

No Contending Against the Will of God: The Christian Church and the American Civil War

Jesse Roberts

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Dr. Waldron

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Historians have often looked back on the American Civil War as a conflict, fought almost exclusively over a moral issue, slavery. The causation of the Civil War is one far more complicated than one simple reason for conflict, causing fierce debate over the previous 150 years. No matter the cause of the war, Christianity, more explicitly the Christian Church, played a direct role in the conflict, a role both in cause, and duration. To many of those in the rank and file, and those in the pulpits, the Civil War that raged between 1861-1865 was deemed a holy war, a war to preserve God's chosen country, and one to fight against the depravity of man.

Religious influence permeated all of American life. The decades succeeding the American foundation were years of religious ferment in America. While the First Great Awakening preceded the American Revolution, a Second Great Awakening passed through America, beginning in 1801, in a small, secluded frontier camp in Cane Ridge, Kentucky. The spread of the Second Great Awakening carried with it a rampant rise in Protestant Christianity. Gone were the days of Presbyterian exclusivity; the Awakening served as a catalyst for several new denominations with differing doctrines. New denominations dominated the religious landscape, with new sects like the Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians and even more peculiar sects, like the Mormon Church.

The first half of the 1800's were years of euphoric religious revival, giving birth to evangelicalism on an unprecedented scale. Missionaries became an integral part of the Christian Church, and this coincided with religious crusades of roving, barnstorming preaching tours, a push for more education that involved Christian undertones, even ministering to slaves in bondage. Many viewed America as God's chosen country, a new Israel and prosperity showed God's providence in making America a great

Christian nation. With prosperity came responsibility, and with responsibility religious leaders were forced to examine the depravity that was rife in American society.

Examination of depravity occurred in a time of political turmoil. As America represented fertile, Christian spirituality, religion infiltrated all aspects of American society, including politics. America was rapidly shifting from a society of agrarianism, to one of industrialization, and this shift in economics created started to create religious debate.¹ The most notable, among religious debate was one over the question of slavery. This debate would divide the churches of the Northern and Southern states, and would become a driving force behind eventual civil war. America's nation was one chosen by God, but the slavery question could have an answer that would corrupt and destroy America's Road to prosperity. That, of course, was the Northern angle, for Southerners the defense of slavery was far more than economical, but often vindicated through scripture.

These wider religious debates occurred during growing political tensions. New states were growing out of the Mexican-American War, and rather than answering the question of slavery for these new regions, the American government left the choice up to the citizens. This Compromise of 1850 was a gateway to the eventual Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, a bill that would cause a violent border war between the new states. The new acts produced a chain of events that led to America's bloodiest conflict, occurring between 1861-1865, Americans would witness unprecedented violence. A presidential election, bringing an abolitionist president was birthed from these tenuous times, pushing Southern states to secede, and attack a Federal fortification in Charleston Harbor, creating a bloody, total war.

Religion was implicit in this powder keg. Prior to Civil War the church split into two major factions for each denomination. The questions over slavery, and civil war, reached a populace that filled

¹ Phillip Shaw Paludan, "Religion and the American Civil War," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, edited by Randall Miller, Harry Stout, Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 22.

pews every week to look for answers during a time of anxiety. The backlash from reprimands of slavery, pushed the southern ministers to retaliate, and the fervor defending slavery grew. As war began in 1861, both sides, seeing their respective nation as the one God chose, became integral promoters of war. As war continued both the Northern and Southern churches carried the torch, justifying the cause for all belligerents. Eventually as the reality of war proved how difficult, and bloody this modern conflict would be, the church played a part in the downfall for Southern states, and success for the North. The Civil War, no doubt ended an abomination in slavery, but did so at a cost of more than 600,000 lives. It involved every area of American society, and directly affected civilians at home. The historical question to solve is why did Christianity, specifically the Christian church have an effect on the growing tensions prior the American Civil War, and what did the church do to justify the Civil War for Americans? Furthermore, what did the church do to maintain the war effort, both in the North and the South? These things occurred because the Christian church was so integral to the lives of Americans, and the church played a major role in society that helped shape the thoughts and actions of Americans. The church in their respective regions of North and South saw their cause as religiously justified. As the war went on, the Souther church justified their cause by pointing to early victories of proof of divine providence, while the North saw their cause as just in their move to be seen as the moral right, in their drive to abolish slavery.

II. Antebellum (1840-1861)

The 1840's represented a decade that would forever change the United States of America, both politically, and religiously. For the first forty-years of the 1800's, Americans experienced a time rich with religious revival. The explosive growth of new American denominations came forth out of evangelicalism. The protestant faith had dominated the religious landscape, giving birth to new, long-lasting denominations of Christianity like the Methodists, the Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Church

of Christ, and even more controversial faiths like the Mormon church. Religious movement had created a nationwide draw for the Christian church, so much so that by 1850, according to the United States Census of 1850, four to five million Americans were actively involved in evangelical Christianity. The United States population in 1850 stood at 23,191,876, and of that number one out of every seven Americans were members of a church.² During the 1800 Census, it was revealed that just one out of every fifteen Americans held church membership.³

This rise in religious expansion created an American idea, one in which the United States was seen as a nation chosen by God for greatness. Validation came from the formation of a missionary society nationwide. Americans were tenacious in their fight to spread Christianity, and the spreading of Christian revival sparked a fervor, in which both political, and religious leadership. Ministers partook in campaigns to end social issues, while others spent years creating communal areas of holiness.⁴ This growing, Christian society paralleled Biblical prophecy, in which Americans saw their nation standing as a nation receiving divine favor.

While many saw the United States as a nation chosen by God for prosperity, an abomination in their midst started to dampen their hopes for a bright future, slavery. Slavery was a highly debated subject throughout the entirety of American existence. By the 1840's the arguments over slavery began to deepen, in conjunction with the expansion of American borders. Religious split over the issue came over Calvinist ideals in which the Bible holds authority, retaining the idea that the Bible was the message God had put forth for man to follow. While socially, slavery became an issue of disgust, Biblical authority, according to many religious leaders, dictated that slavery stood as an acceptable aspect of everyday life. Leaders looked to passages, like Leviticus 25:44, where it states "You may buy male and

² United States Census of 1850, ix.

³ Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Chicago: Barakaldo Books, 2020), 17-21.

⁴ George Rable, *God's Almost Chose Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 12.

female slaves from among the nations that are around you.”⁵ Justification came from infamous ministers of the day like, James Henley Thornwell, who published a widely circulated sermon titled *The Rights and Duties of Masters*. Thornwell’s sermon discussed a biblical obligation to those he deemed lesser-than, and while God gave man the right to own slaves, man had a slavery to those in his care.⁶

This disgust with this morally vile form of human servitude catalyzed a new form of social crusading, abolitionism. The abolitionists came forth out of an attempt to modernize protestant America. Beginning in 1837 a split occurred within the Presbyterian church, splitting it between the Old, and New Schools. While Old School Presbyterians favored a more literal translation of the Bible, New School Liberal Presbyterians were more open to interpretation, and this allowed for attacks on the apparent biblical sanction of slavery. One argument came forth out of the New School, coming from the pen of Albert Barnes, a New School Presbyterian, creating a publication known as *Inquiry into the Spiritual Views of Slavery*. Barnes’ translation of the scripture was viewed through a modern, 19th century lens, in which the theologian argued that biblical approval of slavery did not fit into the modern era of history.⁷ The abolitionist was therefore viewed, especially in the argument of the pro-slavery Southerner, as a heretic, going against a literal translation of the Bible.

This shift in disfavor towards slavery had not only religious, but political implications. Political parties in America suffered greatly in the first half of the 19th century. The reputation of Democrats had been tarnished, and the disappearance of the Whig party left much to be desired on the grounds of politics. This turmoil in politics was a precursor to an era of political rehabilitation. As political parties rebuilt in the United States, they did so during an era of religious fervor, and ferment. Political leaders

⁵ Leviticus 25:44 (ESV)

⁶ 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 on the coloured population* (Charleston: Press of Walker & James, 1850), 7-20.

⁷ Mark Noll, “The Bible and Slavery,” in *Religion and the American Civil War*, edited by Randall Miller, Harry Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 44.

were heavily favored in they held evangelical tendencies, thus opening the door for a religious influence in politics. In 1833 the American Anti-Slave Society was formed, a group influenced by the revivalist Christianity of the day, and through this group the abolitionist movement was turned into a political movement. Through this Calvinist organization, abolitionists began to strive for political influence.⁸ Early attempts to garner abolitionist candidate support were met with failure, and with that a growing sentiment festered until the birth of a new anti-slavery political party came into being. The early Liberty Party formed in 1840 became a resounding failure, but through this formation a ripple effect occurred that would eventually make abolition, or anti-slavery sentiment a prominent part of religious and political life.⁹

The 1840's were fractious years for the American Church, mainly over the issue of slavery. The 1844 Methodist General Conference met in New York City, in which the discussion over slavery took on a new form. James Osgood Andrew, a Methodist Bishop since 1832, married a slave-owning widow. As a Georgia citizen there was little Andrew could do, as Georgian law at the time outlawed emancipation of slaves. The General Conference consisted of a mixed crowd, of both Northern and Southern church leaders, of which the southerners were greatly offended by the outcome of the conference. Andrew, due to his inherited slave-owner role, was asked to resign his position, which he proceeded to do. Enraged southerners felt slighted by the action. While the Conference ended up with Andrew's forced resignation, a later vote approved of a split between Northern and Southern churches. The newly formed Southern Methodist denomination would become of nearly all protestant denominations to split into two separate conventions.¹⁰ In 1844 the Home Missionary Society (HMS) furthered the divisiveness

⁸ Richard Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 135.

⁹ Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*, 136-141.

¹⁰ Rable, George, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 24.

of slavery in the church, voting to no longer allow slaveholders to work as missionaries. The split of the HMS resulted in a split between the Baptists Church, splitting between a Northern and Southern branch.

The early split between the Northern and Southern churches were of minimal consequence. While the split early-on was over the issue of slaveholders, Northern churches generally frowned down upon the institution, but took a mute stance on the subject. While many Northern Churches skirted the issue, the growing independence of two churches happened in the shadow of a national crisis. While other denominations split, this occurred around the timing of the Mexican-American War. With the conflict ending in 1848 the potential of more slave states came to fruition, stirring up chaos, and abolitionist consent. To quell the potential of an overblown political situation, coming directly from the hand of the Federal government, the decision was made to leave any potential slave questions up to the citizens of new territory, the infamous 1850 Compromise. While this allowed the Federal government officials to breathe easy, knowing they didn't have to make the difficult choice, the choice spread discontent throughout the country. By this time the slave question began to weigh heavily on a nation that viewed itself as God's chosen nation, a New Israel.¹¹ This created an era in which slavery not only polarized the country, but further divided the Northern and Southern churches, forcing the Southern churches to draw further away from Northern influence, and go onto the defensive.

In modern-day America it is easy to discount the influence of religion. Between 1992-2020 the number of Americans stating they were church members dropped from 70% of 1,000 respondents in 1992 to just 52% in 2020. The number of Americans who explicitly stated they were not involved in any church rose from 29% saying no in 1992 to 47% of Americans.¹² In 1850, according to quantitative data

¹¹ Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*, 19.

¹² Published by Statista Research Department, and Jan 15. "Church Membership among AMERICANS 2020." *Statista*, 15 Jan. 2021, www.statista.com/statistics/245485/church-membership-among-americans/.

compiled by Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, written in 1986, church membership grew from 10% in 1800 to 34% in the 1850's, growing to 37% by 1860. Astonishingly this trend continued until 1980 in which 62% of Americans were estimated to have held church memberships, so in the years between 1800-1850 church membership grew exponentially.¹³ This number discounts the higher number of Americans who were simply involved with a church in the first-half of the 1800's, which was viewed as much higher due to the uneasiness about new denominations. These statistics should note the tremendous influence the church had on daily life in the United States. In the South, especially, the incessant attacks against slavery that started to call from Northern pulpits was mirrored by the growing hostility towards slavery in politics, thus forcing southern ministers to shuffle positions and go on the defensive. This all occurred as southern religious leaders became esteemed leaders of southern communities.¹⁴

While slavery is not the primary cause of the Civil War to come, it played the essential role in a divided church, and eventual support for the war. During a post-Awakening era of American history, the church had such profound influence that the sentiments quickly infiltrated politics. A notable pamphlet, published in 1851 titled *Selections from the Speeches and Writings of Prominent Men in the United States on the subject of Abolition and Agitation*, took political sentiments from Union Safety Committee in light of the 1850 Compromise. While the committee members spoke in favor of compromise, they attacked slavery. The speakers argue that the Constitution recognized a system of slavery, and therefore the government could not make decisions to abolish or not. The authors spoke in circles, both defending abolitions, but struggling to skirt federal law, such as the Fugitive Slave Act, and questioning the viability

¹³ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, "Turning People into Pews: Estimating 19th Century Church Membership, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25, no.2 (June 1986), 187.

¹⁴ Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 15.

of rehoming three-million freed slaves.¹⁵The greatest fear, invoked by the pamphlet was the potential break-up of the American Union, thus exemplifying the political tension of the day.

War Begins 1861:

With tensions growing between Northern and Southern churches, especially over the issue of slavery, America began to fracture. God's mighty, and great nation was now breaking over economic and political issues, and now religious issues as well. The Union was seen as a necessity to maintain the promise of America, but Southerners saw it differently, especially following the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. This came in the years following the Kansas-Nebraska act in which bloody revolts over the issue of slavery came to a head with John Brown's Slave Revolt in 1859. Idleness was no longer allowed, as the issue of slavery went from philosophical, and political to material in an instant. John Brown's slave revolt occurred just three years after an abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner was caned on the Senate floor by South Carolina Representative Preston Brooks. Sumner, an ardent abolitionist fought to repeal the Fugitive Slave Act, that would force freed slaves to be returned to their owners.¹⁶ These were all signs of growing strife, that would affect the church.

The church was used to create a persona surrounding Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's religious image was used to address the reality that political and religious life were one in the same.

While Lincoln's devoutness is called into question by modern historians, this image was important for a populace concerned divine retribution, and acts that served as barrier to destiny as God's chosen nation.

In-turn, during an era in which Protestantism was the most influential religious movement in America, Catholicism was viewed with suspicion. Politicians used this to their advantage, by showing Lincoln's opponent, Stephen A. Douglas, as a Catholic who was not attuned to temperance.

¹⁵ *Selections from the Speeches and Writings of Prominent Men in the United States on the subject of Abolition and Agitation and in favor of the Compromise Measures of the last session of congress, addressed to the People of the State of New York by the Union Safety Committee* (New York: J.P. Wright, 1851), 4-6.

¹⁶ "The Demands of Freedom: Speech of Hon. Charles Sumner, In the Senate of the United States, Feb . 23, 1855, on his Motion to Repeal the Fugitive Slave Bill." *New York Daily Times*, March 10, 1855.

The Lincoln-Douglas election portrays the prominence of religion in everyday life. The Northern-Southern split that came with the election of Lincoln signified a shift in the conversation within religious circles. The luxury to stay silent on the political issues of the day was no longer. The crisis was furthered in December of 1860, following Lincoln's election, in which South Carolina voted to secede from the Union. Three weeks later Mississippi seceded, followed by Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina and finally in Tennessee, following a declaration of war. War came when the symbol of Federal oppression, a fortress in Charleston Bay, was attacked on April 12, 1861. Lincoln later called for 75,000 volunteers, and this action, along with Fort Sumter's fall, meant that both the North and South had viable religious grounds for war.

A Holy War 1861-63:

War was now declared in April of 1861, and both Northern and Southern churches were forced to take a stance. An infamous Tennessee Bishop of the Episcopal Church, James Otey, gave a fiery speech, telling all Southerners to not sympathize with the United States, the call for volunteers was proof that Southerners needed rebel.¹⁷ To Southerners, their fight against the federal oppressor was a fight sanctioned by God. Northerners took a similar stance, most notable example being a story about the pious commander of Fort Sumter Major Robert Anderson, in which the devout officer defended his fortress in compliance with God's will. Just months earlier in a January 26th issue of *Harper's Weekly* in which an illustration shows a kneeling Major Anderson, praying at the foot of an American flag in Fort Sumter's Parade Ground.¹⁸ A major shift in the narrative, in the newspapers of America, reflected a shift within the church; the North seeing that the southerners had defied to keep together God's chosen Union, and the Southerners saw the Union aggression as an attack on biblically sanctioned issues.

¹⁷ Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War*, 52.

¹⁸ *The prayer at Sumter*. South Carolina Charleston United States Fort Sumter, 1861. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/00652804/>.

The Civil War, for both sides, was justified in religious sentiments. A definitive victory for either side required a national identity to solidify their image as God's chosen nation. The true cause of the Civil War is far more involved than a simplistic view that slavery was the sole cause, something espoused by many modern historians. Modern historical discourse, however, has pointed to more diverse causes, such as the economic causes of war. Zachary Liscow's quantitative analysis of the war's causes, utilizes the data of voters in the 1860 election, taking note that available information points to economic concerns first above the slavery issue, as well as preservation of the Union.¹⁹ While economics was a driving force, the unification of the United States needed a religious cause. For the Union, the country was attacked at Fort Sumter, and in sermons like Leonard Swain's, taking place in the weeks following the attack, he preached that defense of one's nation was sanctioned, and encouraged by God.²⁰ Many Protestants who held millennial beliefs about America as a nation needed to fulfill God's prophesy, saw the war was essential to unify the country again, while also ridding America of the moral evil that was slavery.

In the southern states, protestant ministers played an integral role in pushing forth the war effort. Southern ministers were known to preach in favor of secession. Protestant ministers were highly in favor of the eventual war, and it is known that one-hundred and forty-one Episcopal ministers of the south alone served in the Confederate sources.²¹ One of the most revered ministers to fight for the Confederacy was Leonidas Polk. Polk had been a graduate of the United States Military Academy, and only served five-months before resigning his commission, upon which he became an Episcopalian minister. Upon outbreak of war, he volunteered his service, and ultimately made the rank of Lieutenant General before falling in action at the Battle of Marietta, opposite William T. Sherman. This commitment

¹⁹ Zachary Liscow, "Why Fight Secession? Evidence of the economic motivations from the American Civil War," *Public Choice* 153, no. 1-2 (October 2012), 37-42.

²⁰ Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 55.

²¹ W. Harrison Daniel, "Protestantism and Patriotism in the Confederacy," *Mississippi Quarterly* 24, no.2 (Spring 1971), 119.

by clergymen didn't stop with Episcopalians, and the ensuing war would see a vast rise in the number of clergies serving in the field as chaplains.²²

The Confederacy needed a national identity; one in which a unified southern cause could result in eventual victory. The issue over slavery, that ultimately forced guilt upon the southern populace was justified biblically, as long as the slaves were treated properly.²³ Abolitionist ideas that had been present in the preceding decades were often viewed as heretical, and this allowed for influential ministers, like James Thornwell, to preach justification. The protestant beliefs of the Civil War held to the foundation that God would directly insert himself into the affairs of man. The Civil War therefore could be just, as the attempts by northern aggressors to change, and break from God's word, could therefore be seen as providence, for a Southern nation chosen by God. When war was officially declared, both the northern, and southern sides believed their side was favored by God.²⁴ Southern justification came quickly in 1861, helping southerners develop a national, divinely chosen identity.

In July of 1861 a Confederate army under the command of P.G.T Beauregard defeated a Union force under the leadership of Irwin McDowell. This victory came as a surprise to southerners, and a shock to the northerners. This victory would lead to a string of phenomenal military feats performed by the Confederate Army. The CSA forces would crush the Union forces at places like Fredericksburg VA, again at Manassas, Chancellorsville, the Shenandoah Valley under the leadership of pious General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, and other resounding Confederate victories. In the 19th century, where God would show his favor to the righteous, the southern cause appeared to be righteous. Combating the Northern aggressor, and heretic, was giving the south favor. CSA president Jefferson Davis made national calls for

²² Richard Beringer and Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones and William N. Still, *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 87.

²³ Beringer, *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, 92.

²⁴ Bertram Wyatt Brown, "Church, Honor and Secession," in *Religion and the American Civil War* edited by Randall Miller, Harry Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 89-92.

fasting and prayer.²⁵ These Christian demonstrations, echoed in the southern churches, truly pushed forth a southern agenda. Ironically, southerners believed that God favored freedom, which to southern clergymen meant freedom from a federal aggressor, as slavery was not entirely wrong. This combination of religious fervor, with material military victory gave southerners assurance of their favor.

Morality and Guilt Derail a Cause (1863-65)

Despite Confederate victories in the East, the Western Front began to fall apart early on. CSA forces were defeated by Ulysses S. Grant at Fort Henry and Donelson and ultimately at Vicksburg. He turned the tides at Shiloh just five months before Abraham Lincoln called for the Emancipation Proclamation, a maneuver that would derail the southern war effort. In 1863, Robert E. Lee invaded the North again and was handed a defeat that crippled the southern war effort. The Battle of Gettysburg ended on July 3, 1863 with a disastrous assault infamously known as Pickett's Charge. Lee lost nearly 1/3 of the Army of Northern Virginia, and the rest of the conflict was spent reeling to the defensive. The church leaders of the South could no longer espouse beliefs of a chosen nation.²⁶ Lee's army not only faced constant, and horrific loss in the field, but soldiers in his forces began to desert in droves.

Desertion was a signifier of the crippling southern image. The emancipation proclamation laid fire to northern wills as the major driving force was now emancipation. With a new general to stand behind, in overall commander Ulysses Grant, the northern forces had a new meaning. Northern fervor was reflected in songs of the era like Julia Ward Howe's *Battle Hymn of the Republic* which was infamously ended with the line "let us die to make men free" reflected the spiritual aspect of the conflict. Religious revival ripped through Northern camps, made famous by images like Thomas Mooney giving mass before the infamous Irish Brigade. The Civil War years were fertile for both sides of the conflict within

²⁵ " Important from the South.: Jeff, Davis Appoints March 27 as a Day of Fasting and Prayer. Rebel Reports from Vicksburg. An Attack by Gen. Grant's Forces Believed to be Imminent. Rosecrans Advancing," *The New York Times* March 5, 1863.

²⁶ Beringer, *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, 98.

camps, but the Southern cause derailed as God appeared to favor the spiritual betterers of the Northerners. The Confederate cause was only ever loosely held together by a wavering nationalism, but with God's hand in victory the army was able to hold together.²⁷ Now, however, the southerners were fighting simply to keep in place the horrible act of slavery, or so it seemed. Northern ministers were able to will their men forward with the idea that God would bring certain victory in order to finish his plan for the United States, rid the world of the obstacle that held up his purpose.

Northern churches were now able to point to punishment for southern sin. The horrors of war were punishment enough, but southerners were suffering from destruction of their homeland, and a complete depletion of able-bodied men, of which most were forced to serve. Morale came from the religious leaders of the day, and the tremendous hardships experienced by those at home, and in the field could no longer be explained away.²⁸ Many southerners had resigned themselves to their eventual fate. Religious strength was a part of all American society during the years of the war, and as the religious morale began to collapse in the southern states, the cause lost any ground to stand on. Many Confederate soldiers now saw themselves as fighting for an institution which they all knew was wrong. Confederate camps experienced tremendous revival, but soldiers were beginning to seek guidance in pertinence to the horrors they faced on the battlefield.²⁹ Confederate printing presses also produced a large body of writing on the subject of the Confederate cause, but later efforts were futile, as the morale of soldiers collapsed by 1865.³⁰

²⁷ Beringer, *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, 98-101.

²⁸ James Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (Gloucester: P. Smith, 1964), 101.

²⁹ Drew Faust "Christian Soldiers: The Meaning of Revivalism in the Confederate Army," *The Journal of Southern History* 53, no.1 (February 1987), 63-90.

³⁰ Kurt Berends, "Wholesome Reading Purifies and Elevates the Man: The Religious Military Press in the Confederacy," in *Religion and the American Civil War* edited by Randall Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 133-140.

Northern war efforts were bolstered by a contribution from the churches. Revivals in camp offered comfort to the soldiers fighting, while also serving central to boosting the morale of soldiers. While the Union forces were winning the war, it came at an incredible cost, in which Northern forces were simply able to outnumber southerners. Robert E. Lee's tactical genius saw him make due with a much smaller force, still creating victories. In 1864 Lee's forces annihilated Grant's forces at Cold Harbor, during Grant's Overland Campaign, losing 5,200 men to Grant's losses of nearly 13,000. The bloodiest fighting of the war occurred at Spotsylvania Court House in May of 1864, followed by a costly defensive campaign for Grant outside of Petersburg, Virginia, creating a battlefield of trenches comparable to the Western Front of World War 1. Lee's forces, however dwindled, purely due to the lack of reinforcements back home. Lee slowly began to lose his trusted generals, losing Stonewall Jackson in 1863, followed by Generals like J.E.B Stuart at Yellow Tavern in May of 1864, and A.P. Hill in 1865. These losses came piecemeal for Lee, and Union forces had to suffer through horrific experiences to complete their task, and the church often offered the only solace.

As America stood as a Protestant nation, expanding mission work throughout, the Union forces were able to use this to an advantage to spread Christianity among the ranks. Both armies received Bibles, pamphlets and sermons from the United States Christian Commission, founded in 1865. According to Russell Rich in *American Methodism: A Compact History* the Union Army saw a religious revival in which nearly 200,000 men converted.³¹ These men were coming from a Christian society in which many coming into the Union Army considered themselves Evangelical Christians, as well as Catholics, Mormons and Jewish soldiers. On the Union home front, the war had stayed distant, and northerners were exempt from the same suffering inflicted on Southerners. This allowed for greater Northern morale, coming from religious leadership. Family members not in the field offered support, through

³¹ Russell Richey, Kenneth Rowe and Jean Miller Schmidt, *American Methodism: A Compact History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 99.

prayer, and various other forms of religious transfer such as pamphlets, tracts and sermons. Morale reached new heights in the Union as victories started to accrue. Northern forces finally found a competent general, and freed black slave were being used in the field to terrific effect. This all-reflected God 's favor for Northerners, especially as victory came following Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln was notorious for invoking Christian references, and thus he was often viewed as Christian leader. Freed slaves, military victory, religious revival in camp, new successful military leaders, Abraham Lincoln's eventual reelection, and the impending conjoining of the Union again contrasted with the Southern experience.

In the South, armies were bleeding out, losing men in their ranks to both combat and desertion. The southern fronts were rapidly shrinking, especially following defeats at major southern cities like New Orleans, and Atlanta. Confederate forces had confiscated material, leaving southern citizens wanting. Scorched-earth policies from commanders, like William Sherman brought retribution on the Confederate populace. The ranks of Confederate generals were dwindling with the death of generals like Stonewall Jackson, A.P. Hill, J.E.B Stuart, Johnston Pettigrew, Lewis Armistead, among others. The southerners were facing defeats at the hands of their former slaves, and roving Union patrols were setting slaves free to join Union ranks. In a time where it was widely believed that God's will was materialized on earth, it was clear that the southern cause had started to falter, and God favored the Union.

Conclusion:

Containing the complex subject of religion and the Civil War in a short essay is hardly obtainable. Despite the conciseness of the prior writing, it can be noted that the Civil War was greatly affected by Christianity, the Church and religion overall. Religious leaders in America were able to expand the sentiments of war, as well as sustain, or aid in the downfall of the war effort.

In a post-Awakening America, Protestant Christianity infiltrated all areas of life, including politics. Americans viewed their nation as one divinely inspired, through the preponderance of religious influence in the nation. This led to fears, eventually, over the depravity of man getting in the path of God's plan for his Millennial Kingdom. The greatest issue that arose later was slavery. While slavery did not cause the Civil War, it led to the splitting of the American Church into Northern and Southern components. As religion was profound in American life, and Americans sought answers in church pews, the church had an influence over the minds of congregations who attended these split churches. The churches stirred emotions either in favor of slavery, or ardently against it. During years of political rebuilding, religion during the reverberations of the Awakening, was bound to be influenced by politics, and in 1860 this came to fruition with the election of Abraham Lincoln, and the ensuing Civil War. Southerners found their identity in their collective religion. As they struggled to hold their own nationally, they were able to pull onto Protestant beliefs of the age, to see their nation as the one God wanted to win. This view worked early on, as CSA forces continued to find victory, after victory until the disaster at Gettysburg in 1863. The defeat caused a shift in the morale of southerners, especially coming from the church. No longer could the church drive the narrative that the South was meant to succeed onward to victory, as every aspect of the Southern war effort collapsed. Northern propaganda, newspapers and ministers spoke constantly of the moral superiority involved in freeing man from bondage, and soon the Confederates believed they were only fighting to defend the abomination of slavery. Union forces found final victory in 1865, and this came after an incredible reversal of fate. Revivals in camp, positive messages in the pulpits, and clear favor from God rebounded the Union efforts. Final victory came after enduring years of hardship that were necessary to fulfill God's vision, which involved rejoining the Union back together. Favor came following Emancipation, and the chain of favorable events ultimately proved the Godly influence in the Union victory.

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