1.1

Ancient Greece had lent Rome its forms of sculpture, architecture, art, and philosophy, could boast the military exploits of the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, and could claim the title of the cradle of democracy. Despite initially lagging behind Rome in terms of cultural influence for Americans, it is now agreed that by the antebellum period, Greek ceased to be the “neglected stepsister” of Latin and, with the help of the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s, the impact and influence of ancient Greece on American artistic and intellectual life increased considerably.<sup>672</sup> This new status for Greek classical history and culture is seen in no more pronounced way than the Greek revival architecture that abounded across the South in the form of magnificently columned plantations, courthouses, and town halls. Although since Tertullian's oft-quoted disparaging remark about Greek learning “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem,” the church had had an ambiguous relationship with ancient Greece, by the nineteenth century, for most, the feeling was one of admiration more than animosity.<sup>673</sup> Ministers could, therefore, use the history and mythology of Greece to illustrate how the Christian South perfected the pagan example of the Greek republics. Joseph Atkinson, in his sermon *God the Giver of Victory and Peace*, exhorted his hearers and subsequent readers,

“If Socrates could talk of transports of joy at the prospect of seeing Palamedes, Ajax and other heroes of antiquity in a future world--how should the Christian feel when he looks forward to an everlasting abode, not a transient meeting with the saints of all ages--with his Christian friends who have fallen in his defense--and with Christ Himself, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”<sup>674</sup>

Southerners were encouraged in this way to have a better hope, a surer foundation, and a higher expectation than these illustrious pagans, who, despite not being Christian, had something to teach in their attitude towards the afterlife.

The South was at war, however, and the primary usage of the history of the ancient Greeks was to refer to their impressive military victories. The common perception of Greek history was civilization defeating barbarism and a story, resonant in the South, of the numerically smaller defeating

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<sup>672</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 168.

<sup>673</sup> Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol III, Latin Christianity: Its Founder Tertullian* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1903), 246.

<sup>674</sup> Atkinson, *God the Giver of Victory and Peace*, 15.



overwhelming force. In his sermon, *God our Strength and Refuge in this War*, Thomas Verner taught that God could use war to perfect and develop a people, the principle as he expounded it was that,

“War tends to break up this mammon-worship, effeminacy and selfish expediency, to show that there are nobler things to be contended for in life than mere material advancement; that the chief end of man is not to make money; that there are great principles of belief, and great elements of moral character which underlie all human prosperity.”

These things from which to turn were sins in which the North was complicit, and the South had to avoid. Verner continued to give historical examples, stating, “It was thus that the Greek republics attained their athletic sinew and symmetry, and quickened into its beautiful life their immortal genius. And it has been thus that God has caused the roots of every enduring nationality to strike deep, and grow strong, as its branches have wrestled with the storms of war.”<sup>675</sup> Through this Civil War, the South could hope to be formed by God into a nation as historically significant but more holy and pure than the Greeks.

Athens was the most prominent city-state of Greece and could boast the world's most famous democracy. Charles Minnigerode saw in its history during the Peloponnesian war parallels illustrative for the Confederacy's war effort, “Remember how Athens gave up her city for the salvation of Greece, transported her women and children to Ægina and Troezen, and sent her men to man 'the wooden walls' which the Oracle had pronounced their safety, and in which they gained the battle of Salamis.”<sup>676</sup> Tactical sacrifice would be necessary; retreat was not defeat; these were principles that were repeated ad nauseam in various forms around the South, suffering setbacks and reverses that were not part of its original belief in a quick and easy victory as vindication of the right of their cause. The Peloponnesian war also saw Pericles deliver his stirring oration at the funeral of the citizens of Athens; *The Southern Churchman* quoted him as saying of them, “they place not so great a confidence in the preparations and artifices of war, as in the native warmth of their souls, impelling them to action.”<sup>677</sup> The South, too, could learn from this not to put too much faith in their military strength, which was

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<sup>675</sup> Rev. Thomas R. Verner, *God is our Refuge and Strength in this War: A Discourse Before the Congregations of the First and Second Presbyterian Churches, on the Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, Appointed by President Davis, Friday, Nov. 15, 1861* (Richmond, VA: W. H. White, 1861), 7-8.

<sup>676</sup> Minnigerode, *He Who Believes Shall Not Make Haste*, 12.

<sup>677</sup> *The Southern Churchman* 8, no.6 (September 1861): 301.

inferior to that of the North, but in something more profound within themselves that could not be defeated by sheer force.

Ancient Greece faced annihilation from a superior force and had to rally around itself to fight for its noble cause against the forces of barbarism in the Persian wars. This was the narrative of the Persian wars presented by Herodotus that had gone down in history and reached almost mythical status. Southern preachers saw this as analogous to the Confederacy's conflict with the North; principles were at stake, even civilization itself. This epic struggle served as a picture to encourage the beleaguered South. Thomas Smyth made this point by comparing the North to the armies of Xerxes and reminding his congregation, "The battle is not to the swift nor by might and strength. The battle is the Lord's, and to whosoever he will victory is given...at Marathon, 10,000 Greeks defeated 600,000 Persians and slew 6,000 of them with a loss of only 192."<sup>678</sup> Here he relied on the belief that God's hand is in even the battles of two heathen armies arrayed against each other. He borrowed the authority of historical example to show the principle he was trying to expound; that the South can win against incredible odds. If God wills an outcome, this is predetermined, and his children are to have faith in this reality.

The second most famous and influential Greek City state was Sparta. Although not a republic, Sparta became a society to reflect on with a necessarily severe Christianization and sanitation of its history. It entailed emphasizing and praising the warrior ethic and asceticism of the Spartan nation, also a slave-holding society, without referencing the elements of Spartan society that would have been at odds with Southern Christian values and social norms. Instead, Sparta could be recreated in the rhetoric deployed by ministers to evoke Christian civic republican virtues.<sup>679</sup> Sparta also had one of the few historical examples that Southern ministers regularly applied directly to women. The Spartan Women were said to have been particularly proud of the military exploits of their children and are quoted as saying to their sons going off to war, "Come back on your shield or carrying it." This devotion to the military cause and desire to see their sons behave like "men" and even to sacrifice them for the cause of victory was readily connected to the experience of Southern women. For example, *The Southern Presbyterian* wrote, "The heroism and endurance of the Spartan matrons have been so far eclipsed by the self-sacrificing spirit of Southern Ladies, that in future lime they will scarcely occupy a place on the

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<sup>678</sup> Smyth, *The War of the South Vindicated*, 693.

<sup>679</sup> The Spartans also afforded the world one of the most infamous examples of heroic defeat and fortitude in the face of overwhelming odds in the battle of Thermopylae. This story could be used to stir up resilience or teach a lesson, as did Rev. J. Harris, reminding his readers that "Leonidas and his three hundred brave comrades were defending a just and righteous cause, and yet they perished at Thermopylae." Harris *The True Soldiers Spiritual Armor*, 13, 17.

page of history.”<sup>680</sup> In this way, the proper spheres of the genders were kept appropriate for the South, the woman, wife, or mother at home, domesticated, and the male off to war, externally oriented and protecting his family and sacred honor. However, at the same time, the female has a role to play in an intrinsically martial pursuit. The story of the Spartan mothers could also lend an ideal feminization to the state as when Benjamin Morgan Palmer said, “But to-day the State, like the Spartan mother of old, receives through us one of her noblest sons upon his shield, and pours out her grief upon his venerated form.”<sup>681</sup> This choice by Southern ministers to use the classical image of feminine heroism rather than turn to Christian examples or martyrs from the early church is indicative of clergy who were in tune with current aesthetic trends and dominant cultural imagery. This language was employed by orators and politicians and reproduced in literature such as Augusta Jane Evans *Macaria*.<sup>682</sup> Minister's use of these tropes and images shows a desire to encourage civic virtue and devotion to the nation approaching a civil religion from more than simply biblical precedents.

### *Rise and Fall of Republics*

Paul Quigley has argued that “the fall of the ancient republics...enjoyed a particularly powerful hold on the antebellum historical imagination,” showing how intellectuals turned to these historical examples to draw lessons for the South in avoiding similar catastrophes themselves.<sup>683</sup> Eugene Genovese similarly has highlighted the South's obsession with the classical cyclical view of history, which saw the rise and fall of nations as part of an ongoing outplaying of history, yet at the same time notes that the South “embraced the broadside attack on the cyclical theory launched by Augustine and other Christian thinkers.” What resulted was the attempt to create a “cycle-breaking South” which depended on “the Christian Character” of the society.<sup>684</sup> Southern ministers engaged in this project with enthusiasm and devotion during the Civil War, seeing their role as a prophetic voice that could call upon these historical examples and reorient the religious life of the South, avoiding moral decay and perusing Godliness to bring about ultimate victory. However, Genovese, focusing on the South's intellectual elite in its

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<sup>680</sup> *The Southern Presbyterian*, June 12, 1862, 1.

<sup>681</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *Address Delivered at the Funeral of Maxcy Gregg* (Columbia, SC: Southern Guardian Steam Power Press, 1863), 3.

<sup>682</sup> Augusta Jane Evans. *Macaria* (New York: John Bradburn, 1864), 416.

<sup>683</sup> Quigley, *History and Southern Nationalism*, 22.

<sup>684</sup> Eugene D. Genovese, “King Solomon’s Dilemma—and the Confederacy’s.” *Southern Cultures* 10, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 56.

entirety, not ministers and churches specifically, overemphasizes the extent to which there existed a contradiction and conflict between Christian and classical views of history in the Southern mind, which needed to be reconciled. For most, if not all, Southern ministers, however, their conception of cycles of history seen in the rise and fall of nations was not derived from classical theory as much as from Old Testament history and theological conceptions of how God deals with nations in human history.

Benjamin Morgan Palmer prominently displayed the conception of God's dealings with nations, evidenced in the sermons of multiple Southern ministers throughout the antebellum and Civil War period. He theorized that a nation is, in a sense, like a person before God “with responsibilities, duties, and obligations,” and crucially, “is held to a strict providential reckoning.” As nations could not be saved or condemned in the afterlife for their sins, their punishments and rewards were meted out in the here and now.<sup>685</sup> With this view in mind, the task was simply to identify how the Confederacy was failing to fulfill its obligations, duties, and responsibilities before God. The question was asked, time and time again, what sins needed to be repented of in order to stave off judgment and enjoy blessing? This sin could be various or multifaceted; in his sermon, *The Word of God a Nations Life*, George Pierce argued that it was “opulence,” which he felt “has always been one of the most active causes of individual degeneracy and of national corruption.”<sup>686</sup> Whatever the specific sin, be it pride, corruption, or decadence, one thing was clear: the Confederacy was in its infancy and was ripe for attack from evil forces; its task was to avoid falling into sins early in its life that could fester and grow until decline and fall set in. Rev M. W. Wheelwright cautioned the infant Confederacy “The God of Nations will give us an honorable place among the nations of the earth. A young people must be pure. Corruption in youth would ruin – kill before manhood was reached.”<sup>687</sup> Wheelwright saw this process as already having wreaked havoc on the young United States, which is why, in his opinion, the war was necessary. This was also the view of Thomas Atkinson in his discourse *Christian Duty in Present Times of Trouble*. He postulated that the sins that had led old empires to fall into ruin had been repeated and surpassed by the North; he declared, “Those old stories we have all read were outdone. Rome, corrupted by the conquest of Greece and Asia...was prophetic of our destiny. Our material prosperity, swift as was its advance, did not keep pace with our moral deterioration.”<sup>688</sup>

Moses Hoge put it this way “the profligacy of the people and the reckless tyranny of rulers; - have occasioned the downfall of the most powerful kingdoms and commonwealths of the world...Thus

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<sup>685</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *A Discourse before the General Assembly of South Carolina*, 3.

<sup>686</sup> George F. Pierce, *The Word of God a Nations Life*, 18.

<sup>687</sup> Wheelwright, *A Discourse Delivered to the Troops, Stationed at Gloucester Point*, 14.

<sup>688</sup> Thomas Atkinson, *Christian Duty in Present Times of Trouble*, (Wilmington, NC: Fulton & Price, 1861), 8.

fell the fairest land of the Muse, Home of Homer, of Pindar and Pericles...Thus fell majestic Rome.” In the view of Hoge, this process had repeated itself in his day, and with powerful effect, he finished his list of ancient states that had fallen by jumping to the present to observe “And thus fell what was once the noblest Confederacy over which the blue Heavens ever bent.” He was referring to the late United States, and warned “let the sad epitaphs inscribed on the tombs of departed nations admonish us of the causes of their decline and fall.” What was the cause from which the Confederacy could learn? Alfred Magill Randolph told his people that military defeat was not the cause of Rome's downfall, but “corruption” and the South should be cautious since, “all along the course of human history, governments have grown prosperous only to grow weak by corruption, and die the death of suicides.”<sup>689</sup> Since this was the case, a remedy was needed to break the cycle; A. B. Longstreet knew precisely what that could be. He believed the Confederacy had an immeasurably better chance than Greece or Rome at avoiding downfall; he told his congregation, “We have an unerring chart for our guidance, which they had not: and a power Omnipotent at the helm, that a single village, a single family, a single man may call into existence.” He would have his people search the scriptures and pray.<sup>690</sup>

*The Richmond Christian Advocate* provides an example of the most common way of addressing this question. It wrote, “It is a fact obvious to the most indifferent reader of history, that so long as any nation piously recognized the existence of God, and humbly submitted to his authority, acknowledging him in all their ways, they were prosperous and happy.” The answer was to acknowledge God, something ministers felt that the United States had not sufficiently done and that the Confederacy had admirably done but still could do better. This was especially true in light of the belief that when nations from history did not maintain a sufficient level of respect for God in their culture, “they invariably fell, ultimately, into adversity, disgrace, and ruin.” This is simultaneously a warning for the South and a description of the North. However, these lessons from history were not easy to receive; they required an extra exertion of piety or grace from God. Just weeks before the surrender of Lee at Appomattox, the *North Carolina Presbyterian* explained “that nations rise and fall, flourish and decay, according as their morality is complete or defective, is a truth, trite indeed, but valuable to all who would draw wisdom from the hard experience of former ages...Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage – what are they? They have passed away.”<sup>691</sup> The editor felt that these were still examples that could teach the Confederacy but that

<sup>689</sup> Randolph, *Address on the Day of Fasting and Prayer*, 9.

<sup>690</sup> A. B. Longstreet, *Fast Day Sermon Delivered in the Washington Street Methodist Episcopal Church, Columbia, S.C., June 13, 1861*. (Columbia, SC: Townsend & North, 1861), 8.

<sup>691</sup> “Defective Morality,” *North Carolina Presbyterian*, March 8, 1865, 2.

too often people had read history, felt the force of its lesson, but then proceeded to make precisely the same mistakes of which they were warned, and this is what the North had done in the mind of the Southern clergy, and was something that needed to be constantly reiterated as a warning in the pulpits of the South.

John Paris was keen to point out that the result of failure to learn the lessons of history and neglect of God in this world would lead to one thing: judgment. He listed Babylon, Nineveh, Tadmor, Persepolis, and Thebes as places whose greatness had been lost, then reminded his listeners, “Sparta has departed from the map of nations, and Athens is but the tomb of Athens that was. These have all sinned, and 'there is a God that judgeth in the Earth.’”<sup>692</sup> In this way, Southern ministers were able to deploy the authority of history to display the need for moral rectitude and reliance on God. Not simply scriptural warrant, which was to be expected and obeyed, but also that the principles within scripture played themselves out in real-time in the experience of the history of the world. The fall of Rome and the desolation of the eastern empires of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia were historical facts that required no leap of faith. The cause of their downfall was corruption, intrigue, and decadence, all things condemned in scripture and called sin. Therefore, the common view of the rise and fall of nations reinforced the scriptural view of Southern Christians and bolstered their trust in the interpretation of events offered by clergymen. In engaging in this process, the church was able to assert its theory for the victory of the South and the construction of a society that would break the cycle of rise and fall and bring in instead a Godly nation that would fulfill its providential mission and maintain slavery in order to bring about the millennium and the furtherance of the kingdom of God.

### *Republican France*

In September of 1848, *The Southern Presbyterian Review* ran an article on the *History of the Girondists* in which the author accused the French Revolution of leading “Directly to the most appalling exhibition of relentless depravity the world has ever witnessed.” he went on to claim that “Bloody Rome never excelled her hecatombs of living victims.” According to the review, France's sin was to reject natural authority and obedience to hierarchically structured relationships and exchange them

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<sup>692</sup> John Paris “*Funeral Discourse – Hokes bridge April 1<sup>st</sup> 1864*” Quoted in David Cheeseborough, *God Ordained this War*, 273.

instead, with radical egalitarianism. The author argued that the Bible requires obedience between masters and slaves, “Where is the democratic idea?” He asked, explaining, “Slavery is the great conservative balance wheel which...secures us the only possible liberty which can endure the rude pressure of a fierce democracy.”<sup>693</sup> This was a common view of Revolutionary France in the antebellum and Civil War South, seen as a particularly pertinent example of how republicanism can slide into unchecked democracy and tyranny. France was seen as the ultimate case study of what could go wrong when liberty, equality, and fraternity were made universal values apart from Christian influence and apart from regulated republicanism. As the war approached and as the fighting began, ministers claimed to observe in the North the worrying pattern of all that had gone wrong in the French example.

Such scenes observed in the French Revolution struck at the central fears of a Southern society desperate to maintain its hierarchically structured society which relied on systems of relational imbalance and subservience. This fear of societal collapse and upheaval could be intertwined with theological concerns and biblical rationales for slavery and social deference to morph the threat of the North into an arch-nemesis, satanic and demonic, endowed with supernatural animosity to the Godliness of the South. Stephen Elliott accused the government of the Union of being “as atheistic as France in her worst days of wild Revolution,”<sup>694</sup> and in another address, stated that “catching the echo of the French Revolution they set up liberty, equality, fraternity as their idols and dethroned the God of the Bible.”<sup>695</sup> Statements like this were calculated to show that the element that made the North and Revolutionary France similar and comparable was their devotion to equality and their radical removal of all distinction and forms of subservience, which in the slave-holding South, was heresy. This was true, as slavery, in their eyes, rested on the correct understanding of God's word, the very thing Elliott believed North and France had neglected, “the mad fervor of the French revolution had inclined men to think that liberty, as they termed licentiousness and anarchy, was the greatest blessing bestowed by God upon man.”<sup>696</sup>

The Baptist General Association of Virginia used the French Revolution to undermine the anti-slavery sentiment in the North, delegitimizing it in the eyes of the Christian South by association with something that was agreed to have been Godless. “We shall cite the French revolution with its reign of terror, to show how all the philanthropic schemes of godless philosophers and humanitarians are but a

<sup>693</sup> “History of the Girondists,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 2, no.3 (September 1848): 390, Robert Louis Dabney believed that Voltaire inculcated the French with “infidel notions” and stated that “if had been no revocation of the edict of Nantes, there would have been no Voltaire, and no French Revolution.” Dabney to Hoge, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1843.

<sup>694</sup> Elliott, *Our cause in harmony*, 16.

<sup>695</sup> Elliott, *Ezra's Dilemma*, 14.

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

delusion and snare.”<sup>697</sup> Thomas Verner, moreover, believed that abolitionism and the French Revolution were not simply comparable but one derived from the other. He suggested that what he termed “this anti-slavery Hydra” was “Spawned in the huge Serbonian bog of French infidelity and radicalism.”<sup>698</sup> The power of the appeal to the example of the French Revolution lay in the fact that it embodied both a corruption of republican ideals into violence, despotism, and hostility to organized religion. Thus, the Southern minister was afforded the perfect illustration of how the form of a society's government and its religious nature could go hand in hand. Removing one affected the other, and in the North, for all to see, was a clear picture of both being corrupted with disastrous results. Benjamin Morgan Palmer described the “abolition spirit” as “undeniably atheistic.” Palmer believed the origins of the movement to be demonic. He continued, “The demon which erected its throne upon the guillotine in the days of Robespierre and Marat, which abolished the Sabbath and worshiped reason in the person of a harlot, yet survives to work other horrors, of which those of the French Revolution are but the type.”<sup>699</sup> The type was being fulfilled in the government and abolitionists of the North in Palmer's view, and he warned Southerners that “Its banner-cry rings out already upon the air "liberty, equality, fraternity," which simply interpreted mean bondage, confiscation and massacre. With its tricolor waving in the breeze, it waits to inaugurate its reign of terror.”<sup>700</sup>

For many in the South, there was a clear distinction between the principles of the French Revolution and the American Revolution. The republicanism set up in America was seen to be vastly different from the democracy that was attempted and aborted in the French experiment. For Southerners, it was believed that the North had drifted from the original intent of the American Revolution, and this was in no small measure responsible for the war that was now waging in their land, the *Southern Churchman* stated, “We are fighting to prevent ourselves from being transferred from American republicanism to French democracy.”<sup>701</sup> Fearing that some may think there was a link between the two revolutions and subsequent republics, William Hall sought to draw out a racial distinction between them; he wrote that “The French Revolution was more superficial, special, and Celtic; this crusade was more profound and comprehensive, Teutonic; the latter has been slower in its development, than the former, because the ideal moves more slowly than the material.”<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>697</sup> *Address of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1863*, 3.

<sup>698</sup> Verner, *God Our Refuge*, 19.

<sup>699</sup> Palmer *Fast Day Sermon*, 10.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>701</sup> *The Southern Churchman* 8, no, 6 (September 1861): 295.

<sup>702</sup> Hall, *The Historic Significance*, 19.



Another great of the French Revolution was its overthrow of God and its complete disregard for the tenets of the Christian religion. This lesson for Confederacy came with the highest form of historical authority; the French experiment, as it was termed by many, came to a destructive end and did not result in the utopia that its instigators had desired. Instead, it seemed to bare out all the Southerner's worst fears of what might happen if society was disturbed, religion tampered with, and order disrupted. The irony of such ardent Protestants defending the French Catholic Church appears to have been lost on the ministers of the South. Methodist minister and editor of the *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal South*, D. S. Doggett, sidestepped the fact that he probably would not have thought the *Ancien Regime* had a high place for the Bible and declared that "France in the wild delirium of her revolution [had], abolished the Bible, and closed the churches in order to inaugurate the experiment of a government without God," the result of which, to Doggett, was a "Dismal catastrophe" that he wished to serve as a warning to the "Confederacy to reinstate the Bible to its place, and to constitute every church a Shiloh for the gathering of the people."<sup>703</sup> The refrain that the Confederacy needed to seat Christianity closer to its heart to avoid the pitfalls of the French Revolution was regularly heard from Southern pulpits. Ministers felt that the North had already succumbed to the excesses of the French Revolution and were now attempting to foist them on the South; A. B. Longstreet thought that the role of Governments was to "check vices, not instill virtues" and that "not will science do it as France proved in all her recent heavings." His solution was quite different; he postulated, "Nothing short of a national religion founded on the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ will ever produce a healthful national morality."<sup>704</sup>

The French Revolution pushed to the surface of history several forceful personalities and men of fame and infamy, but none so much as Napoleon himself. As with other great men in history, Cromwell and Washington being two we have already seen, he presented a fascination for those wishing to draw historical parallels and lessons to apply to their congregations, hearers, and readers in their day. Often Napoleon was seen as comparable to Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, something he would have approved of, in as far as the wars of all three were seen as lacking principle, aggressive, and bloody for the sake of power and pride. The purpose of drawing these comparisons between these three legendary generals was to highlight what was occurring under the Lincoln administration. Stephen Elliott preached "Wars of conquest, such as those of Alexander or Caesar. Or Napoleon, demand a perpetual advance from victory to victory, but wars maintained for national independence

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<sup>703</sup> D. S. Doggett, *A Nations Ebenezer* (Richmond, VA: Enquirer Book and Job Press, 1864), 14.

<sup>704</sup> Longstreet, *Fast Day Sermon*, 7.

must necessarily be defensive.”<sup>705</sup> While Henry Niles Pierce poured scorn on the actions of the North, saying, “Were military glory only the prize, though our national escutcheon were emblazoned with all the exploits of an Alexander, a Cesar, and a Napoleon, it would be to me the badge and record of sin and shame.”<sup>706</sup> Comments like this sit uneasily with Southern militarism and Southern ministers' celebration of military victory. However, the contradiction was not felt by people who saw themselves as victims, not aggressors. Their high view of honor allowed for violence and glorifying military exploits.

### *The Dutch Republic*

The experience of the foundation of the Dutch Republic chimed with historical resonance to a people who felt that they were removing themselves from the overbearing power of a corrupt and proud nation. The religious overtones of the two conflicts also establish the comparison as the South felt it was gaining its independence from a religiously corrupt and dangerously infidel North, just as Protestant Holland had been gaining its independence from Catholic Imperial Spain. It would be fair to say that reference to this historical epoch was not as frequent as to the classical world or France, but it was by no means relegated to obscurity. Rev. James Ramsey, for example, saw in Holland a great Christian hero and militarily successful leader, William I, a type for the Confederate general Stonewall Jackson. At an oration delivered upon the death of Jackson, Ramsey lamented that “Never perhaps did such a throe of agony pierce a nation's heart, at the fall of a single man since the Dutch Republic stood horror-stricken at the assassination of William, Prince of Orange.”<sup>707</sup>

Others saw in the Dutch armies yet another example of Christian soldiery with which to encourage the Confederate troops and promote godliness among the ranks. Thomas Verner saw that the Dutch people's faith was their great strength in their struggle for independence in a way that could be useful for the South. “It would be easy to show that the religion which fits men for any duty, suffering and danger, must fit them for the duties, sufferings, and dangers of war;... that made feeble Holland an over-match for the proud chivalry of Spain.”<sup>708</sup> *The North Carolina Presbyterian* used the history of the Dutch revolt to illustrate its belief that “A virtuous and gallant people in a good cause have never failed” something of which, it told its readers, “no one can doubt the historical truth,” it reminded them

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<sup>705</sup> Stephen Elliott, *How to Renew Our National Strength*, 7.

<sup>706</sup> Pierce, *Sermons preached in St. John's Church*, 10.

<sup>707</sup> James B. Ramsey, *True Eminence Founded on Holiness*, 18.

<sup>708</sup> Verner, *God Our Refuge*, 17.

that “The little city of Leiden in 1573 withstood the whole power of Spain, at the time the most warlike nation in Europe.”<sup>709</sup> *The North Carolina Presbyterian* was in no doubt that the South could perform similar deeds of resilience due to the rightness of its cause and the character of its populace.

After the fall of New Orleans, the Union army introduced a rule that Confederate citizens of that city must take the oath of allegiance to the Union to be pardoned for their act of rebellion against the federal government. This was taken as an affront to proud Southerners and a problem for the clergy to navigate when advising their congregants. Benjamin Morgan Palmer had fled to Columbia, SC, from New Orleans, but still, in touch with those directly affected by the presence of Union troops, he penned a widely distributed tract in which he desired to find a page of history that could explain the current situation, he admitted that “I have in vain searched the records of modern history for its parallel.” He concluded that the Dutch revolt from Spain demonstrated remarkable similarities and explained, “The Spanish power then, as the North does now, branded the attempt of a brave people to frame their own Constitution and laws as flagrant rebellion; and conducted a long and bitter war to reduce, as they alleged, a revolted province to allegiance.” Despite these similarities, Palmer was able to locate a distinction to which he drew his readers' attention, writing, “But in no instance did the cruel Alva — fitting tool though he was, of a treacherous and bigoted despot, force a reluctant oath upon the cities which he conquered.”<sup>710</sup> By drawing out this historical comparison, Palmer underscored the a-historical, unprecedented nature of the North's actions in the South. He was able to appropriate the memory of the Dutch revolt to endow the South's cause with a sense of moral superiority while at the same time excoriating the North for their unparalleled cruelty and lack of decency in war.

In the July 1862 edition of *The Southern Presbyterian Review*, Rev. John Bailey Adger reviewed Northern Historian Mr. Motley's *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, published twelve years before.<sup>711</sup> It presents a striking example of how the past was used to debate the meaning of contemporary events. Adger saw in the struggles of the Dutch for liberty against Emperor Charles V a mirror of the issues being fought for in the American Civil War. The point of contention between Adger and what he read in Motley was the question of why the Dutch were fighting, by extension, why the South was fighting. This issue revolved around “rights.” In the developments that led to the proclamation of the “Groote privilege,” which Adger calls the “Magna-Charta of Holland,” Motley used the terminology of recognition of ancient rights, not the acquisition of new privileges which Adger approved of, but then

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<sup>709</sup> “The Bible the Fountain of Political Wisdom,” *North Carolina Presbyterian*, February 3, 1864, 1.

<sup>710</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *Oath of Allegiance Discussed in its Moral and Political Bearings* (Richmond, VA: McFarlane and Fergusson, 1863), 6-7.

<sup>711</sup> John Bailey Adger, “Motley's Dutch Republic,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 15, no.2 (July 1862): 94-157.

Motley also brought in the language of “Human rights” and “Natural rights” which is where he and Adger departed ways. The contrast of “natural rights” and “natural servitude” made by Motley, who suggested this was the point of contention between Southern and Northern conceptions of rights, was seen by Adger as “one of the most vulgar errors of our time.” Instead, Adger conceived of “natural rights as not the doctrine of any truly enlightened age, concerning man, fallen and under the curse. It is, on the contrary, a doctrine of French Infidelity.” Adger saw this error as compromising the entirety of Motley's work, which he believed was designed to “confirm his countrymen in their creed.” Adger Concluded, “there is no liberty worth the name, but rational and regulated liberty” and “thus Dutch rights...have always been seen to be very different from the rights of savages or semi-barbarians.”<sup>712</sup>

Later in the article, Adger attacked Motley for his opinion that “popular rights” were superior to “states’ rights” and that the Dutch suffered due to a lack of democratic character. This Adger could not countenance, saying, “The author, of course, believes in the government of the people, directly exorcised. On the other hand, we believe in representative government...government in the hands of the chosen rulers.” He added, “We are great enemies...to arbitrary rule” but “have no sympathy with [the] idea of 'human rights' nor can we sympathize with his appreciation of 'popular rights,' in distinction from 'states’ rights.” Stating, “Indeed what a great and sacred struggle for states’ rights that is, which Mr. motley's own people just now are forcing upon this free-born Confederacy.” As a result, Adger asserted that Motley’s work was “tinctured with radicalism” as an example; he points to where Motley apparently “sneers at Philip of burgundy's sovereignty 'by inheritance.” In this is detected a latent attack on the values of the South and points out, “Even for New England this is a dangerous doctrine, where there is such vast inequality of wealth.” Adger spoke for the South when he asserted, “We believe what the savior of mankind taught on this subject. Some men are born to rule, and others to be ruled.” It is the view of Adger that the contention of the Dutch for their liberty was the same as the English in their Civil War and of the Confederacy in theirs; the maintenance of what civil liberties were theirs by right of birth.<sup>713</sup>

Throughout his analysis of Motley, Adger drew parallels to the contemporary situation. For example, he commented on the Duke of Alva that as he “penetrated the heart of the ancient Batavian lands, he found himself outmatched by the spirit of national freedom.” Adger believed the government of the North should have taken heed of this example before sending their generals and armies into the “states of the Confederacy.” The review culminates in an extended list of ways in which the Dutch and

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<sup>712</sup> Adger, *Motley's Dutch Republic*, 97, 99.

<sup>713</sup> *Ibid*, 101-104.

Confederacy wars were comparable and a table of the lessons to be learned from how they differed. Adger contended that there were four ways in which the wars were similar. Firstly, the co-mingling of religious and political elements; secondly, what he termed the same “blind infatuations manifest in the two attempts at tyranny;” thirdly, what he saw as “the same popular heartiness in the two efforts to resist despotism;” fourthly, “the same high religious confidence that God will give deliverance.” The contrasts were, first, “what was at stake” arguing that America constituted the peculiar home of constitutional freedom in a way that Holland did not in its day; secondly, the scale, dwelling on the fact that the Northern armies are exponentially larger than those deployed by Philip of Spain; and finally, and somewhat counter-intuitively he contrasted the “obstacles” which the Northerners have “cheerfully encountered” asking if this is a sign more of their “courage or their cupidity.” He concluded by observing that the Dutch had their setbacks, but were ultimately victorious, which was to be a lesson for the Confederate army, and ends with the rousing deceleration “what have our reverses been at any period since the war began, in comparison with those borne by the heroic Dutch with such sublime fortitude?”<sup>714</sup> Therefore, a simple review of a work of history became a polemic for the Confederacy and an opportunity to argue against the North. The contentions of the Civil War were read back into history, and the past became a battleground of interpretation. This demonstrates the depth of feeling in the South regarding the issues of rights, their relevance to the Confederacy, and their implications for the meaning of the war from the Southern perspective. Ministers, such as Adger, who valued attempts to maintain and preserve orthodoxy, piety, and inherited rights throughout history, used their conservative interpretation of the past to understand their present experiences.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have shown that the Southern clergy had a conception of its status as a republic and had a central role in acknowledging God and the place of religion. It also respected states' rights, particularly the right to constitute a society based on racial slavery and the preservation of hierarchical relational structures. This was not seen as a contradiction but demonstrably desirable from the pages of history. This belief was fostered by the positive example of Holland, a Christian nation freeing itself from the dominance of a more powerful, corrupt, and religiously suspect nation. Its course to national greatness and commercial success, as well as religious orthodoxy while maintaining a certain level of tolerance, was a model to be copied and a parallel with which to identify; the French example, on the

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<sup>714</sup> Ibid, 148-159.

other hand, was a negative example of how a republic could go too far, relieve itself of its reliance on God and fall into tyranny and bloodshed. This was what was seen to have happened in the North, and they were readily cast in the roles of Philip V of Spain or Napoleon as a dictator responsible for aggressive, costly wars at the expense of his people.

The Classical examples of Greece and Rome also resounded loudly from the pulpits of Southern churches throughout the war. Both martial cultures were revered and renowned for their exploits in the field of battle but also the halls of political power, artistic endeavor, and philosophical speculation; these archetypal civilizations provided performative exemplars, warnings, and encouragements. Parallels could be drawn to maximize the rhetorical effect of calling upon a romanticized and grandiose past; the classical world was embedded in the psyche of nineteenth-century America, its figures almost mythical and god-like. However, these republics had fallen; Greece to Rome, Rome to its own corruption, and the hordes of barbaric invaders. These examples also demonstrated within themselves the rise and fall of republics and how God dealt in history with nations that did not honor him. The same fate for Rome and Greece was seen to be happening in the North; history was repeating itself there and could well begin to do so in the South, too, if Southerners were not diligent in preventing it from happening. Ministers had a solution to this problem; it was more godliness and more recognition of the role of God in their state. Yet not only this but also what was required was a further deepening of the conviction of the correctness of slavery and its biblically mandated foundation. Godliness required slavery to continue and conversions to take place among the slave population if the cycle of rise and fall was to be broken. After all, sin and pride caused falls; if a man could be responsible for bringing judgment on his country for pride, corruption, and decadence, he could avoid it and receive a blessing by being Godly and holy and having Christian statesmen and soldiers.

These examples from history point to the authority of precedent and comparison; readily accepted narratives and interpretations of historical events provided a canvas upon which to paint the picture of the Civil War that one wished to present to one's audience. Southern ministers were adept at using history in this way to denigrate the North, highlight their barbarity and lack of Christian character and charity, and enthuse the South, providing it with models of behavior and patterns of performance which would aid in its ultimate victory. This was in addition to direct examples and lessons from the Bible itself. In the midst of war, the Southern churches were not simply Biblicists or biblical literalists; they relied on the authority of history to make their points and drive home their arguments. They drew on their self-conception as conservative maintainers of orthodoxy and maintainers of godliness and

purity. Many of the histories they turned to during the war were not church history; Greece and Rome were pagan, but still, the knowledge of them in the mind of the public and their resonance made it possible to draw lessons from them for use in explaining and defining the war and how the Confederacy could win.

## **Conclusion**

The historical identities that Southern Protestant clergy had been creating and shaping in the antebellum years provided a usable past to the Southern Protestant churches, offering legitimacy, explanation, and rootedness, providing narratives of continuity amid social and religious change and upheaval. These identities, influenced through books, sermons, articles, and seminary lectures, acted as a constitutive element in the development of the idea of the South as a separate Christian republic when secession and the Civil War came. During the course of the conflict, ministers drew on the tenets of the identities they had been fostering to underpin their conception of what a Christian Confederacy could and should be, how it might win the war, and what was at stake if they failed in that mission. The use of history was, therefore, central to the contribution of Southern ministers to the Confederacy. History supplied them with examples, lessons, and types to aid in navigating the spiritual and emotional turmoil

that arose in the harrowing experiences of war. Under the intense focus of the war's lens, White Southern Protestantism was laid bare. The years of fighting reveal that Southern Protestantism contained a romantic association with the past. Christian clergy used church history, secular history, ideas of the nation's history and purpose, and the long view of universal history to rationalize the situation in which they found themselves and the system of racial slavery. These currents of thought were adopted from the surrounding culture, sometimes wholesale, sometimes with caveats, and other times there existed contradictions and challenges to dominating narratives. In their zeal to purify the morality of the Confederacy, clergy re-imagined their relation to politics and the state while attempting to assert they were adhering to the strict spirituality of the church. Southern Protestantism was pulled from multiple sides and displayed the resulting erratic movements. The identities formed as Christians, as those who preserve and conserve and of orthodox maintainers over the antebellum period, were tested during the crucible of war, and Ministers clung to them resolutely to the last.

This study has shown that Southern ministers contributed to a distinct Southern Christian nationalism that was nostalgic and based on identities derived from curated historical memories. This reorients the discussion of American Christianity of this period away from over emphasizing the democratic and emancipatory power it held, towards re-centering the authority of the past in mid-nineteenth-century American Protestantism. Furthermore, contrary to standard accounts of Southern Christianity, Southern ministers did not arrive at their conservative positions simply through biblical literalism, although they were biblical literalists, but also drew upon historical narratives and tropes to understand the conflicts of their day in a way that reveals the reason for the passionate nature of their defense of slavery and the Confederacy. In addition, this exploration has illustrated the link between denominational and regional identity in the context of sectionalism and war, and re-introduces that category into a historiography that largely downplays denominational affiliation as a source of identity during this period in favor of the broader terms of evangelicalism, or revivalism.

Drew Faust has written that the “very qualities of malleability and almost universal appeal that had transformed [evangelicalism] into a common vocabulary of public discourse in the antebellum years rendered [it] less than ideal as a cement for national unity in time of war.”<sup>715</sup> Ultimately the attempt at binding the nation behind a conservative Christian idea of what the South should and could be failed; no amount of oratory could maintain unity in the face of the military and political collapse the Confederacy experienced. However, the malleability of the historical narratives and modes of using

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<sup>715</sup> Faust, *Confederate Nationalism*, 84.



history employed within Southern Protestantism, when seen as underpinning a historical identity, were what Southerners used to come to terms with defeat and navigate the experience of Reconstruction.

Following the surrender of Lee and Johnston's armies and the capture of Jefferson Davis in April and May of 1865, Southern ministers faced the reality that their predictions of victory had been strikingly inaccurate. No amount of religious revival, prayer, or repentance had saved the South; the "righteous cause" had not resulted in God's intervention on behalf of the Confederacy. Now Southern ministers had the arduous task of understanding and interpreting defeat and giving meaning to the sacrifice of so many lives to ultimate loss. There was much soul-searching to be done, but perhaps unsurprisingly, one conclusion could not be reached; that the war was God's chosen method of ending slavery because it had been a sinful institution wrought in iniquity. Turning again to history aided Southern ministers in their attempts to discern the workings of God in the aftermath of defeat. By far, the most common explanation was that God was chastising his chosen people to bring about a greater and more glorious future resurrection of the cause for which the South had fought.<sup>716</sup> It had been a central tenet of the denominational identities discussed at length before the war that the pure church suffered persecution and opposition from the earthly powers; this had aided in an association of the North with powers of infidelity. The experience of war reinforced in the minds of Southern clergy that this belief was true. They had observed Northern reluctance to grant the legitimacy of secession as belligerence against the cause of justice and then subsequent military actions as outright aggression, especially after emancipation became the stated goal of the Union. Defeat did not render this view invalid but rather confirmed it. Presbyterians had been driven from Scotland and Northern Ireland, Baptists reveled in their mistreatment by generations of church authorities, Methodists pointed to the rejection of Whitfield and Wesley by those in positions of power, and Episcopalians could look back to Bloody Mary. From the perspective of Southern Protestants, God had suffered his people to see hardships and setbacks before, and, for them, this was another iteration of that same principle.

The task facing the Southern Protestant clergy after the cease of hostilities was not a light one. Before them lay large-scale destruction of property, poverty, and population depletion, the reconstruction of the churches would be an uphill struggle as church membership was drastically reduced due to deaths, population movement, and the mass exodus of Black Christians now able to exercise their choice in places of worship. For example, the Methodist Episcopal Church South

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<sup>716</sup> Daniel Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33-48. See also Genovese, *A Consuming Fire*, 101.

declined from 748,968 members in 1860 to 498,847 in 1865.<sup>717</sup> Alongside this, money was scarce; the religious press was disrupted, and, in many cases, educational institutions had to be wholly rebuilt or re-founded. The Protestant uses of history, as we have seen them developed over the antebellum period and deployed during the Civil War, continued over into Reconstruction and was a major way in which ministers addressed these issues. Protestant clergy could, by interpreting events and giving explanations for defeat, offer comfort to their flocks and provide the link historical identity back to the antebellum world as it was. Almost immediately after the cessation of fighting, the war became an addition to the history that Southern ministers discussed, and the clergy began to shape the narrative into a cultural memory for Southern Christians. Voices that had been prominent in the war turned now to make the war historic, according to their own version of events. Robert Louis Dabney was an early practitioner of this, publishing his vitriolic *Defense of Virginia* in 1867. He depicted the South as righteous, acting as previous generations of Christians, opposed by tyrannical powers in the North.<sup>718</sup>

This work is a key text in what Rollins has called the myth and Reagan Wilson has called the religion of the lost cause.<sup>719</sup> This belief in the righteousness of the Confederacy, its chastisement in defeat, and ultimate resurrection were central to the South post-war identity, and its effects suffused every area of White Southern life. Ministers were significant creators and upholders of the lost cause. They prayed at memorial services, gave orations at public reunions, and spoke at the unveiling of statues. All of this reinforced the relationship between the cause of the Confederacy and Christianity and removed the possibility of considering repentance for slavery or a conviction of error for secession. Southern ministers underpinned the ultimate correctness of the Southern view of the Civil War by sanctifying it with religious rhetoric a pious narrative of the Confederacy's short existence. They did this using history in the same way as they had done during the war, continuing the narratives, beliefs, and ideas into peacetime in surprisingly effective ways. One prime example was the continuation of the hagiography surrounding figures like Stonewall Jackson and Lee and the near deification of the common Confederate soldier. They continued to be seen as the true Cromwellians, embodying the Puritans' piety and the cavalier's gentlemanly attributes. Dabney produced a biography of Jackson in which the man's religious character was solidified as inseparable from his military virtues as the

<sup>717</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>718</sup> Robert L. Dabney, *A Defense of Virginia [and Through Her of the South,] in Recent and Pending Contests Against the Sectional Party* (New York, 1867).

<sup>719</sup> Rollin G. Osterweis *The Myth of the Lost Cause: 1865-1900* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1973) and Charles Reagan Wilson *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), See, Gains M. Foster *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) for the argument that the lost cause was not simply a “backward-looking or romantic movement” but a mechanism to “[ease] the regions passage through a particularly difficult period of social change,” 6.

archetypical soldier saint.<sup>720</sup> Others joined in glorifying the Confederate military, such as John William Jones's *Christ in Camp* (1887), which argued that the post-war South needed to remember that the piety of the Confederate army was its most important characteristic.<sup>721</sup> Thus, the military and spiritual memory of war were intertwined in the lost cause's iconography. The chapel of Washington and Lee University, where a marble edifice of Lee, installed in 1883, rests in peaceful repose in place of the communion altar, served as a powerful visual image of this.

Thus, the Confederacy was seamlessly incorporated into the historical memory of Southern Protestants. Alongside this, there continued a historical glorification of the antebellum period. Seminaries faced particular hardships during the war, with students off fighting in the army and, in the case of the Baptists, losing vast sums of money in Confederate bonds.<sup>722</sup> However, they rebuilt and continued their programs of church history. When the generation of men who had built them during the antebellum period retired or died, their lives were remembered, and their institutions memorialized in ways that cast the antebellum period as a golden age of Christian civilization.<sup>723</sup> Alongside the military and civil heroes of the Confederacy, churches also hallowed the memory of their spiritual heroes from the antebellum and Civil War periods. In 1871 John Bailey Adger published the collected works of James Henley Thornwell, who had died during the war, in four volumes, something that had only been done for two other Southerners at that point, John C. Calhoun and Hugh Lagaré.<sup>724</sup> These included his theological lectures and polemical treatises, which contained much of the philosophy which undergirded his confessional conservatism, and volume four contained his writings on slavery that had been so crucial in Southern defenses of the institution.<sup>725</sup> Four years later, Benjamin Morgan Palmer published *The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell* (1875), which drew a portrait of a man of unrivaled mind and deep piety. Appended to this were two of his most famous writings, both polemical attacks on the North and glorifying the Southern view of the Bible and slavery. They served to cement his status as the South's most distinguished theologian and to present the antebellum South as a place of intellectual and spiritual giants.<sup>726</sup> Church histories of other kinds continued to be published, too;

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<sup>720</sup> Dabney, *Life, and Campaigns of Lieut-Gen. Thomas J. Jackson* (Richmond, VA: National Publishing Co, 1867).

<sup>721</sup> Jones, *Christ in the Camp*.

<sup>722</sup> Broadus, *Memoir of James P. Boyce*, 198.

<sup>723</sup> See, for example, *the Memorial Volume of the Semi-centennial of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina*. (Columbia, SC: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1884).

<sup>724</sup> Thomas E. Peck "Thornwell's Writings," *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 29, no.3, (July 1878): 415.

<sup>725</sup> John B. Adger ed., *The Writings of James Henley Thornwell in Four Volumes* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1871).

<sup>726</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell: Ex-President of the South Carolina College, Late Professor of Theology in the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina* (Richmond, VA: Whittet & Shepperson, 1875). In reviewing Palmer's work, William Boggs wrote, "The truth is that the writer could hardly have

George Howe's history of Presbyterianism in South Carolina was published in 1870 and continued the glorification of the Presbyterian spirit as it came to the South, reinforcing the historical and regional identity of Christians in that state as liberty-loving, pious contenders for the right.<sup>727</sup> 1875 saw the publication of a three-volume history of Methodism in Tennessee, and within another decade, histories of Methodism in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia had also appeared.<sup>728</sup> The example of the historical discourse delivered at the South Carolina Baptists Association's Semi-centennial in 1871 offers a stark example of the continued use of denominational identity in reinforcing regional differences. Reflecting on the split in 1845, J. L. Reynolds, professor at Furman College, commented that Southern Baptists had “no to confession to make; no repentance to offer” and announced the ultimate condemnation of the actions of Northern Baptists by saying, “for the first time in the annals of our race, Baptists took the side of the oppressor against the oppressed.”<sup>729</sup>

The denominational splits between Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist persisted after the Civil War. These came to be seen increasingly in historical terms and remained as reasons for the continuation of regional identity and the power of history to sustain them. Benjamin Morgan Palmer penned a lengthy review of propositions to reunite the Northern and Southern branches of the Old School Presbyterian Church. He argued that the Northern Presbyterians held the incorrect view of the relation between church and state because the North had insisted on churches supporting the Union cause and had declared slavery sinful. With those things being the case, he believed that the Southern Presbyterian church could not reunite with the Northern branch as it persisted in error and was unwilling to repent. True to the South's identity of maintainers and preservers, he argued that the Southern Presbyterian church was the true inheritor of the spirit of the original split between Old and New School.<sup>730</sup> The importance of the spirituality of the church as a doctrine continued to be identity-forming, and whereas once it had been used to keep the morality of slavery out of the churches

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uttered encomiums too high pitched when he described what was generally admitted by those competent to form a judgment to be a supreme human genius.” “Palmer's Life of Thornwell,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 27, no. 3 (July 1876): 517.

<sup>727</sup> Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*.

<sup>728</sup> John B. M'Ferrin, *The History of Methodism in Tennessee in Three volumes* (Nashville, TN: A. H. Redford, 1875); Matthew H. Moore, *Sketches of the Pioneers of Methodism in North Carolina and Virginia* (Nashville, TN: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1884); and Albert M. Shipp, *History of Methodism in South Carolina* (Nashville TN: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1884).

<sup>729</sup> *Minutes of the fifty-first meeting and semi-centennial anniversary of the State Convention of the Baptist denomination, in South Carolina: held at Camden, S. C., November 23, 24, 25, 26, 1871* (Charleston: Edward Perry, 1871), 36.

<sup>730</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *Reunion Overture of the Northern General Assembly to the Southern Presbyterian Church Considered* (Jackson, MS: Clarion Steam Printing, 1870), 82. John Bailey Adger also saw this as the issue at stake, that the North and South had different views of the role of the church and state, “Northern and Views of the Province of the Church,” *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 16, no. 4. (March 1866): 384-411.

discussions, it was now used to resist Reconstruction and maintain as much of prewar racial segregation and social stratification as possible. The importance of these feelings to the self-conception of Southern Presbyterians can be gauged by the first history of the Southern Presbyterian church written by Thomas Cary Johnson. The work is mainly composed of a defense of the Southern Presbyterian church's decision to separate from the Northern Old School denomination. Johnson argued that Southern Presbyterians were simply holding onto the truths they had received, whereas the North acted on novel principles and moved against the South. In effect, the South was more sinned against than sinning.

The most significant change that Southern Ministers had to negotiate in the life of Christians and the church was the changed relationship with the Black population in their midst. Vast numbers of formerly enslaved people opted to form their own self-sufficient Black denominations and congregations, and it became apparent fairly soon that things would not continue on as they had done. Many White clergy expressed surprise that their former slaves did not wish to remain in a state similar to that which they had been in prior to emancipation. Almost immediately, a standard narrative was set down by Southern clergy. John Bailey Adger wrote an article claiming that Southern enslaved people had been “slaves yet virtually freer than most of the laborers of the world.” Ministers who had spent the antebellum and Civil War periods attempting to reform slavery to reflect their paternalistic ideal of patriarchal slavery began to tell themselves that that was how slavery had really been. The abuses were smoothed over, and a trope of the happy slave was used as a prop to the ideals of the lost cause. On the other hand, to contrast this, Adger claimed that Black religious worship, no decoupled from the moderating influence of Whites, was degrading and unchristian and even accused Black Christians of indulging in child sacrifice.<sup>731</sup> The maintenance of slavery in order to Christianize the Black population had been critical to the clergy's rationalization of God's purposes for the Confederacy. What were they to say now that slavery had been abolished? Adger argued that since the Southern White population had been trained in the character and nature of Black people, they should be able to maintain political and social control over them for the same purposes of their mutual benefit and extension of the kingdom of God. Thus, the conception of the South's place in universal history could be maintained in the face of seemingly obvious contradictions.

Benjamin Morgan Palmer provides an illustrative insight into how history was deployed to support the lost cause myth in exactly the same ways and with many of the same priorities and

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<sup>731</sup> John Bailey Adger, “The Future of the Freedmen,” *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 19, no. 2. (April 1868): 268, 274.

conclusions as it had been to support Southern Christian identity before and during the war. He was invited to address the literary societies of Washington and Lee University, which he did in June of 1872, taking for his subject *The Present Crisis and its Issues*. The loss of the war and the emancipation of the enslaved Black population of the South had not dimmed his belief in the providential destiny of the White race in America.<sup>732</sup> He returned to his favorite theme from his wartime preaching, the relation of a nation's character to its role in history. After explaining to his audience that history could be broken down into “epochs,” he explained what he felt was necessary for a people to transition from one epoch to another with their historical character intact. He argued that “no people has long kept its place in history after traversing the fundamental principles upon which the national character has been formed,” yet he saw that the same people must retain enough “elasticity” in order to “adapt themselves to new conditions, and thus to meet the issues of another Cycle.”<sup>733</sup> He believed that the South was one such people who were going through an epochal change and had principles to preserve while also adapting to the new situation. He used Rome as a negative example of a people not holding on to principles when it slid from a republic into an empire and England as a positive example of a people who held onto the principle of liberty and reaped the consequent reward. He argued that America was the true progression from Anglo-Saxon liberty and must preserve the principle of regulated liberty in order to remain a historic people. Thus, he saw the role of the South within America to promote and preserve a conservative principle, which, again, he argued was what the American Revolution had done previously.

These stages in history, Rome, England, and the American Revolution, were therefore used by Palmer to make precisely the same point as he had in the antebellum period and during the war. Yet, he understood that he spoke into new circumstances, and it was not slavery that had to be preserved any longer but the distinction between the races. This was the main principle that White America, directed by the South, was to preserve to fulfill its historic mission. Palmer also had a message for the free Black population, “if [they] are to be a historic people, [they] must work out [their] own destiny on [their] own foundation.” This attitude laid the conceptual groundwork for a vision of a racially segregated country; Palmer went on, “The true policy of both races is, that they shall stand apart in their own social grade, in their own schools, in their own ecclesiastical organizations, under their own teachers and guides.”<sup>734</sup> The weakness of the paternalism espoused by Southern clergy during slavery

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<sup>732</sup> Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *The Present Crisis and Its Issues* (Baltimore, MD: John Murphey & Co, 1872).

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid*, 8, 11.

<sup>734</sup> *Ibid*, 20-21.

was shown to be what it had always been, mere rhetoric. Following emancipation, it dissipated and was replaced by a cruel and smug expectation that the Black race would diminish under the superior force of the Anglo-Saxon people. By conserving the principle of racial difference and allowing each race to work out its own character, Palmer believed that the Southern civilization he loved could persevere. However, true to his vision of the progress of truth through history, he saw that this idea would be opposed. With the recent memory of so much death and destruction in the war, he reminded his audience that to be true to these principles may require martyrdom but that they were the “principles of our fathers” and “our ancestral faith.”<sup>735</sup>

Heather Cox Richardson recently and provocatively argued that the South really won the Civil War. She argues that White oligarchies in American history, in order to preserve their own power, have preyed on the fears of lower-class White males by convincing them that racial equality will really mean White subservience. She sees this dynamic at play in the Old South, preserved through the Civil War, into Western expansion, and down to our day. In this way, the anti-democratic principles of the South have, in reality, won out against the egalitarian principles that were competing with them in the Civil War.<sup>736</sup> Her argument points to an ongoing debate over the continuity between the antebellum period, the Civil War, and the New South. Her book also highlights the continuing relevance and resonance of these questions have for Americans down to this day.<sup>737</sup> What was preserved, what changed, and how did racism, social structures, and inequalities persevere for so long? To what extent are we living with the repercussions of the answers to these questions? To answer these would be beyond the scope of this work, but some observations can be made about Southern Christianity and the role of history with regard to continuity.

Southern Christianity did change because of the war and emancipation, and yet, much remained the same. The shared experience of war, the defense of slavery, and the concern to maintain racial segregation drew together Southern Protestantism into a more unified expression of a regional Christianity with a significant overlap in shared identity. Furthermore, the experience of slavery and emancipation divided Southern Protestantism into Black and White. After the war, White churches neglected and ignored Black Christians in many instances in a way that had not been true prior to the war. Thus, the racism remained, but the outworking of it changed. Another element of White

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<sup>735</sup> Ibid, 27-28.

<sup>736</sup> Heather Cox Richardson, *How the South Won the Civil War: Oligarchy, Democracy and The Continuing Fight for the Soul of America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>737</sup> See James L. Roark, “So Much for the Civil War”: Cash Continuity and Continuity in Southern History,” *The Mind of the South Fifty Years Later*, ed., Charles W. Eagles (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1992), 85-101.

Protestantism that remained constant and enabled a sense of continuity within Southern Protestantism was its historical identity and use of history. The sense of being a people who held onto controversial and unpopular truths in the face of opposition remained, fed by the same historical denominational narratives as in the antebellum and Civil War periods. The rejection of development or progress in Christian belief was also still maintained. The idea of regulated liberty from English history up through the American Revolution, of inherited rights, and of the character of racial groups persisted and was continually referred to by Southern clergy. The difference was that now they had the rise and fall of the Confederacy as an ultimate example of sacrifice, hardship, and martyrdom was added to the historical connections they saw through time. These views were powerful enough to prop up the Christian view of the meaning of the Civil War and the lost cause, and further research and study would no doubt reveal that these elements were a factor in the preservation of Jim Crow and segregation into the twentieth century. Recent events in America and the resultant interest in Christian nationalism have shown that these views have never entirely gone away.

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