“Alas for the Church of God”: Southern Methodist Leaders and the Quest for Ecclesiological Identity, 1844-1876

by

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Abstract

This dissertation traces the formation, development, and preservation of a distinctive “southern Methodist” identity by southern Wesleyan leaders during the Civil War era, and describes the tensions faced in seeking to faithfully fulfill the components of that identity. Southern Methodism was birthed into both a particular social ethos and a distinguishing ecclesiastical philosophy. It took organizational form in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, following the 1844 separation of southern and northern delegates to the Methodist Episcopal Church’s General Conference session.

Southern Methodist leaders sought to maintain their ecclesiological character while embracing their southernness. They witnessed against the ills and sins they perceived in the society around them, even as they defended that society’s foundations. They engaged ecumenically with other faith communities, but conserved their denominational distinctives, occasionally in aggressive manners, and they zealously maintained their Wesleyan legitimacy, while battling for recognition and autonomy from their estranged northern counterparts.

Political secession and the American Civil War complicated all of these areas, while also adding problematic issues of loyalty and submission for a religious body that traversed both Confederate and Union territories. Southern Methodist leaders struggled to carry out their sense of civic duty and to sustain their ecclesiastical channels, which

proved a gargantuan task in the face of wartime chaos and northern Methodist attempts at taking over the southern jurisdiction.

By the close of war, the southern church's prospects for autonomous survival seemed bleak. Southern Methodist leaders, however, proclaimed their intentions to rebuild their denomination and remain a separate body of Methodism. Beginning with the critical General Conference of 1866, they did just that, and by the end of Reconstruction had eliminated any doubts of their church's endurance. Meanwhile, at Cape May in 1876, northern Methodist representatives finally recognized the southern denomination as a coequal and co-legitimate branch of original American Methodism, providing the ecclesiological fulfillment of identity that southern Methodist leaders had asserted and sought for over 30 years.

Acknowledgments

I make no apologies for the length of the list that follows. In the process of researching and writing this dissertation, and indeed throughout the duration of my academic career, I have been gifted with a personal and professional community of support that humbles me beyond words. It is my joy and my honor to offer my deepest thanks to those who have traveled this journey with me, or refreshed me along the path.

I have benefited greatly from the resources of numerous archives and libraries. I am indebted to the excellent staffs of the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library at Emory University; the Special Collections and University Archives of the Jean and Alexander Heard Library at Vanderbilt University; the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University; the J. B. Cain Archives of Mississippi Methodism at Millsaps College; the Memphis Conference Archives of the United Methodist Church in Jackson, Tennessee; the Library of Virginia and the Virginia Historical Society, both in Richmond, Virginia; and the South Central Kentucky Cultural Center in Glasgow, Kentucky. My particular thanks to Ann Phillips of the Memphis Conference Archives and to Debra McIntosh of Millsaps University for making particularly restricted sources available for my research.

Two summer fellowships in the early stages of my dissertation provided subsidized research and a wonderful sounding board of scholars and field experts. First, the 2011 Duke Summer Wesley Seminar, hosted by the Center for Studies in the

Wesleyan Tradition at Duke Divinity School. While there, I enjoyed the brilliance, collegiality, and Wesleyan expertise of the three seminar directors, Randy Maddox, Dick Heitzenrater, and Russ Richey. Second, the 2012 Wesleyan Studies Summer Seminar, hosted by Asbury University and Asbury Seminary. I received crucial insights and gracious generosity from the seminar director, Ken Collins, and my assigned faculty mentor, Ken Kinghorn.

My employing institution, Freed-Hardeman University, has supported my work in multiple ways. Provost and Vice-President for Academics C. J. Vires provided Faculty Research Grant funds to facilitate both research for and presentation of sections of my dissertation, and he has been a strong supporter and advocate of faculty scholarship generally. Greg Massey has respectively served as my undergraduate advisor, my senior thesis mentor, my teaching colleague, and my department chair. In each of these roles, he has shaped my work and career in ways for which I am profoundly grateful. Writing a dissertation while teaching a nine-course annual load has been a formidable task, but Greg has assisted me at every turn, from minimizing new preps to shielding me from excessive committee and advising obligations.

FHU's library staff has been an invaluable ally. Although she tragically passed early during the project, former Library Director Hope Shull was a friend and a knowledgeable resource to all faculty members engaging in scholarly projects. It is an honor to utilize the Academic Resource Center that now bears her name. Additional library staff, especially current Director Wade Osburn, Interlibrary Loan Manager Karen Hobbs, and former University Archivist and Departmental Liaison James Mitchell, have

gone above and beyond the ordinary call of librarians' duty to acquire and make available numerous books and microfilms for my project.

I presented selections of my dissertation research for the Tennessee Historical Society, the Society of Appalachian Historians, the Christian Scholars' Conference, and the FHU University Scholars' Day. At each of these venues, I received valuable feedback that guided or affirmed the direction of my study.

I am thankful for the many faculty and graduate colleagues that shaped my graduate experience at Auburn University. Many departmental friends made coursework and prelims not only bearable, but a true intellectual joy. Adam Jortner and James Wright (my University Reader) provided insightful comments and questions for my defense. Charles Israel, although a second reader, remained intricately involved in evaluating and editing my dissertation from the earliest writing. He is a model faculty member and administrator, and I am privileged to have had his guidance.

Kenneth Noe has been an impeccable advisor. I stumbled into his office my first year as a master's student at Auburn, still grappling to figure out the direction of my graduate study. He welcomed me to the university, patiently served as faculty guide to an early research project, and eventually took me on as an advisee. He has proven flexible, encouraging, and knowledgeable at every phase of my work. Ken is a rare combination of immaculate scholar, superb teacher, and inspiring advisor; he is, in the fullest sense, a true mentor.

Many friends have been unflagging supporters, and I am constantly amazed and humbled by the love they shower upon me. My faith community at Jacks Creek Church of Christ has given me spiritual nourishment and faithful camaraderie throughout my

dissertation. The individuals there are too many to mention, but I hope they know how deeply I love each of them. They are a beautiful gathering of ragamuffin saints, and I cherish my family's inclusion among them.

Rolland Pack, who served as my undergraduate Honors College Director and also officiated my wedding, has given me gifts in abundance. My research notes sit in file cabinets he bought personally and passed down to me, and I read journal articles in a gloriously comfortable leather recliner he himself carried into my office as a surprise. Rolland and his precious wife Rebecca have always been available for conversation, a hot cup of coffee, and a word or prayer of loving encouragement.

Andy Wood was the first person I met in the history department of Auburn University. We began our coursework simultaneously, shared nearly every seminar together, and although separated by multiple states after completing prelims, have conversed at length through every point of the dissertation. In the end, we submitted our complete first drafts within 24 hours of each other. If there is such a thing as academic blood brothers, we have long since adopted each other, and I cannot fathom completing this dissertation without his influence and companionship.

Kenan and Ashley Casey are the best of friends. Through our time as undergrads together, to our overlapping graduate study at Auburn, to our reunion now as colleagues, Kenan and I have shared virtually all stages of academia together. The Caseys have plied me with food, espresso, babysitting, and commiseration during the entire journey. I have few joys as great as seeing our children share the same close friendship that their parents have.

The Lofland clan in Opelika, Alabama, may as well be family. Frank and Janice are like a third set of parents to my wife and me, and John and Lisa are wonderful honorary siblings. I may never reside in the Auburn area again, but it will be a "home" to me as long as the Loflands are there.

My family has been unwavering in love, in faith, and in support of me for as long as I can remember. I am thankful for my brother Collin, the best high school history teacher I know, and his wife Michelle, for their steadfast support and encouragement. My extended family in Florida nourished several of my writing binges – both with uplifting cards and with care packages of beef jerky, iTunes cards, and money for caffeinated inspiration. When I married, I received a kind, faithful, and generous set of in-laws, for whom I am deeply appreciative. Glenn and Carol Ary, as well as my brother-in-law Clint and his wife Allison, have encouraged me throughout this journey and provided abundant care for my family when I needed intensive work periods without distraction. Finally, my parents, Olen and Linda Markum, have equipped and supported me throughout my life. The sacrifices, generosity, time, and love they poured into my upbringing, my academic training, and my family have been both invaluable and seemingly endless. In marriage, in faith, and in charity, they are my heroes.

My son Cael was born just as I was beginning my dissertation. As I complete it, he is starting kindergarten, and now has two younger brothers, Caden and Cuyler, as well. The beautiful, loving chaos that my sons bring to my life cannot be overstated. This project has taken much longer because of them, but I would not trade a second of time spent with them during its completion. They are my pride and joy.

Lastly, and most importantly, I thank Jenny. Everyone else on this list has witnessed or aided in this journey of my dissertation; my wife has lived it with me. Her sacrifices and support can hardly be quantified, so I will not embarrass myself in the futility of trying to do so. Suffice it to say that I consider myself blessed and privileged far beyond what I deserve to share my life with her. To dedicate this dissertation to her seems wholly inadequate, but only she will grasp the scope of time, labor, stress, expense, and love represented by that dedication. She is worth all of it – and infinitely more.

Soli Deo gloria.

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List of Abbreviations

AME	African Methodist Episcopal Church
AMEZ	African Methodist Episcopal, Zion Church
MCA	*Memphis Christian Advocate*
MEC	Methodist Episcopal Church
MECS	Methodist Episcopal Church, South
MPC	Methodist Protestant Church
NCA	*Nashville Christian Advocate*
NCCA	*North Carolina Christian Advocate*
NOCA	*New Orleans Christian Advocate*
RCA	*Richmond Christian Advocate*
SCA	*Southern Christian Advocate*
TCA	*Texas Christian Advocate*

Introduction

This dissertation is a study of the dynamics of ecclesiological identity in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) from its formation in 1844 through the period of Reconstruction following the American Civil War. It focuses on southern Methodist leaders' process of delineating, establishing, and maintaining a distinct and autonomous denominational persona across the mid-nineteenth century. The central argument is straightforward: "southern Methodist" leaders grappled with a tension of identity, seeking to act and direct their church in ways that were both quintessentially "southern" and fundamentally "Methodist." While these dual categories of identity were generally compatible, they periodically intersected or clashed in manners that forced southern Methodists to prioritize either their sociopolitical or else their ecclesiastical heritage. The development of the MECS during this era reveals a faith tradition that both defended and challenged the mores of southern culture, and took great pride in its Wesleyan theology and organization even as it divided from and battled for legitimacy and autonomy against the largest denomination of American Methodism, the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC).

Reflecting these strains of duality, one Southern Methodist bishop assigned MECS preachers to chaplaincies in the Union army, even as a fellow bishop drove preachers out of the denomination for the "heresy" of Unionism. Southerners opposed antislavery to the extent of dividing the national Methodist church, but left the overtly antislavery sections of the Methodist *Discipline* undisturbed for nearly fifteen years. They crafted a convincing-enough constitutional case for their schism that the senior bishop and "constitutional father" of Methodism, Joshua Soule of Maine, took his stand

alongside the southern jurisdiction. White southern Methodists bitterly fought their northern counterparts for contested denominational infrastructure, yet willingly ceded over a million dollars worth of property to exiting black southern Methodists after the Civil War. And the same postwar General Conference that caustically declared its intentions to remain forever autonomous from northern Methodism voted by majority to remove the word "South" from the southern church's name. In these and similar episodes, "southern Methodism" revealed deep nuances, qualifications, and tensions within the two fundamental components of its identity.

This study, and its component themes, fits into a robust and growing body of nineteenth century southern religious history. Excellent scholarship on the religious dimensions of the antebellum period abounds. Christine Heyrman, in *Southern Cross*, explains the origins of the "Bible Belt" through the convergence of southern evangelicalism and southern slavery and conceptions of mastery. In *The Democratization of American Christianity*, Nathan Hatch compares the democratizing diffusion of political power and ideology in the early republic to the growing influence of laity and non-elite believers within the explosively-growing denominations of the Second Great Awakening. Philip Mulder's *A Controversial Spirit* explores the promise, politics, and pitfalls of evangelical revivals in the antebellum South, demonstrating the resiliency of theological and organizational particularities that forestalled Protestant homogeneity even in the midst of broad "awakenings."[1]

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[1] Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Philip N. Mulder, *A Controversial Spirit: Evangelical Awakenings in the South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Numerous other studies have focused on the relationship between Protestant evangelicalism and the society around them. Donald Mathews's dated but still relevant *Religion in the Old South* explains how evangelical understandings of liberty and individual value bolstered both white dominant middle-class society and black southerners eager to be free from the physical and spiritual bindings of slavery. Similarly, in *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity*, Sylvester Johnson contends that black Christians effectively appropriated a contrived scriptural justification for racial bondage in such a way as to force white believers to acknowledge their spiritual legitimacy. Charity Carney applies a historiographical focus on honor studies to religious masculinity in her recent *Ministers and Masters*. Beth Schweiger's *The Gospel Working Up* examines antebellum southern society's gradual embrace of previously unrespectable evangelical groups through a lens of professionalization, progress, and modernity, while John Eighmy more pessimistically views the 1845 formation of the Southern Baptist Convention as a marker of southern Christianity's "captivity" to the culture surrounding it.[2]

Additionally, two studies, the edited compilation *God and Mammon* and Kenneth Startup's *The Root of All Evil*, flesh out the interaction between antebellum Protestantism and the market economies of the nineteenth-century world. And Gregory Wills's

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[2] Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); Sylvester A. Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Charity R. Carney, *Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood, and Honor in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011); Beth Barton Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

Democratic Religion discusses the interplay of Calvinistic Baptist oversight and discipline with southern conceptions of liberty and autonomy in the South.[3]

Several additional works have deftly investigated the role of slavery and race in antebellum southern religious identity. Anne Loveland's classic *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order* intertwines evangelical leaders' views on slavery with their views on various other social issues, crafting a nuanced portrait of a typical "southern evangelical" minister. In *The War against Proslavery Religion*, John McKivigan examines the role of northern abolitionism in creating an entrenched sectionalism among southern Christians. McKivigan's edited volume with Mitchell Snay, *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery*, mobilizes a host of excellent scholars to more fully clarify slavery's crucial impact on religion leading up to the Civil War. Meanwhile, Charles Irons's study of evangelicalism in early national and antebellum Virginia, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity*, skillfully surveys the ways in which white and black Christians' ideologies directly shaped each other. And in a recent addition to the historiography, Luke Harlow's excellent *Religion, Race, and the Making of Confederate Kentucky* develops the narrative of Kentucky's religiously-influenced trajectory from antebellum Unionism to postwar neo-Confederate ideology in relation to slavery.[4]

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[3] Mark A. Noll, ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Kenneth Moore Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[4] Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); John R. McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, eds., *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia Press,

Antebellum Christianity significantly impacted the sectional crisis, as some important studies have shown. In 1993, two pivotal studies appeared that further clarified the circumstances of political and religious separatism. Richard Carwardine's *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* provides an account of the debates and divisions over the "spiritual church" and its role in society, and the respective philosophies toward political involvement and rhetoric taken by northern and southern churches. Mitchell Snay's *Gospel of Disunion* meanwhile focuses on the influence of southern churchmen in their society, and the manner in which they formed, if sometimes ambivalently, a religious defense of slavery and helped to craft a unique southern identity against what they saw as an increasingly heretical and divisive northern clergy and society.[5]

In regards to the sectional crisis, Mark Noll's *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* reveals that the sectional conflict involved a deeply theological battle over hermeneutics and biblical approach, which lasted well beyond the surrender at Appomattox. Edward Crowther's *Southern Evangelicals and the Coming of the Civil War* argues that southern Christians came to view the Republican Party as a challenge to the entire foundation of their investment in southern culture, thus accepting secession as a means of preserving that moral influence. And C. C. Goen's *Broken Churches, Broken*

1998); Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Luke E. Harlow, *Religion, Race, and the Making of Confederate Kentucky, 1830-1880* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[5] Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

Nation finds in the major denominational schisms prior to the war both a foreshadowing of and a prerequisite for political secession in 1860.[6]

The once-neglected topic of religion during the Civil War has, happily, seen an explosion of interest in recent years. Several older works remain quite relevant for scholars studying the religious dimensions of national fratricide. In 1957's *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*, James Silver surveys the support given by southern evangelical denominations to the Confederate cause. Chester Dunham looks at northern ministers' views and rhetoric toward the South and southern Christianity in a variety of aspects in his 1972 *Attitude of the Northern Clergy Toward the South*. James Moorhead's *American Apocalypse*, published in 1978, similarly emphasizes the attitudes and actions of "Yankee Protestants" during the war.[7]

The 1980s and early 1990s witnessed several key surveys of religious life vis-à-vis the Civil War. Sidney Romero's 1983 *Religion in the Rebel Ranks* is a short but effective examination of ministers' experiences in and influence on the Confederate army, Gardiner Shattuck's 1987 *A Shield and Hiding Place* briefly explores religious activity in both Union and Confederate armies. Harrison Daniel's *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy* two years later is another highly efficient study of broad aspects of Confederate Christian involvement in wartime. In 1993, Gerald Smith contributed *Smite*

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[6] Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Edward R. Crowther, *Southern Evangelicals and the Coming of the Civil War* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 2000); C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985).

[7] James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967); Chester Forrester Dunham, *The Attitude of the Northern Clergy Toward the South, 1860-1865* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1974); James Moorhead, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860-1869* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

Them Hip and Thigh!, a work focusing specifically on Georgia Methodist clerical participation in the southern army.[8]

The 1998 compilation of essays in *Religion and the American Civil War,* however, presaged a new infusion of religious historiography into Civil War scholarship. That volume assembled a host of scholars to begin searching new directions of inquiry into the field, although some projects admittedly were already well in the works. Warren Armstrong's *For Courageous Fighting and Confident Dying* concentrates on the experience of Union chaplains. On a broader level, John Brinsfield, William Davis, Benedict Maryniak, and James Robertson provide analytical essays, firsthand reminiscences, and helpful rosters of chaplains both Confederate and Union in their book *Faith in the Fight*.[9]

Meanwhile, several more recent works take an in-depth examination of the motivations, theologies, and lessons demonstrated by various demographic groups during the war. Steven Woodworth's now-classic *While God Is Marching On* set the stage for these studies, explaining how soldiers' individual and collective beliefs shaped their reception of the war's events, and in some cases, shaped the course of the war itself. Kent Dollar's *Soldiers of the Cross* gives particular focus to the way the war shaped the faith

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[8] Sidney J. Romero, *Religion in the Rebel Ranks* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983); Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., *A Shield and Hiding Place: The Religious Life of the Civil War Armies* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987); W. Harrison Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy* (Bedford: Print Shop, 1989); Gerald J. Smith, *Smite Them Hip and Thigh!: Georgia Methodist Ministers in the Confederate Army* (self-published, 1993.

[9] Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson, eds., *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Warren B. Armstrong, *For Courageous Fighting and Confident Dying: Union Chaplains in the Civil War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); John W. Brinsfield, William C. Davis, Benedict Maryniak, and James I. Robertson, Jr., *Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2003).

of "Confederate soldier-Christians," while David Rolfs and Sean Scott dissect the religious attitudes and interpretations of northern Protestant soldiers and civilians, respectively.[10]

A few volumes qualify traditional narratives of religious trajectories during the war. Bruce Gourley's study of Georgian Baptists during the war, *Diverging Loyalties*, locates key distinctions between classes and organizations of Baptist adherents that significantly impacted the support shown—or not shown—to the Confederacy. A chapter in Kenneth Noe's *Reluctant Rebels* meanwhile challenges the patterns of revival and religious journey thought to be typical for soldiers, finding important disparities in later-enlisting soldiers not exposed to the first year of war and camp life.[11]

Two grand-scale histories have appeared lately, each bringing broad synthesis and important interpretations to the field of Civil War religion. Harry Stout's impressive *Upon the Altar of the Nation* lays out in depth the ideologies and moralities that shaped and emerged from the war, and considers them with a critical eye. And George Rable's magisterial *God's Almost Chosen Peoples* provides the first cohesive fusion of the broad historiography into a streamlined narrative of religion in the American Civil War.[12]

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[10] Steven E. Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001); Kent T. Dollar, *Soldiers of the Cross: Confederate Soldier-Christians and the Impact of War on Their Faith* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005); David Rolfs, *No Peace for the Wicked: Northern Protestant Soldiers and the American Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009); Sean A. Scott, *A Visitation of God: Northern Civilians Interpret the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[11] Bruce T. Gourley, *Diverging Loyalties: Baptists in Middle Georgia During the Civil War* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2011); Kenneth W. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: the Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[12] Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Penguin, 2006); George C. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A*

The theme of nationalism is particularly pertinent to points of this story, and a religious narrative in the Civil War era is difficult to address without some level of attention to the interplay between religious belief and national identity. Numerous key works regarding Confederate nationalism have shaped the current field. In *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, the four co-authors contend that a waning nationalism among Confederate citizens, and especially southern evangelicals, drove the failure of the Confederacy. Drew Faust's much more concise *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism* provides a slightly more nuanced presentation of Confederate nationalism. Faust sees Confederate nationalism as bolstering the nascent republic, but ultimately too little and too unimaginative to compensate for the CSA's myriad other internal issues and flaws.[13]

In *The Confederate Republic*, George Rable argues that despite the Confederacy's serious internal problems, the nationalistic "revolution against politics" helped bond the formative nation together, and was key to the Confederacy lasting as long as it did. Anne Rubin, meanwhile, in *A Shattered Nation*, asserts that Confederate nationalism was the most successful byproduct of the failed attempt at independence, as the *idea* of the Confederate nation thrived and survived the actual political nation.[14]

A few monographs focus on the process of nationalistic creation, or on nationalism's application on the ground during the war. Michael Bernath's *Confederate*

Religious History of the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[13] Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still Jr., *Why The South Lost The Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

[14] George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

Minds and Coleman Hutchinson's *Apples and Ashes* each examine the role of print and intellectualism in the formation of Confederate nationalism and southern culture. In *The Metaphysical Confederacy*, James Farmer examines southern values through the intellectual biography of an ardent Confederate nationalist, James Henley Thornwell. Preston Graham's *A Kingdom Not of This World* qualifies the traditional narrative, describing the attempts of clergyman Stuart Robinson to keep devotion to God and to country separate categories during the war. Finally, Timothy Wesley's *The Politics of Faith during the Civil War* adroitly navigates the ways that religious nationalism both North and South led to intense policing and politicking on behalf of ministerial loyalty.[15]

The postwar story of religious development has significant room for growth, but several works stand out as models for further studies. The strongest broad look at religious interaction and evolution through the Reconstruction era is Daniel Stowell's *Rebuilding Zion*, concentrating on the dynamics of "religious reconstruction" in the South from the respective perspectives of southern blacks, southern whites, and northern white and black missionaries. *Vale of Tears*, an essay compilation edited by Edward Blum and

[15] Michael T. Bernath, *Confederate Minds: The Struggle for Intellectual Independence in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Coleman Hutchinson, *Apples and Ashes: Literature, Nationalism, and the Confederate States of America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012); James O. Farmer, Jr., *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986); Preston D. Graham, Jr., *A Kingdom Not of This World: Stuart Robinson's Struggle to Distinguish the Sacred from the Secular during the Civil War* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2002); Timothy L. Wesley, *The Politics of Faith during the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

Scott Poole, assembles a myriad of promising, but only article-length, excursions into postwar religious themes and stories.[16]

Anne Marshall's *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, similar to Harlow's *Making of Confederate Kentucky* but later in its chronological scope, uses a lens of memory to explore the long cultural battles and shifts that shaped the state's entrance into the twentieth century. Charles Reagan Wilson's *Baptized in Blood* demonstrates the appropriation of evangelical themes and language in the formation of a southern neo-Confederate civil religion. Ted Ownby's *Subduing Satan,* Paul Harvey's *Freedom's Coming*, and Edward Blum's *Reforging the White Republic* all incorporate analysis of the immediate postwar era, but as part of much longer chronological studies.[17]

Numerous strong studies focus on the experience of black believers after the war. Clarence Walker's *A Rock in a Weary Land* tells the story of the African Methodist Episcopal Church's role and mission efforts in the Civil War and Reconstruction South. William Montgomery, in *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, takes a similar approach, but includes more of the broad experience of black Christians in the process of postwar society. Reginald Hildebrand's *The Times were Strange and Stirring* specifically

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[16] Daniel Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Edward J. Blum and W. Scott Poole, eds., *Vale of Tears: New Essays on Religion and Reconstruction* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005).

[17] Anne Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980); Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Paul Harvey, *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

concentrates on black ministers in the Methodist tradition, and their physical and spiritual actions in response to emancipation. And Katherine Dvorak's *An African-American Exodus* details the processes of Christian segregation in the postwar South.[18]

Finally, selected Methodist-centric studies speak to the particular relevance of Wesleyan actions and beliefs in mid-century American society. A few standard histories of Methodism include the era as a portion of a much broader history of Wesleyan bodies. These include narratives by William Warren Sweet, Gross Alexander, and the various authors compiled under Emory Bucke.[19]

A few other dated but important works focus on particular themes or time periods in Methodism during the nineteenth century. Donald Mathews's *Methodism and Slavery* ends in 1845, but describes the evolution in American Methodism from a generally cohesive stance of antislavery to a bitter divisiveness of schismatic proportion over the peculiar institution. Lewis Purifoy's dissertation, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," picks up where Mathews leaves off, describing the proslavery culture that came to infuse the MECS after separation from the MEC. Hunter Farish's

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[18] Clarence E. Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land: The African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); Reginald F. Hildebrand, *The Times were Strange and Stirring: Methodist Preachers and the Crisis of Emancipation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Katherine L. Dvorak, *An African-American Exodus: The Segregation of the Southern Churches* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1991).

[19] William Warren Sweet, *Methodism in American History* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953); Gross Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," in Gross Alexander, et al, *A History of the Methodist Church, South; the United Presbyterian Church; the Cumberland Presbyterian Church; and the Presbyterian Church, South in the United States* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1894); Emory Stevens Bucke, ed., *The History of American Methodism*, Vol. II (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964).

notable tome, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, begins at the close of the Civil War and provides a social history of the MECS through the close of the century.[20]

Certain state-level examinations discuss the experience and impact of Methodists in respective locales. Roy Short's *Methodism in Kentucky* traces the development of Wesleyanism in the state from its origins up through the broad Methodist mergers of the mid-20th century. Matthew Foulds's recent dissertation, "Enemies of the State," contends that Methodist antagonisms between the divided sectional bodies helped shape the progression of Civil War West Virginia. *Cross and Flame* by John Abernathy Smith, akin to Roy Short's volume, survey's Methodism in middle Tennessee across two centuries of its maturation. Durwood Dunn's book *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism* investigates the complicated region of the Holston Conference, using slavery and ecclesiastical battles to assess the impact of the Civil War on border state Methodism. Finally, Christopher Owen's excellent *The Sacred Flame of Love*, the most significant published model for this dissertation, connects Methodism in Georgia throughout the long nineteenth century to the broader society and cultural transformations surrounding it.[21]

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[20] Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965); Lewis McCarroll Purifoy, Jr., "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery, 1844-1865" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1965); Hunter Dickinson Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts: A Social History of Southern Methodism, 1865-1900* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969).

[21] Roy Hunter Short, *Methodism in Kentucky* (Rutland: Academy Books, 1979); Matthew Tyler Foulds, "Enemies of the State: Methodists, Secession, and the Civil War in Western Virginia, 1845-1872" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2012); John Abernathy Smith, *Cross and Flame: Two Centuries of United Methodism in Middle Tennessee* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1984); Durwood Dunn, *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee

This dissertation seeks to merge components of each of these historiographical strands into a cohesive study of the development and maintenance of a distinct "southern Methodism" by denominational leaders. To accomplish this, it utilizes institutional records and histories; Annual and General Conference proceedings; the network of denominational newspapers within the MECS; the personal and public writings of bishops, editors, educational leaders, and other prominent clergy; memoirs and biographies of important denominational figures; and the rich secondary literature sampled above.

A prologue sets the stage for the tensions of southern Methodist identity that would appear throughout its development. The vignette examines a conflict in Charleston, South Carolina, in the early 1830s, over the treatment of free black members of a prominent MEC congregation. In the process of settling this clash, the regional denominational leadership acted in ways that challenge the traditional narrative of a southern church held captive to the culture around it. The resolution of the Charleston episode presents a foreshadowing of southern Methodist duality.

Following the Prologue, Chapter 1 describes the ideological and ecclesiastical buildup to the 1844 separation of southern Methodists from the MEC at that year's General Conference. Growing strains between staunchly antislavery northern Methodists and proslavery or at least slavery-accommodating Methodists in the South put great pressure on the MEC's unity, but so too did questions of ecclesiastical policy and constitutionality related to the denomination's governing document, the MEC *Discipline*. These two areas of long conflict amplified and merged in 1844, particularly as applied to

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Press, 2014); Christopher H. Owen, *The Sacred Flame of Love* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

the acquisition of slaves by Georgian bishop James Andrew. The resultant battle at the General Conference led to the drafting of a "Plan of Separation," which divided the MEC into two separate, but ostensibly fraternal and coequal, jurisdictional bodies. Southern leaders thus birthed the MECS into both a particular racial ethos and a particular constitutional ecclesiology.

Chapter 2 traces the development of this nascent "southern Methodism" as its leaders guided the MECS through its first fifteen years of existence. The constitutional questions of 1844, thought to have been peaceably resolved by the Plan of Separation, exploded anew when the 1848 MEC General Conference renounced the Plan and declared the MECS a schismatic break-off of the church, triggering an ongoing conflict over physical and financial resource ownership and ideological legitimacy. Meanwhile, MECS leaders developed a growing and generally thriving southern church that, like most other communities of faith in history, dealt with internal politics of organization and direction, formed relationships of varying affiliation or antagonism with other denominations, and struggled to mediate and influence the society around it while not alienating its potential targets for conversion.

Chapter 3 considers the southern Methodist leadership's reactions and responses to the secession winter of 1860-61 and the onset of the American Civil War in April 1861. The institutional leaders of the church generally did not push for or enthusiastically welcome secession, although their sensibilities generally sided with the South. While they vehemently attacked abolitionism, they also encouraged political moderation and ecclesiastical aloofness, viewing secession as a political matter that did not merit denominational endorsement or participation, particularly since they had already dealt

with matters of schism, slavery, and constitutionality as a spiritual matter in 1844. Church leaders drew a fine distinction between questions of politics in peacetime, however, and questions of nationalism in war. After Fort Sumter, MECS leadership overwhelmingly supported the Confederacy, even as it hoped to keep the denomination's ecclesiastical focus on matters of faith and salvation.

Chapter 4 explores the disruptions and difficulties experienced by the MECS because of the exigencies of war. Institutional leaders desperately worked to keep the denominational machinery going and meet the needs of their flock, but found it to be an increasingly futile task. Federal occupation and collateral damage from military campaigns only intensified these problems, and in the absence of stable communications and travel limitations, many sectors of the MECS simply had to improvise and carry on as best they could during the war. The inability to hold the scheduled 1862 General Conference in Union-occupied New Orleans ensured that denominational cohesiveness during the war would remain elusive. Even in the midst of such chaos, however, MECS leaders mobilized significant denominational resources and finances to support the Confederate military effort and to spiritually sustain the Confederate armies and civilian population.

Chapter 5 specifically focuses on the involvement and interactions of southern Methodist clergy during the war. MECS ministers filled many roles in Confederate military and moral service, including as chaplains, missionaries, soldiers, financiers, and recruiters. But this participation raised periodic questions of southern Methodist preachers' first priority. MECS leaders discussed and debated the appropriate forms and limits of exchanging pastoral home front duties for service to the government, and

exactly how blurry the line was between a faithful "soldier of the Lord" and an obedient soldier of the Confederate army. Meanwhile, MECS leaders tried to set aside denominational rivalries in the common interest of patriotism and wartime spiritual nurture, but also maintained and defended their theological distinctions when they perceived them to be threatened by civil religion or the actions of interdenominational organizations. Most MECS clergy wanted to serve as good Confederates, but not at the expense of being good Methodists.

Chapter 6 analyzes the contours, expectations, and limitations of "ecclesiastical nationalism" during the Civil War. Southern Methodist leaders affirmed that obedience to government and civic faithfulness were crucial components to their Christian identity, but they never ceased their belief that they were called to witness against society's sins as well. MECS spokesmen critiqued and challenged aspects of the Confederate nation even as they bolstered its spiritual and moral legitimacy. The latter half of the chapter makes an important comparison to demonstrate the complexity of nationalism in a theological context. The MECS's jurisdiction spanned both states in the CSA and in the USA. Comparing the manner in which southern Methodist leaders responded to unionism in Kentucky versus unionism in East Tennessee, the chapter argues that theology cannot be disregarded in considerations of wartime allegiance and nationalism.

Chapter 7 concentrates on the wartime interactions between the MECS and the MEC. The military conflict resurrected and enflamed long-simmering tensions and grievances between the two bodies, especially when the MEC declared the Confederate states a mission field and utilized military advancement as a means of advancing the "mother church" in the South. When Secretary of War Edwin Stanton extended to the

MEC the right of occupation and seizure of "disloyal" MECS churches, the ecclesiastical skirmish reached a fever pitch. Southern Methodist leaders interpreted the actions of MEC leaders as renewed and direct attacks against both the autonomy and the legitimacy of the southern church, and responded in vicious defense of their beloved denomination. By 1865, the American Civil War had become a holy war in American Methodism.

The final chapter picks up with southern church leaders' experience of military defeat. With the fall of the Confederacy and the failure of political independence, the survival and autonomy of the MECS also appeared quite tenuous. MEC representatives eagerly sought either reunion of the two bodies, or an imposed absorption of the southern branch by the northern church. At a small gathering at Palmyra, Missouri, however, MECS spokesmen issued a spirited declaration of their intention to remain independent, and consequent actions by southern Methodist leaders reinforced this determination. The 1866 General Conference in New Orleans became a pivotal session for rebuilding and revitalizing the MECS.

Following the war, MECS leaders also had to confront the uncertain future of their black membership, which they had largely ignored during the distractions and chaos of war. Revealing important assertions of their constitutional philosophies as well as the interplay of paternalism and postwar resignation, southern Methodist leaders organized their remaining black contingent into a separate ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) church. As Reconstruction progressed, MECS leadership continued to affirm their autonomy from and coequality with the northern church, while the two bodies slowly worked toward ecclesiastical détente. These efforts climaxed with an 1876 commission at Cape May, New Jersey, where MEC leaders finally and formally

recognized the MECS as a legitimate and coordinate branch of American Methodism, ending a 30-year struggle of ecclesiological identity.

Following Chapter 8, an epilogue bookends the prologue's realization of "southern Methodism." Investigating and appraising a little-noticed moment in 1866 when the MECS General Conference voted to change the denomination's formal name, the closing contends that southern Methodist identity carried with it after the war a continuing tension of duality. Even as MECS leaders sought to be devotedly southern and devoutly Methodist, the implications and qualifications of those component personas pulled and strained each other in subtle ways. But the events of 1876 allowed a definitive conclusion to those pressures, at least as they related to the denomination's title.

A brief appendix provides basic terms and descriptions of MECS polity and structure during the period examined in this study.

A short disclaimer on nomenclature is required. Except when used in quotes, "southern" has been kept lowercase when used as a designator for Methodists in the South. Compelling arguments may be made both for capitalizing the term and for not capitalizing it, but two reasons factored into the decision not to capitalize. First, deference is given to the common modern academic practice of capitalizing "South" but lowercasing "southern." Second, the dissertation seeks to avoid any confusion of identification of the MECS with the Southern Methodist Church, a later branch-off Wesleyan denomination of the 20th century.

"Alas for the Church of God in coming days!," MECS bishop James Andrew wrote in September 1861, reflecting on the early months of the Civil War and fearing the impact of continued conflict. The aging bishop had in large part triggered the struggle

that had birthed the southern denomination, and he could have little idea how much the war would revive the battles of Methodism and threaten the MECS. As southern Methodists who proudly embraced both components of their identity, however, Andrew and other MECS leaders would not give up on their beloved church. For better or worse, they would fare as it fared.[22]

[22] *Nashville Christian Advocate*, 19 September 1861.

Prologue
"For ourselves, we love Methodism": William Capers and the Realization of Southern Methodism

"In consequence of this arbitrary and despotic proceeding worthy of a Russian autocrat, or the Cham of Tartary, nearly one hundred and fifty members have withdrawn from the [Methodist Episcopal] Church, and now appeal to an enlightened public for a justification of their conduct." So charged a group of eight expelled church members, writing on behalf of former Methodist Charlestonians at the conclusion of a complicated—and as historian Donald Mathews notes, a "minor but symbolic"—moment in antebellum southern religion.[1]

The background and impetus for the conflict is vital to understanding the implications of the episode's conclusion. The initial controversy entailed the extent of segregation and the treatment of free blacks at one of the most populous Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) meetinghouses in 1833-34. Charleston had been at the crux of a national scare roughly ten years earlier, when Denmark Vesey planned a failed slave uprising that resulted in widespread racial backlash and raised white paranoia of further insurrection.[2]

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[1] *An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Difficulties in the Church in Charleston in the Year 1833, up to November 28 of that Year*, Pamphlet 2 of 4, p. 25, Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 205. The series of published pamphlets are, respectively, the explanation for expulsion dispensed to the remaining church members; a refutation and alternative explanation produced by the expelled members; a broader reply and defense by the church; and the concluding report by the South Carolina Conference.

[2] A strong treatment and analysis of the Vesey conspiracy and its effects is Douglas R. Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey* (Madison: Madison House, 1999).

While the MEC congregation's trustees required slaves to sit in sequestered galleries, free blacks possessed more leeway in their sitting arrangements, although many sat in an intentionally designed area known as "the boxes." By the summer of 1833, however, some white members had grown increasingly sensitive about the amount of interracial seating on the main floor of the building. Finding little support from the church pastorate for an ultimatum against interracial seating, the discontented white members took matters into their own hands. On a particularly crowded Sunday, they physically ousted blacks seated in the traditionally "white" area outside the boxes from the church. This use of force raised the ire of church leadership, including the lead minister, William Capers. Moreover, the next Quarterly Conference passed resolutions seeking to remove the boxes altogether and require free black members to sit in specifically designated segregated benches.[3]

Capers considered the resolutions "unfortunate." Believing that the sentiments of the church trustees and the general membership supported him, he offered a public rebuke to those he felt lacked "christian charity and kindness" in their treatment of black members. At that point, emotions and reactions on both sides began to intensify. The "Committee," a group of men delegated with delivering the resolutions to the trustees, believed that Capers had undermined the conference's directives, and they sent him a petition in support of the resolutions, containing the signatures of over 250 church members. That petition initiated a long and bitter correspondence between Capers and the

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[3] *Difficulties in the Church in Charleston*, Pamphlet 2 of 4, pp. 1-2; Melton, *A Will to Choose,* 161-62; *Difficulties in the Church in Charleston*, Pamphlet 1 of 4, p. 4. Melton attributes the population growth of both black and white members to the recent arrival of Capers, who was regarded as an exceptionally skilled preacher. If true, Capers' popularity served very much as a double-edged sword for Charleston Methodism, as will be seen.

Committee. Capers dismissed the petition in vitriolic language, labeling it "a precedent of unexampled evil tendency, calculated to bring into the bosom of the church, the spirit of party, anarchy, and strife, to the subversion of all unity, order, and peace." He also questioned tongue-in-cheek whether the Committee—which included several class leaders—would not find their labor better invested in meeting regularly for study and exhortation with their class members, and he accused them of exploiting "boys and girls, minors" for a significant percentage of the petition signers.[4]

In response, the Committee issued a scathing response to Capers, raising the threat of mass secession from Methodism in Charleston if he and the trustees persisted in forcing whites "to sit side by side in their public assemblies, with mulattoes!" Knowing that Capers had a history of involvement in and penchant for slave missions, they asked if his stubbornness was worth the cost of "your black classes" and "your black missions." But their final barb was both revealing and prophetic: "For ourselves, we love Methodism. … We believe the vital interests of the church are in jeopardy, and we cannot sit down … without raising an arm, and a voice in her defense." For both Capers and the Committee, the stakes involved no less than the preservation of Methodism in the South. Consequently, the struggle held great implications for the identity of what was slowly taking form as *southern* Methodism.[5]

The debate evolved considerably over the next couple of months. The Committee accused Capers of sabotaging the first attempt to convince the trustees to act on the

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[4] *Difficulties in the Church in Charleston*, Pamphlet 1 of 4, 4-8; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 206; *Difficulties in the Church in Charleston,* Pamphlet 2 of 4, p. 24.

[5] *Difficulties in the Church in Charleston,* Pamphlet 1 of 4, p. 10; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 207.

resolutions. While in the midst of the debates, Capers resigned the traditionally ministerial-held post as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. In a subsequent meeting of the trustees, they declared their belief that "the proposed alterations will tend rather to injure than promote the welfare of the church." Seeking to "promote the peace of the church," however, they would allow the actions to be performed, but only under the responsibility and expense of the Committee. Notably, the Committee did not pursue the removal of the boxes at that point.[6]

In the meantime, the issue shifted to a constitutional struggle over the MEC *Discipline*. The disgruntled members charged the trustees with defying the *Discipline* by "refus[ing] obedience to a positive order of the Quarterly Conference," and initiated an attempt to undermine the trustees by reorganizing church authority under the act of incorporation granted to the MEC in Charleston in 1787. In short, they sought to organize authority over the property in the mass society of Charlestonian Methodism, rather than in the traditional hierarchy of trustees and the Quarterly Conference. In many ways, the conflict reflected similar struggles of democratization that were and had been occurring throughout evangelical America.[7]

Following a promising but failed attempt at reconciliation at the close of 1833, hostilities between the parties climaxed again in the spring of 1834. In late July, a delegated trial committee formally expelled the schismatics from the MEC. True to their

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[6] *Difficulties in the Church in Charleston,* Pamphlet 1 of 4, 13-15, 17; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 206.

[7] *Difficulties in the Church in Charleston,* Pamphlet 1 of 4, 18-19; See Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, especially pp. 81-93, wherein Hatch describes how the Asburian influence and makeup of American Methodism made it both a "faith of the people" but also organizationally more immune to some of the most damaging effects of religious democratization.

threats, the expelled members took with them over 150 fellow white members, and joined a congregation of the Wesleyan branch-off Methodist Protestant Church. But as Capers supporter and future southern Methodist bishop George Foster Pierce proudly declared, the Methodist church was "not to be frightened by the 'portentous roll' [of members threatening to withdraw]," even "if there were not 12 members left in the Church."[8]

The Charleston episode is important for understanding nineteenth-century evangelicalism. Donald Mathews, in his seminal *Religion in the Old South*, was the first modern scholar to take note of it, and few religious historians have addressed it since. On the surface, the expulsion and withdrawal resulted from racial violence, a power struggle between the congregational minister and a delegated committee, and an interpretive clash over the Methodist *Discipline*. Mathews contends that the ecclesiastical tussle reveals "a transformation of whites' attitudes—repudiation of a past which valued black people as fellow church members, and the affirmation of a future of racist arrogance." His perspective lines up with Beth Schweiger's narrative of antebellum southern Christians competing and striving for respectability and authority within their denominations, and with Charity Carney's description of a patriarchal and honor-driven Methodism in the antebellum South. Certainly, elements of all three interpretations—a budding racist devaluation of black religious participation; concern for relevance, propriety, and

[8] William M. Wightman, *Life of William Capers, D.D., One of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; including an Autobiography* (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1902), 341-43; Melton, *A Will to Choose*, 162; *An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Difficulties in the Church in Charleston,* Pamphlet 2 of 4, pp. 23-24 (quotes on 24).

Methodist reputation; and strident conflict over honor and authority—are found in the controversy.[9]

On a deeper level, however, the Charleston clash reveals critical dynamics of Methodist character and organization that display a precedent of tension and struggle that would continue through both the Methodist schism of the 1840s and the Civil War itself. Put another way, the incident reveals a profoundly felt struggle over the identity of Methodism in the South. Mathews is correct to emphasize the pivotal nature of the moment, and to characterize the conflict as a new beginning of sorts for southern Methodism. But in certain aspects, the episode was not as *transformative* as it was *illuminating*. After all, Capers's steadfast support for the black members over the whites forced the issue in the first place, and the Methodist hierarchy, including the trustees, Presiding Elder, and a bishop, affirmed his authority as the controversy developed.

Indeed, the dispute, in both its racial form and its organizational/constitutional form, opens a lens onto two closely-related contests that played out in intra- and inter-denominational struggles leading up to and through the Civil War era. In the years ahead, Southern Methodists continued to grapple with how to position themselves relative to other denominations, and with whether their own identity was most fundamentally *southern* or *Methodist*. Put another way, southern Methodists stridently identified themselves as *Methodist* and engaged with both secular society and other faith communities on the basis of that identity. At the same time, however, southern

[9] Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 205-07; Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up*, 27-33; Carney, *Ministers and Masters*. Beyond Mathews, J. Gordon Melton discusses the Charleston incident and its contextual background in *A Will to Choose: The Origins of African American Methodism* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 161-63. A rather sanitized version is presented in William M. Wightman, *Life of William Capers,* 339-43.

Methodism experienced numerous internal flashpoints of conflict or crisis over how that identity should be expressed. Many different ideological categories shaped and contextualized these respective periods of struggle, including race and slavery, honor and paternalism, nationalism and political allegiance, and theology and ecclesiology. In each of these crisis or conflict moments, however, the actors engaged in a struggle of identity: what did it mean to be a "southern Methodist," and how could they best fulfill each component of that duality? The varying, often divergent responses to that question comprise much of the content of the following chapters.

William Capers himself illustrates this dichotomy. Summarizing the Charleston incident, Donald Mathews rightly notes that "No one really emerges as heroic: Capers was willing to keep slaves in the gallery even as he fought for the free blacks' rights on the floor; the free blacks resented being forced to choose between standing during the service or sitting with slaves; and the latter disliked the free blacks so much that they would not, as one man complained, 'permit us to rest in peace.'" Yet Mathews also notes Capers to be "a dignified, thoughtful, and moderate man who served the Church far better than most of his fellow Southerners." A second-generation slaveholder who denied any inherent immorality in slavery, he helped spearhead the separation of the proslavery portion of American Methodism and served as one of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South's [MECS] founding bishops, Capers nonetheless devoted much of his life and career to native and slave missions. Even in 1881, well after the Civil War, African Methodist Episcopal (AME) bishop Jabez Campbell presented Capers as an example of "faithful men of the M.E. Church, South" who had labored positively on behalf of southern blacks. William Capers powerfully illustrates a Wesleyan tradition that was, as

Christopher Owen has proclaimed, "simultaneously southern and Methodist." And the very tensions, dichotomies, and paradoxes found in Capers's demonstrations of both his quintessential southernness and his ideal Methodism foreshadow the struggle of identity that surfaced at key moments throughout the nineteenth century.[10]

Thus, where scholars such as Donald Mathews, Mitchell Snay, and Anne Loveland utilize a lens of slavery and abolitionism to characterize the 1830s as a transformative moment in southern evangelicalism, this dissertation uses a paradigm of denominational ecclesiology to assert that southern Methodist identity was not fixed or absolute in the antebellum and Civil War era. Broadly, the withdrawals of church members in 1833 Charleston may well indicate a dominant shift toward racial antagonism, but internally the clash between Capers and his congregational flock also reveals a struggle over how southernness and Methodism would be defined in relation to each other. "Southern Methodism" may have been realized, but it was far from settled.[11]

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[10] Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 207; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 69; Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 8; Frederick DeLand Leete, *Methodist Bishops: Personal Notes and Bibliography with Quotations from Unpublished Writings and Reminiscences* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1948), 39-40; Campbell quoted in Owen, *The Sacred Flame of Love*, 147; ibid., x.

[11] See Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*; Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); and Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*. Recent scholars have also resisted viewing the 1830s as a discontinuous moment. Luke Harlow nuances Loveland's "stark period divide" in Luke Edward Harlow, "From Border South to Solid South: Religion, Race, and the Making of Confederate Kentucky, 1830-1880" (PhD diss., Rice University, 2009), 25-27. See also Owen, *The Sacred Flame of Love*. This dissertation's terminology regarding "church" as an entity or concept is based on the delineations set forth by Bryan P. Stone, scholar of evangelism and ecclesiology at Boston University School of Theology. Stone distinguishes between the terms "ecclesiastical," "ecclesial," and "ecclesiological" in the following manner: ecclesiastical is "relating to the church as an established institution" (e.g., "our church follows an ecclesiastical calendar") [here Stone borrows closely from the Merriam-Webster definition]; ecclesial is "relating to the church or the church's nature" (e.g., "Christian

existence is ecclesial existence"); and ecclesiological is "relating to the understanding, doctrine, or concept of the church" (e.g., "Church architecture has enormous ecclesiological significance"). Author's correspondence with Bryan P. Stone, 20 June 2013.

Chapter 1
"The most vital principles of our church organization": The Separation of Southern Methodism

"The subject is intruded everywhere. At private houses, camp-meetings, everywhere, the charges are rung upon it. Verily, there is a species of dogmatic, fanatic, ultraism in all this that is, little as the brethren suspect it, malign in its origin, disgusting in its delivery, and hurtful to the cause of God."[1] George Foster Pierce penned these words in a polemic for one of the MEC's denominational newspapers in the early 1840s. The MEC stood on the cusp of schism, to be realized shortly at the upcoming General Conference of 1844, and Pierce himself would play a significant role in that assembly. A rising star and future southern bishop, as well the son of a prominent Methodist patriarch, Pierce's voice carried substantial weight. Given the timing, circumstances, and authorship, modern readers might easily assume that Pierce's attack targeted the usual antebellum suspects: abolitionists, hermeneutical innovators, or perhaps temperance dissenters. In fact, he leveled his vitriol at round-breasted coats. Pierce expressed anger at traditionalist Methodists who sought to require preachers to wear old-fashioned garb rather than contemporary formal dress.[2]

Pierce's invective about coats involved the same charged language often used to excoriate abolition and antislavery, such as "fanatic," "malign," and "ultraism." Recognizing this application introduces a cautionary complication in the scholarly tendency to reduce antebellum southern churches to their stances on slavery. The same

[1] George G. Smith, *The Life and Times of George Foster Pierce, D.D., LL.D, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, with His Sketch of Lovick Pierce, D.D., His Father* (Sparta: Hancock Publishing, 1888), 141.

[2] Ibid., 140-42.

passion, rhetoric, and staunchness that undoubtedly characterized many southern Methodist attitudes and actions in cohesion with their surrounding culture's societal mores of slavery also defined their postures in relation to internal ecclesiastical issues, other southern denominations, and various social issues beyond the question of slavery's existence.

This chapter seeks to add nuance to our previous understanding of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South's formative period by recognizing its adherents' overarching desire to be both good *southerners* and good *Methodists*. The "southernization" of denominations in the antebellum United States has been capably demonstrated by numerous scholars. In the arenas of respectability, masculinity, and the toleration or embrace of slavery, particularly, Methodists in the South joined other denominational adherents in accommodating their religious teachings and actions to the broader culture around them. As historian Christine Heyrman notes, "Methodists … found common ground with worldlier men … and their distinctiveness, once sharply etched, began to blur." Southern Methodist spokesmen came to zealously defend slavery and sought to legitimize interpretive biblical constructions of racism such as the "myth of Ham." They pursued societal approval through modernity and professionalization. And they conformed to patriarchal expressions of "mastery" in ways that both bolstered and appealed to the social dominance of southern slaveholders. In the words of a prominent scholar of southern religion, Methodist and other southern clergymen became "educators, guardians of the collective life, and models of the good life for the privileged" in the late

antebellum period, but in ways whereby "approval of slavery would be automatic and casual, [and] its demise would spell the doom of southern ways."[3]

The framework utilized here does not seek to challenge the widespread identification of Methodism in the South with proslavery ideology and southern cultural mores. The MECS as it developed was unquestionably a "southern" and proslavery church. Crucially, however, the faith tradition also contained a simultaneous and coequal determination to faithfully represent its historical and ecclesiological identification with American Methodism. In short, the MECS was much more than *just* a proslavery church. Southern Methodists in the mid-nineteenth century were neither unassuming "cultural captives" held hostage by their accommodations nor aloof and spiritually-removed witnesses against the society they inhabited. Rather, they lived constantly with the tensions of a faith tradition often caught between its ideals and its realities.[4]

The formalization and early development of southern Methodism as a distinctive denomination exemplifies this framework's utility. The context of slavery and abolition within American Methodism leading up to the 1844 schism must be noted, however,

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[3] Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 248; Samuel S. Hill, Jr., "The South's Two Cultures," in Samuel S. Hill, Jr., et al, *Religion and the Solid South* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 40. On Methodist and broader evangelical proslavery views, see Irons, *Origins of Proslavery Christianity*; Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*; and Crowther, *Southern Evangelicals and the Coming of the Civil War*. More dated but still cogent examples include Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, and Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*. On the "myth of Ham," see Johnson, *Myth of Ham*. On religious susceptibility to social respectability and masculinity, see Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*; Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, and Carney, *Ministers and Masters*.

[4] For the classic articulation of the cultural crisis/captivity theory in relation to southern evangelicals, see Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity* or Samuel S. Hill, Jr., *Southern Churches in Crisis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967). This dissertation pursues an approach much closer to that of Beth Barton Schweiger in Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up.* For an enlightening retrospective on the captivity theory, see Hill's interpretive essay in Samuel S. Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1999), xxix-lxii.

before the dynamics of the schism can be fully understood. In his classic text *Slavery and Methodism*, Donald Mathews views the 1830s as a transformative period for American Methodism in relation to slavery. The church patriarchs of the late 1700s had been overwhelmingly antislavery in principle, but the tone of antislavery sentiment, particularly in the North, took on a much more strident edge by the 1830s. Meanwhile, southern Methodist leaders who had sought incremental laxity in antislavery church policy, either out of proslavery sentiment and self-interest or the fear of losing evangelistic access to slaves and slaveholders, reacted bitterly against attempts to tighten the denomination's nominally antislavery stances and rhetoric. The 1830s thus proved a complicating decade for Methodist engagements over slavery.[5]

As Christopher Owen points out, abolitionist sentiment concentrated in the New England conferences "went beyond Wesleyan and Asburyan prescriptions" in their calls for more stringent action against slavery within the MEC. In response, Methodists in the deep South "more abashedly defended slavery than ever before," although a moral hesitation toward slavery remained. Indeed, Luke Harlow, building off the historiographical work of Anne Loveland and the Genoveses, contends that the primary change in Methodist conflicts over slavery after 1830 was a new southern *perception* of abolitionists. Particularly, abolition became associated with—or became an alleged gateway to—"liberalism" in the form of changing hermeneutics and practices.[6] In 1844, as tensions reached a breaking point, a member of the Philadelphia Conference of the

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[5] Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, especially 177-211.

[6] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 52; Harlow, "From Border South to Solid South," 50. In his assessment, Harlow cites Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, "The Divine Sanction of Social Order: Religious Foundations of the Southern Slaveholders' World View," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55 (Summer 1987): 211-33.

MEC, speaking on behalf of northern conservatives, affirmed this view in a letter to the pro-southern *Richmond Christian Advocate*. The writer deemed the General Conference's actions "not the result of the old anti-slavery feeling of the church," but instead "a decided yielding to modern abolitionism," and placed the blame for division upon the northern branch of the denomination.[7]

The development of a "slaveholding ethic" at this time is central to understanding the pursued southern balance between "anti-slavery" and "abolition." Many southern Methodists since the early and mid-1800s had sought to ameliorate the most visibly negative components of slavery. In the process, according to Christopher Owen, they "showed attachment to and genuine concern for the welfare" of their slaves. Prominent slaveholders such as George Pierce, Robert Lovett, and James Andrew worked to keep slave families together, avoided corporal punishment, and took great care to ensure their slaves' well-being. Future postwar bishops Holland McTyeire and John Keener both worked willingly and extensively with antebellum black churches in New Orleans, often in the midst of yellow fever epidemics. Describing his ministry to local slaves, the effective West Tennessee circuit rider Joseph Collins gushed in his diary that "I was filling the true object of my mission—in preaching the gospel to the poor." Perhaps the epitome of the slaveholding ethic, William Capers became the head of the "Southern Department of Missionary Work" for the MEC by 1840, and presided over eighty

[7] "Opinions on Division," *Richmond Christian Advocate* [hereafter *RCA*], 1 August 1844.

missionaries. Southern Methodists under Capers devoted a formidable infrastructure of human and material resources to slave missions.[8]

Many southern Methodists by the 1840s, in other words, saw slavery as a Biblical institution that could be redeemed without being rescinded. Touting the success of the mission to the slaves that he so intricately and passionately oversaw, Capers became one of the "chief architects" of the "noninterference" political stance of southern Methodists toward slavery's continuation. At the same time, the slaveholding ethic and the mission to the slaves included potential liabilities for southern Methodism. Many of the blacks converted by Joseph Collins in the Memphis area chose the autonomy of separate black Methodist churches when available. Dee Andrews connects the controlling aspects of the mission to the slaves with the rise of "black adherence to the churches of the Baptists" through the antebellum era. And as Charles Irons notes, black conversion—even in autonomous black congregations—tended to reinforce stereotypical white apologias for proslavery Christianity. The pursuit of an "antislavery" form of slavery, ironic and paradoxical as such a concept may be, nonetheless provided southern Methodist representatives a theologically compelling, if also socially and economically convenient, means of participating in an institution they believed was a "social" but not a "moral"

[8] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 78; Richard Herbert Moorman, "The Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire (1824-1889)," 25-27, John James Tigert IV Papers, Box 4 Folder 5, Vanderbilt University Special Collections and University Archives, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter cited as Vanderbilt); "The Early Ministry of Brother J. T. C. Collins," Deceased Ministers Files: JTC Collins, Memphis Conference Archives, Memphis Conference Office Building, Jackson, Tennessee; Irons, *Origins of Proslavery Christianity*, 182.

evil. As Luke Harlow argues, it allowed them to attack slavery's characteristics, "though never its racist foundation."[9]

Against the developing southern slaveholding ethic grew a potent, if minority, abolitionist movement in the North, particularly in New England. For Methodists, the visible strains of ecclesiastical unity began in the mid-1830s with abolitionist discontents. Orange Scott and LaRoy Sunderland provided the most stringent and significant of these abolitionist voices. Both Scott and Sunderland had an extensive history of hostility and run-ins against local conferences and Methodist bishops. They were longstanding gadflies within the MEC, although the full scope of their influence was not realized until their secession in 1843-43. Sunderland served as an organizer of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the early 1830s, and in 1836 began circulating the *Zion's Watchman* abolitionist newspaper in New York City. Scott meanwhile utilized his own paper, Boston's *Zion's Herald*, to issue a strident call for immediate abolition in 1835. Prominent conservatives and the MEC leadership opposed Scott and Sunderland's activism. Nathan Bangs, the influential editor of the MEC's largest newspaper, New York's *Christian Advocate and Journal*, banned all discussion and promotion of abolitionism from his columns. Sunderland also faced increasing frustrations in his antislavery objectives. Ultimately, the two abolitionist leaders, along with a significant number of disgruntled New England Methodists, broke away from the MEC following a

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[9] Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, 203-04; "Early Ministry of Brother JTC Collins"; Dee Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 234; Irons, *Origins of Proslavery Christianity*, 170; Harlow, *Making of Confederate Kentucky*, 5.

strong chastisement at the 1840 General Conference. They reorganized as the six-thousand-member Wesleyan Methodist Church.[10]

The heart of the battle between "proslavery" and "antislavery" factions of American Methodism, however, involved the controversial "Rule on Slavery" in the constitutional *Discipline* of the MEC. The *Discipline* served as the binding document for Methodist doctrine, practice, and style. As such, battles over virtually any issue tended to revolve around the *Discipline*, either at the outset or as the contest developed. What became codified as the General Rule on Slavery appeared first in 1789. The instruction prohibited "the buying or selling the bodies and souls of men, women, or children, with an intention to enslave them."[11] From that point until the General Conference of 1844, alterations to, and evolutions of, the General Rule tended to weaken its language or include caveats to its enforcement, as church policy grew more accommodating toward slavery's entrenchment in American society. These changes included limiting punishments only to those in "official positions" of the MEC, and providing an exception to the expectation of manumission in states that legally forbade emancipation. Meanwhile, MEC leadership granted the South Carolina Conference permission in 1808 to publish a special edition of the *Discipline* that omitted the Rule on Slavery altogether. In 1816 the General Conference essentially conceded that slavery was an ongoing reality

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[10] Broad denominational discussions of the 1830s may be found in Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 19-49, and more extensively in McKivigan, *War Against Proslavery Religion*, 36-73. On Orange Scott and LaRoy Sunderland's activism and breakoff, see Andrews, *Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 235; Richard M. Cameron and Norman W. Spellman, "The Church Divides," in Bucke, *History of American Methodism*, Vol. II, 31-47; Edward D. Jervey, "LaRoy Sunderland: Zion's Watchman," *Methodist History* (April 1968), 16-32; and Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 128.

[11] Robert Emory, *History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: G. Lane and P.P. Sanford, 1844), 181, quoted in Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 4.

of American life, and that little could be done except to regret and perhaps mitigate the negative consequences of its existence. Indeed, the General Rule's wording itself led to some Methodists—both northern and southern—to view its applicability only in terms of the slave *trade*, and not slave *ownership*.[12]

Methodist historian Richard Cameron called 1840 the "low-water mark for antislavery sentiment in the church." The 1840 General Conference not only formally chastised abolitionism for the second quadrennial in a row, but readjusted the Rule on Slavery to its weakest point ever, mandating the same slaveholding rights and exemptions for "the various grades of office" in the MEC that ordinary members held. The Rule on Slavery now provided theoretical opposition and regret for the existence of slavery, but allowed both lay and clerical slaveholders to remain such in cases where civil law was "hostile" to manumission. The next General Conference, however, witnessed the deciding crisis for American Methodist unity. Certainly the intermediate secession of the Wesleyan Methodist Church created a serious concern among northern Methodists, and

[12] As late as 1860, well after the 1844 divide, the northern MEC recognized varying views on the purpose and applicability of the Rule on Slavery. The Rule on Slavery's trajectory and evolution has been described in varying detail by Cameron and Spellman, "The Church Divides," 12-21; Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 4-9; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 8-61; Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 185-95; and especially Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 1-22, which remains the most efficient and effective discussion of the complicated views of early Methodism toward slavery. Purifoy's note on p. 4 clarifies the terms of argument over the Rule on Slavery's original legitimacy and applicability. Joshua Soule, the leading constitutional authority in mid-nineteenth century Methodism, argued that the Rule on Slavery was designed to apply only to the slave trade: Joshua Soule, undated manuscript, Joshua Soule Papers, Box 1 Folder 3, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University (hereafter cited as Emory). See more on Soule's constitutional views and actions below in this chapter. On the MEC's continuing diversity of opinion on the Rule on Slavery, see David Christy, *Pulpit Politics; or, Ecclesiastical Legislation on Slavery, in its Disturbing Influences on the American Union* (Farran and McLean, 1862), 405-06.

its significance in the events of 1844 should not be discounted. But the clash of wills and views at the 1844 General Conference went much deeper than moderates' paranoia of further abolitionist secession. Rather, the crisis entailed questions and implications that, for many, struck to the heart of what it meant to be a Methodist in the South.[13]

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Numerous scholars have detailed the events of the 1844 General Conference, given its pivotal importance within American Methodist history. This chapter accordingly gives only a brief sketch of the general narrative, focusing primary attention instead on the historiographical interpretation of the crisis, and offering an alternative framework for understanding southern Methodist leaders' perceptions of their denomination's formation.[14]

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[13] Cameron and Spellman, "The Church Divides," 21; Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 11, 21-22.

[14] The literature on the 1844 General Conference and resulting schism is, in a word, immense. Early exhaustive accounts include the *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church: Vol. II, 1840, 1844, Together with the Debates of 1844* (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1856), and Charles Elliott, *History of the Great Secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Year 1845* (Cincinnati: Swormstedt and Poe, 1855) [a book Donald Mathews aptly calls "partisan, bulky and unreadable"]. Later classic treatments include Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 15-37; Cameron and Spellman, "The Church Divides," 47-85; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 246-82; Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 23-65; and Sweet, *Methodism in American History*, 244-53. A useful summary of the various debate speakers, while a deeply biased source, is found in Lucius C. Matlack, *The Antislavery Struggle and Triumph of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1881). Finally, briefer modern treatments include Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*, 159-64; and Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 128-34.

The General Conference, held in New York City from 1 May to 11 June, began and proceeded with the usual business of the church. Nevertheless, tension and anticipation of a slavery standoff had been building for nearly two years, and was virtually palpable among the attending delegates. Two cases of discipline eventually precipitated the separation crisis, although one was clearly more central and significant than the other. The first case involved Baltimore Conference preacher Francis Harding, who appealed a suspension by his conference for failing to pledge to attempt emancipation of several slaves he had acquired by marriage. Prominent Virginia Methodist William A. Smith vociferously supported Harding in debate. Because Maryland law required emancipated slaves to leave the state or receive legislative approval to remain, Smith contended, manumission was "impracticable," and Harding was subject to the Rule on Slavery's exemption. The representative Baltimore Conference prosecutor averred conversely that Maryland in no way forbade the fundamental act of manumission, and it was therefore "practicable" by the *Discipline*'s standards. On a largely sectional vote, the General Conference upheld the suspension. Southerners were livid, but delegates on both sides expressed concerns about the long-term implications of the Harding decision. Still, the episode triggered no explicit schismatic actions. Harding had already been charged and convicted by his conference peers, and the debate rested almost exclusively on the rather vague notion of how "practicable" Maryland made emancipation. Too, the Baltimore Conference had a consistent history of action against slaveholders, and conferences were granted

significant autonomy in disciplinary matters, so Harding seemingly had little excuse for not knowing the consequences of his predicament.[15]

The second case proved much more problematic. Since the 1840 quadrennial, Bishop James O. Andrew had come into possession of two slaves, both by bequest. That possession now created a similar problem to that of Francis Harding, for Georgia law forbade emancipation. Particularly galling to antislavery northerners, and somewhat ironically as well, Andrew's election to the episcopacy in 1832 had largely resulted from the perception that he was not a slaveholder, unlike other prominent southern candidates, particularly William Capers. In fact, Andrew had longstanding connections with slaves prior to his episcopal ordination, and may well have been an actual slaveowner in 1832. In the midst of the 1844 crisis, Andrew wrote to his close friend William Wightman that he had "been a slave holder for the last eight years," and that he had sufficiently and satisfactorily filled his episcopal duties to both slaveholding and nonslaveholding conferences. Andrew's disclosure, as well as Mark Auslander's research, refutes the conservative white narrative, given at the time and for generations later, that Andrew's engagement with slavery was either accidental or extraordinary. Indeed, according to Auslander's findings, Andrew owned at least forty-two slaves over the course of his life.[16]

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[15] Norwood, *Story of American Methodism*, 197-99; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 251-55; Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 26-31.

[16] Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 31-32; Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 9; Letter from James O. Andrew to William M. Wightman, 6 July 1844, James Osgood Andrew Papers, Box 1 Folder 4, Emory; Mark Auslander, *The Accidental Slaveowner: Revisiting a Myth of Race and Finding an American Family* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 68-72, 94-97, 235-70. Ultimately, Andrew's

Andrew, however, did not face a trial or even formal charges against his character in 1844, for as C. C. Goen points out, he had violated neither civil law nor any standing church regulation. Rather, following a straightforward confirmation by the Committee on Episcopacy that Andrew indeed legally possessed slaves, a Baltimore Conference delegate introduced a resolution requesting the bishop to resign his office. Andrew himself was amenable to resigning, but other southern delegates, anticipating this possibility, had issued a prior protest to the bishop against any consideration of resignation. In any case, slightly more moderate northerners represented by Ohioan James Finlay quickly replaced the initial resolution with one requesting Andrew simply to "desist from the exercise of [his] office so long as the impediment remains," as opposed to resigning.[17]

The Finlay substitute elicited an extended stretch of passionate debate, with numerous representatives from both North and South presenting often repetitious and overlapping arguments for or against the proposed action. At the same time, the debate shifted significantly into broader questions of the relationship between General Conference and the episcopacy, of the jurisdictional sovereignty of annual conferences, and other ideological and abstract issues. At its heart, the crisis entailed two important questions: whether a slaveholding bishop of the Methodist church could exercise his duties in good standing throughout the entirety of the nation, and whether a General Conference majority could exercise authority without due process over a bishop's function and holding of office. Following a failed proposal by the bishops to push the

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circumstances of ownership were a minor point. Neither he nor anyone else disputed his ownership, and the debates focused on the broader moral and ecclesiastical issues.

[17] Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation*, 82; Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 32-35; quote from p. 35.

issue to the 1848 General Conference, a starkly sectional vote ruled in favor of the Finlay substitute. This vote effectively, if not officially, deposed Andrew as a practicing bishop. Incensed southern delegates quickly lodged a lengthy protest against the vote, deeming the decision to render continued ecclesiastical unity all but impossible. Ultimately, in the apparent absence of any middle ground, a bipartisan committee drafted a "Plan of Separation" by which terms of amicable jurisdictional separation were drawn. Consequently, the General Conference overwhelmingly adopted the Plan, which purported to divide the denomination into two distinct bodies, populated by conferences as determined by local vote, and dividing equally the jurisdiction, infrastructure, and profits of the existing MEC to that point. The bitterly contested and antagonistic meeting thus produced a relatively calm and surprisingly harmonious conclusion, but it was to be short-lived indeed.[18]

Historians have presented differing perspectives when evaluating the nature and causes of the 1844 conflict. In so doing, they mirror the participants themselves, whose analyses of the rupture diverged greatly. Primarily, the historical interpretations revolve around whether the crisis was rooted either in *slavery* or in *constitutionalism*, creating a false dichotomy that fails to adequately capture the complicated nature of southern Methodism's distinctive ecclesiology.

Most historians in the last fifty years have downplayed the importance of ecclesiastical or constitutional issues in the 1844 schism, presenting such matters as secondary to slavery or, worse, as a smokescreen to distract from slavery. According to Mitchell Snay, "slavery was explicitly and exclusively the cause of division." "Political

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[18] Ibid., 35-36; Cameron and Spellman, "The Church Divides," 55-64; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 257-68.

and constitutional issues were primary," he grants, but only as "a rhetorical strategy that minimized the revolutionary appearance of [southern Methodist] actions." Christopher Owen similarly asserts that "slavery was *the* decisive issue," and Charity Carney contends that "slavery stood at the center of this whole controversy." Edward Crowther indirectly denies an episcopal/constitutional role in the separation: "Because Andrew refused to manumit his slaves and other southern Methodists had supported him, the Methodist church had divided." John McKivigan, writing in the same essay compilation as Crowther, presents the issue as one of aggressive southern demands for slavery's presence and acceptance, arguing that "proslavery, not antislavery, forces had taken the final initiative in forcing the church divisions," and that "southerners … raised the immediate [issue] that lead to the schism, the acceptance of a slaveholding bishop."[19]

Donald Mathews, the intellectual father of the "slavery alone" historiographical approach, frames the matter most explicitly and strongly, specifically challenging any assertion of a constitutional root to the crisis:

> The emphasis has been on the question of constitutionality rather than the problem of slavery. … It should be pointed out that prior to the General Conference of 1844 there were no widespread debates over episcopal powers, but there were heated discussions about a slaveholding bishop. And only after the question of Bishop Andrew's slaves came up did anyone raise the constitutional question of who could do what to whom and how. Slavery and slaveholders were

[19] Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 127, 142; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 55 [In a slightly modified essay collection published the same year as his book, Owen couches his assertion specifically in terms of the Georgia Conference: see McKivigan and Snay, *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery*, 111]; Carney, *Ministers and Masters*, 4; Edward Crowther, "'Religion Has Something … to Do with Politics': Southern Evangelicals and the North, 1845-1866," in McKivigan and Snay, *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery*, 323; John R. McKivigan, "The Sectional Division of the Methodist and Baptist Denominations as Measures of Northern Antislavery Sentiment," in McKivigan and Snay, *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery*, 352.

> much more important to Southerners than "constitutionality." The denial that slavery divided the Church is simply unsupported by evidence.[20]

Mathews presents constitutionality as a smokescreen to slavery, an after-the-fact rationalization of the southern leaders' course. Other historians do not refute that slavery played a role in the schism, but instead emphasize the importance of ecclesiastical issues. Lewis Purifoy, whose dissertation was completed the same year as the publication of Mathews's *Slavery and Methodism*, notes that "the South's first defense [of Andrew], one it maintained consistently throughout the debates and even later, was a constitutional one." Gross Alexander cautiously asserts that the crisis "was in connection with the problems arising out of the existence of African slavery and its relations to church and state." Frederick Norwood, while claiming that "the fundamental issue which led to separation was slavery," also recognizes "the authority of the general conference versus the integrity of the episcopal office" as another crucial issue, and states that "the conflict cannot possibly be understood without reference to both issues." He further contends that his naming slavery the primary cause of division "does not mean that the constitutional issue was either irrelevant or ersatz." C. C. Goen, while agreeing with Mathews on the primacy of slavery, feels that Mathews "nevertheless dismissed the constitutional dispute too lightly." Norman Spellman, writing in 1964, suggests the most nuanced perspective. Challenging pre-Mathews versions of the "slavery alone" stance, he maintains that "slavery was a basic cause of the Methodist schism, but not the *only* cause." Contending that "Northern Methodists were not ready to divide the church over slavery," and "neither were the Southern Methodists determined to gain the right of slaveholding for the

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[20] Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 250. Christopher Owen makes a similar comment in reference to the Georgia Conference's "regard for maintaining the bishops' powers." See Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 55.

ministry and episcopacy where emancipation was permitted by state laws," Spellman makes a key observation: "It was only when the irritation generated by the slavery question was translated into—or combined with—a constitutional issue that a sufficient cause for division appeared." In other words, slavery may have "caused" the schism, but only by angering northern Methodists to such an extent that they were willing to create a constitutional crisis.[21]

Goen, along with others, also challenges Mathews's assertion that episcopal authority was a novel topic for Methodist debate and policy. In reference to Mathews's claim that constitutional issues arose only as a reaction to James Andrew's slave ownership, Goen points to ecclesiastical struggles as early as the 1820s that "radically divided the northern and southern sections of the church," wherein the division broke along lines of strict versus loose construction of delegated constitutional powers. Gradually, these conflicts led to a breakaway anti-episcopal faction, which organized a new denomination called the Methodist Protestant Church (MPC). Methodist historian Frederick Norwood asserts that "the problem of episcopal authority in relation to the power of the general conference has been with [the MEC]" since 1792, when clergyman James O'Kelly initiated a revolt against the authority of Bishop Francis Asbury. O'Kelly's allies became known as "Republican Methodists," and ultimately many joined with Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone's primitivist "Restoration" movement. The episcopacy even served as a strong point of contention for Orange Scott and LaRoy Sunderland's Wesleyan Methodist secessionists in 1842. In a published statement titled

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[21] Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery, 35; Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 3; Norwood, *Story of American Methodism*, 197, 205; Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation*, 87; Cameron and Spellman, "The Church Divides," 65, 85.

"Withdrawal from the M.E. Church," the Wesleyan Methodists claimed that "we do not withdraw from anything essential to pure Wesleyan Methodism. We only dissolve our connection with *Episcopacy and Slavery* [emphasis added]."[22]

The episcopacy, then, had indeed played a longstanding role in Methodist ecclesiastical struggles prior to 1844. Whether classified by historians as a fundamental cause or not, southern Methodist leaders themselves framed constitutional issues as crucial to the 1844 crisis, and the primary manifestation of these issues concerned the sovereignty of the episcopacy *vis-à-vis* the General Conference, and whether a bishop could be removed or disempowered without trial or charges. As Norman Spellman notes, slavery surprisingly played a rather minor role in the Andrew case debates themselves: only two delegates—one northern, one southern—actually debated slavery. Most southern spokesmen acknowledged slavery as an "evil" and instead focused on polity and the rights of clergy and episcopacy. That the idea of "a unilateral understanding of the locus of authority in American Methodism" was "the North's most assailable point" and a convenient target for southern Methodists does not invalidate the sincerity with which southerners viewed the constitutional issues.[23] In the midst of the schism, southerners defended their course in a denominational newspaper article entitled "The Position and

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[22] John J. Tigert, *A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism* (Nashville, 1894), 371, quoted in Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation*, 87; Norwood, *Story of American Methodism*, 205; Smith, *Cross and Flame*, 35-38; Norwood, *Story of American Methodism*, 195-96; quote from Lucius C. Matlack, *The History of American Slavery and Methodism from 1780-1849* (New York, 1849), 315, quoted in Norwood, *Story of American Methodism*, 196.

[23] Cameron and Spellman, "The Church Divides," 65-66, quotes on 66. Spellman emphasizes the importance of placing the Andrew case in the broader trajectory of controversies involving the episcopacy and subordinate presiding elders (discussed below in relation to Bishop Joshua Soule) rather than simply starting with the Francis Harding trial.

Duties of the Southern Portion of the Methodist Episcopal Church": "The *causes* of the division of the Church are not traceable to the request of the Southern delegates, but to acts and doings of the majority in contravention of the express law of the Church, and in violation of the chartered rights of the ministry." In the southern view, then, it was northerners, not southerners, arguing for a change in Methodist practice and tradition. Taking this view, John McKivigan's charges of aggression leveled against the southern portion of the MEC could be turned back against antislavery northerners.[24]

Many southern Methodists, publicly and privately, shared the *Richmond Christian Advocate* article's opinions. Virginian Methodist C. D. Smith, pushing for separation in an illuminating letter shortly following the General Conference, framed the crisis in strongly constitutional terms. Smith, a circuit rider and prior agent for Emory and Henry College, considered the action against Bishop Andrew "as destructive of Scriptural Episcopacy[,] in as much as [northern Methodists] have regarded the office as a mere office of <u>expediency</u>, originating in and belonging alone to the Gen. Conference." Contra his northern counterparts, Smith viewed the episcopacy as a uniquely authoritative office, both above and before the General Conference. He appealed biblically both to Jesus' injunction for the apostle Peter to "feed his sheep" and to the apostle Paul's farewell to the Ephesian church's elders, arguing that episcopal overseers "were appointed by the Holy Ghost over the <u>whole flock</u>!" To the extent that he expressed concern over the slavery issue specifically, Smith focused on the negating effects he believed northern

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[24] *RCA*, 25 July 1844; McKivigan, "The Sectional Division of the Methodist and Baptist Denominations," 352. McKivigan qualifies his stance by acknowledging that abolitionist sentiment contributed to schism by pushing southerners to "an aggressive defense of slavery," but nevertheless attributes the separation to southern actions rather than northern actions.

actions made on the *Discipline*'s restrictive rules. The northern actions against the episcopacy, he concluded, "enter upon the most vital principles of our church organization." Smith closed his letter with a brief and desperate prayer, "O save our beloved Church!"[25]

The South Carolina Conference meanwhile recorded a series of resolutions protesting the actions of the General Conference shortly after its adjudication. Among them, the conference declared "the action of the majority of the General Conference in the case of the Rev. Bishop Andrew [to be] a gross and flagrant violation of the constitution and discipline of the Methodist E. Church," and proclaimed Andrew's revocation of duty "null and void." The conference also "viewed with deep regret and pain the introduction into the highest judicatory of the church … questions wholly civil and political, and with which ecclesiastical assemblies have no right to interfere."[26]

Some support for the constitutional stance came from those outside the specific denomination. William Bellamy, a leading founder of the Methodist Protestant Church in 1830, compared the MEC crisis with a conflict occurring in his own faith community in 1845. Excoriating a proposal by the MPC Ohio Conference to deny membership to

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[25] Letter from C. D. Smith to G. W. Penn, 6 August 1844, Green W. Penn Papers, Folder 4, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University (hereafter cited as Duke). For biographical information on Smith, see "A Brief History of Macon County, NC," accessed 4 June 2014, http://www.teresita.com/html/smith.html; and *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the Years 1839-1845*, Vol. 3 (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1840), 409. The publication date for these minutes is presumably a typographical error. Jesus's statement to Peter may be found in John 21, and Paul's Ephesian farewell may be found in Acts 20.

[26] Whitefoord Smith, undated resolutions, Whitefoord Smith Papers, Folder 3, Duke. The conference considered the situation rather dire; an initial line in the manuscript (later crossed out) stated that "the peace, prosperity, and indeed the existence of Methodism in the South depends upon the course" pursued by the various southern conferences in the General Conference's wake.

slaveholders, Bellamy charged the antislavery contingent with "collud[ing] with rebellion … against our constitution which forbids either an Annual or the Gen. Conference to pass any Rule which will conflict with the civil law." Those guilty of such "violation of our constitution," Bellamy fumed, "ought to be expelled [from] the connection." More somberly, he worried that if the proposal went through, the MPC would "be forever separated as the M. E. Church has been." And asking "what … the Abolitionists achieved by the bursting asunder the bonds of union in the M. E. Church," alluding to Judas Iscariot, Bellamy concluded simply: "A few pieces of silver."[27]

As time began to pass, the constitutional aspects of the separation remained in view. In 1847, after the formal organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1846, the church issued its first *Quarterly Review*. It was an intellectually-geared periodical focusing on a broad range of topics, from theology and literature to science and history. The closing article of the first issue addressed the "true position of the Methodist Episcopal Church, North and South," relative to the division of 1844. In the article, ostensibly written by an MEC clergyman who had joined the church in its beginnings in 1784, the author passionately affirmed the centrality of Methodist constitutionalism to the episcopal crisis of 1844. Citing the O'Kelly controversy of 1792 as an "indirect" attack on the episcopacy, the writer condemned the attack on James Andrew as "the first open attempt … *to prostrate the Bishops at* [the General Conference's] *feet*." To the author, the longstanding challenge to constitutional

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[27] William Bellamy to "Bro. Norris," 29 May 1845, William Bellamy Papers, Folder 1, Duke. For biographical information on Bellamy, see Ralph Hardee Rives, "Bellamy, William (*24 Oct. 1770-5 Oct. 1846*)," in William S. Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, Vol. 2 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 133-34. The biblical account of Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver is found in Matthew 26.

episcopacy was undoubtedly the root cause of the division: the "attack was not only *open* but *insidious*—slavery having been made the *pretence* for its action." And in its majority vote against Andrew, the delegates had "[assumed] powers unauthorized by the discipline of our church; and which cannot be sustained either by reason, or scripture, or the former practice of the church." Finally, addressing an issue that would remain a point of contention for years to come, the writer asserted that the southern church was a legitimate and coequal "*division of our church*," insomuch as the MECS maintained the integral doctrines and practice of original Wesleyan episcopal Methodism.[28]

* * *

The question of whether the MECS represented a *division of* the MEC or a *secession from* the MEC became both more central and more bitterly contested as time passed, however, and the conflict illustrates a primary reason why the constitutional aspects of the crisis were so imperative to southern Methodist leaders. In a discussion of the Andrew case, Beth Schweiger cogently recognizes that in "arguing that slaveholders were not fit to be missionaries or bishops, Northern pastors implicitly challenged the right of slaveholders to be ordained at all."[29] Carried to its theological conclusion, this argument carried vast implications. If unfit for ordination, could any southern slaveholder

[28] "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), 616, 623.

[29] Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 81. It should be noted that in an atypical deviation from her generally excellent scholarship, Schweiger narrates the circumstances of the crisis in a deeply flawed manner. She describes Andrew as a rejected nominee for the episcopacy, rather than a bishop in good standing denied the exercise of his office. The constitutional implications of the difference therein are enormous. See pp. 80-81.

be considered a legitimate Methodist? Similarly, the charge that southern Methodists were ecclesiastical secessionists implied to many that they were no longer legitimate heirs to original Wesleyan Methodism. This issue and the ideological battles that ensued will be examined in further detail, but the point is crucial: "constitutionalism" was not merely a side issue to MECS leaders. They viewed their constitutional and theological legitimacy as central to their southern Methodist identity.[30]

Assuming that the essayist in the MECS *Quarterly Review* was indeed a northern MEC member, he was not the only northerner who understood or supported the emphasis on constitutionalism. Lucius Matlack, a staunch abolitionist and one who certainly cannot be considered an objective observer, nevertheless acknowledged the constitutional difficulty of Andrew's case: "to allow a Bishop to be a slaveholder would conflict with the usage of the church from its organization … and would compel a violent disruption of the Church throughout the North, East, and West" but, "on the other hand, to unfrock a Bishop, or suspend or censure him, when no canon or statute law of the Church had been violated, was to tread on new ground, having no precedent, and possibly in conflict with the principles of ecclesiastical law." Given the unprecedented nature of both scenarios, there was no easy solution to the crisis. Two later Methodist scholars argued that while

[30] To give but one example of the continuing contests over legitimacy, as late as 1875-76 a series of polemic tomes debated the meaning of the Plan of Separation and whether the MECS was a secession or a division. See Edward H. Myers, *The Disruption of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1844-1846: Comprising a Thirty Years' History of the Relations of the Two Methodisms* (Nashville, 1875), and Erasmus Q. Fuller, *An Appeal to the Records: A Vindication of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in its Policy and Proceedings Toward the South* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1876). Arguing against Myers's narrative of a coequal and co-legitimate division, wherein slavery was the "occasion" of separation rather than the "cause," Fuller charged that the MECS was an "illegal and unconstitutional … desertion," and that "their secession and new Church were both illegal and revolutionary." Fuller, *Appeal to the Records*, 12-13, 45-46.

"Northerners were clearly right in the attitude they took," "the law of the church was on the side of the Southerners."[31]

The most potent, and also most intriguing, argument within southerners' insistence on the constitutional centrality of the separation was the support of the MEC's senior bishop, Joshua Soule. He grew up in Maine, where he joined the Methodist church in 1799. He gained a reputation as a formidable preacher at a young age, and became a presiding elder at age twenty-three. The General Conference elected him bishop in 1820, shortly before his thirtieth birthday, but for reasons discussed below, Soule declined the episcopacy, and was elected again and ordained bishop in 1824. Most significant, however, is Soule's foundational role in Methodist law and polity. In 1808, he wrote the draft of what would become the first Methodist constitution, and in the process, according to MEC bishop Matthew Simpson, "was the author of the plan for a delegated General Conference." Luccock and Hutchinson consider Soule "probably the most influential interpreter of Methodist law the church has ever known," and certainly "the most influential single figure in the church at that time [of the 1844 General Conference]." As such, Soule's understanding of the constitutional issues and stakes in the Andrew case was uniquely authoritative.[32]

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[31] Matlack, *Anti-Slavery Struggle*, 155; Halford E. Luccock, Paul Hutchinson, and Robert W. Goodloe, *The Story of Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1926), 337. Matlack had withdrawn from the MEC alongside Orange Scott and LaRoy Sunderland to help organize the Wesleyan Methodist Church. For brief biographical information, see Matlack's obituary in *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Spring Conferences of 1884* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1884), 79-80.

[32] Leete, *Methodist Bishops*, 169-70; Matthew Simpson, *Cyclopaedia of Methodism: Embracing Sketches of its Rise, Progress, and Present Condition, with Biographical Notices and Numerous Illustrations*, rev. ed., (Philadelphia, Louis H. Everts, 1881), 814; Luccock, Hutchinson, and Goodloe, *Story of Methodism*, 330. On

Soule had long held a lofty view of episcopal prerogative. The 1808 constitution reflected this view, as did his decision to decline episcopal ordination in 1820. Following Soule's election in 1820 but prior to his consecration as bishop, some delegates proposed legislation that would make the office of presiding elder elective rather than by episcopal appointment. In addition, the various presiding elders would comprise a committee that would co-assign preachers to circuits, an action hitherto reserved exclusively to the bishops. Soule and his constitutional mentor, Bishop William McKendree, viewed these proposals as an attempt to override—or replace—the episcopacy's sovereignty and autonomy, and condemned the legislation as an extension of the 1792 O'Kelly controversy. McKendree issued a fervent report against the motion's constitutionality, and Soule renounced his election as bishop. As a result of their influence, the resolutions were suspended until 1824. At that convening, Soule accepted election and consecration, and the proposals, although raised again, were indefinitely suspended, ultimately culminating in the withdrawal of the discontents and the formation of the MPC.[33]

Soule's convictions on polity finally led him to an even more radical decision in 1844 than in 1820. Following the failure of the bishops' recommendation to suspend the Andrew case until 1848, as well as the subsequent passage of the resolution against Andrew, Soule openly cast his support behind Andrew. While he continued in his episcopal role with the MEC following the General Conference, Soule supported the Plan of Separation and the formation of two distinct jurisdictional divisions of the church.

Soule's writing of the 1808 constitution, see Horace M. Du Bose, *Life of Joshua Soule* (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1916), 71-88.

[33] R. H. Rivers, *The Life of Robert Paine D.D., Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1885), 169-71, 219-21. A good summary of early contests over episcopal authority, especially the O'Kelly incident, is found in Andrews, *Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 196-207.

During a convention by southern representatives at Louisville in May 1845, Soule publicly blessed the South's deliberations and privately acknowledged his determination to "unite [my]self with the M. E. C. South" if and when the southern conferences decided to form a General Conference, stating that he felt "fully authorized by the 'Plan of Separation'" to maintain his episcopal role in the southern church, if they received him. In 1846, at the first General Conference of the MECS, Soule formally joined Andrew as the first two bishops of the southern church.[34]

As a result of his decisions, northern Methodists heavily criticized Soule. In particular, Thomas Bond, the editor of the New York *Christian Advocate and Journal*, and prominent Ohio conference member Charles Elliott attacked Soule's adherence to the South. The most polemical strike was Elliott's heavily charged tome *History of the Great Secession*, written in 1855. As its title suggests, Elliott's *History* aimed at delegitimizing southern Methodist claims of a coequal heritage of Wesleyan Methodism alongside the MEC. Soule served as Elliott's chief antagonist and target. Elliott charged Soule with heretically tyrannical views of the episcopacy, and of betraying—not fulfilling or defending—the constitutional polity that Soule himself had helped formalize. The attacks against Soule, by Elliott and others, took a virtually exclusively constitutional dimension. Perhaps Soule's northern background amplified the sense of betrayal against the MEC,

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[34] Nolan B. Harmon, "The Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," in Bucke, *History of American Methodism*, 92; Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 38-42; Note from Joshua Soule, 11 May 1845 (addendum signed 8 January 1872), Joshua Soule Papers, Box 1 Folder 1, Emory; Norwood, *Story of American Methodism*, 207. The Louisville convention met to determine the course of action for the southern conferences, and was attended by Bishops Soule, Andrew, and Thomas Morris (who declined to preside). The delegates agreed to convene the first southern General Conference in 1846. See Sweet, *Methodism in American History*, 251-53.

but at least one bishop, Beverly Waugh, was a southerner who adhered North, and seemingly faced no distinct backlash from southern Methodists.[35]

Soule took these challenges to his constitutionalism seriously. In a series of letters and articles, he lashed back at Elliott and fellow detractors, rebutting their arguments with an acerbic attention to legalism and historical tradition. Against those contending that the episcopacy was an office derived from and subordinate to the General Conference, Soule appealed to the commission and consecration of the first American bishops, Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury. He noted that John Wesley himself appointed them as general superintendents, predating the establishment of a General Conference, and distinct from its authoritative jurisdiction. This direct consecration by Wesley, Soule asserted, was "the 'fountain' of our episcopacy, and we can trace it legitimately to no other source." He waxed eloquently on the legacy of his episcopal lineage: "I love to trace the constitution, organization and ecclesiastical polity of the Methodist E. Church in America, up to their legitimate source, the Rev. John Wesley. … The name of Wesley is

[35] Norwood, *Story of American Methodism,* 206, 196-97; Elliott, *History of the Great Secession*. Elliott targets Soule throughout his work, but the sections devoted primarily or exclusively to Soule include pp. 437-50, 489-99, and 569-84. Elliott also includes information on various other critics of Soule in these sections. Notably, Soule maintained a close friendship with at least one MEC bishop, Thomas Morris. In two letters from mid-1845, Morris assured Soule that he still held "sentiments of high respect and feelings of sincere affection," and that "I am yours in the bonds of a peaceful gospel, whether in labor together, or in fields removed from each other." In the face of "inevitable" division, Morris's "chief concern is that our worse than needless controversy should be speedily terminated … and that we may live, love, and labor as brethren." See letters from Morris to Soule, 21 July and 30 July 1845, Joshua Soule Papers, Box 1 Folder 1, Emory.

engraved on my heart: not indeed in the place of Jesus, the most precious of all names, but as an eminent servant of Jesus."[36]

In another letter, Soule broached the question of a slaveholding bishop's legality. Much had been made of the failure of all slaveholding nominees to the MEC episcopacy. Taking a legalistic approach, however, Soule focused on the constitutional *eligibility* of the slaveholding candidates:

> Until the last General Conference the equal eligibility of the eldership of the church to the episcopal office was, as far as I have knowledge, never called in question. At nearly every General Conference at which the election of a Bishop has occurred, ministers connected with slavery have been voted for to fill that office and in one instance, at least, such a minister [William Capers] was very near being elected. But the legality of such votes, it is believed, was never disputed. But if those votes had been cast for a minister who was disqualified for the office by any constitutional or disciplinary provision they would certainly have been rejected as illegal, and no merely prudential consideration, or rule of expediency would have warranted their reception in any form having the slightest influence on an election. I consider it, therefore, as a point which cannot be successfully controverted, that the discipline of the church, and the usage of the General Conference in conducting and deciding the election of Bishops, have fully recognized the equality, of rights, so far as eligibility is concerned, in the whole body of the eldership. But the plan of compromise before referred to, strikes at the very foundation of this equality.[37]

Soule unleashed particular vitriol on Elliott for the accusation that Soule became a slaveholder after joining with the MECS. Soule angrily declared the charge a "bare-faced falsehood, without the least mixture of truth," asserting that "I am not now, and never was a slaveholder. I never owned a slave by purchase, or gift, or by any other means, and never had an intention or desire to own one." To Soule, his relation to slavery was

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[36] Joshua Soule to "Messrs. Editors," undated, Joshua Soule Papers, Box 1 Folder 3, Emory.

[37] Joshua Soule, "On Matters of 1844," undated, Joshua Soule Papers, Box 1 Folder 1, Emory. In the same essay, Soule also reaffirmed his conviction that the episcopacy was not a "mere agency of the General Conference," and that suspension of a bishop without trial or charges was unconstitutional.

irrelevant to the broader question of Christianity and Methodist constitutionality: "Greater and better men than I am, I have not a doubt, have owned slaves, and many have passed into that land where the 'servant is freed from his master' … Philemon and Onesimus are, doubtless, among the number." As late as 1856, Soule continued to lament what was, in his view, an impeded progress of Methodism, due to "those worse than useless contentions with the civil and domestic institutions of the country" among the northern church. He noted that the MEC's only means of reconciling their constitutional dilemma would be to alter the Rule on Slavery, resulting in "the exclusion of all slaveholders from her communion," including, he later noted, the MECS itself. As far as "whether this exclusion act would not be more fatal to the peace, unity, and prosperity of the church than … the present order of things, the future must determine."[38]

Soule's support of and transfer to the MECS brought immense pride and vindication to southern Methodists, for as Frederick Norwood notes, "it would be impossible to explain the role of Joshua Soule solely on the basis of his attitude toward slavery. His convictions on constitutional law, which threw the General Conference of 1820 into utter confusion, guided in large part his ultimate determination to cast his lot with the southern church." Although Soule exhibited no more sincerity than many who shared his views, his constitutional pedigree and social background lent a particular *a priori* legitimacy to his arguments that most southerners did not possess.[39]

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[38] Joshua Soule, "A notice independent of the more elaborate paper," undated, Joshua Soule Papers, Box 1 Folder 3, Emory; Letter from Joshua Soule to "Joseph," September 1856, Joshua Soule Papers, Box 1 Folder 2, Emory. Philemon and Onesimus, master and slave respectively, were friends of and fellow converts with the Christian apostle Paul, as described in the biblical book of Philemon.

[39] Norwood, *Story of American Methodism*, 205.

As mentioned above, scholars have generally felt compelled to prioritize slavery or constitutionality as the fundamental core of the Methodist divide. Ultimately, however, the hierarchical and "either-or" framework insufficiently captures the tension of bourgeoning southern Methodist identity. Southern Methodist leaders in the 1840s were driven both by a fundamental "southernness" that adapted missiology to the surrounding slave society, and by a deep-rooted ecclesiology that valued legalistic devotion to Methodist constitutionalism and polity. Constitutional issues could and had singlehandedly ruptured Methodist union, but slavery issues had also pervaded the MEC since its American inception. The MECS was born into the same dualistic tensions of southern Methodist identity that characterized William Capers's Charleston church in 1833, and that would continue through and beyond the American Civil War. As Frederick Norwood has said of Methodism leading up to the schism, "tension reigned at the top." Thus, southern Methodist spokesmen could locate a biblical justification at the center of a proslavery theology, and sometimes even idealize slavery in public, as Augustus Longstreet did in the 1844 General Conference debates, while also freely characterizing slavery as an "evil" and working to rectify many of its qualities. Framers of southern Methodism such as William Capers, James Andrew, and Joshua Soule cast their lots fully with the South, but not at the expense of their Methodism. If that duality seemed paradoxical at times, it was a necessary part of their ecclesiological identity.[40]

[40] Norwood, *Story of American Methodism*, 201; Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 54-59; Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 47; Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 34-35.

Chapter 2
"Defend the institutions of Methodism": The Formation of a Southern Methodist Denomination

Southern Methodist leaders were clearly en route to independence following the Plan of Separation's approval and General Conference's adjournment. Leading up to the 1845 Louisville convention and the 1846 organizing of the General Conference of the MECS, Methodists and observers alike pondered the broader implications and fallout of the schism. The most glaring implication, particularly for non-Methodists, involved the schism's effect on national political unity in the United States. John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, and Daniel Webster all expressed interest or concern at the prospect of Methodist ecclesiastical disunion. Calhoun wrote to at least two prominent southern Methodists, William Capers and Whitefoord Smith, seeking meetings to discuss the separation and its political repercussions. Webster later acknowledged having "great concern, as that [Methodist] dispute went on, about the result," and opined that "the result was against my wishes and against my hopes." And Clay, caught in the western border grounds, placed the schism in tense political terms: "I will not say that such a separation would necessarily produce a dissolution of the political union … but … its tendencies on the stability of the confederacy would be perilous and alarming."[1]

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[1] Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation*, 33, 100-01, 110-11; Letter from John C. Calhoun to Whitefoord Smith, 4 June 1844, Whitefoord Smith Papers, Folder 1, Duke; Donald G. Jones, *The Sectional Crisis and Northern Methodism: A Study in Piety, Political Ethics and Civil Religion* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1979), 33. Goen's work most effectively analyzes denominational crises as presage to political disunion. For a synopsis of his broader argument, see Clarence C. Goen, "Scenarios for Secession: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War," in Samuel S. Hill, ed., *Varieties of Southern Religious Experience* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 11-23.

While most southern Methodist spokesmen vociferously supported ecclesiastical division, moreover, some displayed great hesitancy to split with their northern counterparts. Richard Carwardine cites several examples of both lower- and upper-South Methodists urging compromise and conciliation. Tennessean Thomas Wilkerson expressed in October 1844 his "fear [that] Satan has more to do in this business than we are aware." Even James Andrew himself, the man at the crux of the separation, expressed moderation toward varying stances in the separation debate. In July 1844, he wrote to his friend and southern newspaper editor, William Wightman, relating his desire for the emotion to die down. Passionate southern leaders such as William Smith of Virginia were defending him well, Andrew admitted, but "are too hot and sharp … our main object now … should be to part in as good friendship as possible." Through the summer, Andrew continued to urge moderation on fellow separatist southerners, encouraging Wightman to use his influence and voice as editor of the *Southern Christian Advocate*. Andrew even asked Wightman to defend MEC bishop Edmund Janes to the Memphis Conference, which was considering rejecting Janes's presiding role at their annual conference. Andrew also endorsed Somerville, Tennessee preacher William Booth, who had been attacked by Wightman himself for ecclesiastical unionism. Andrew praised Booth as "a very worthy man" who "loves the church and honestly desires her perpetual union." Indeed, Andrew mused, "there will be many such individuals in the southern ranks[;] would be strange if there were not. … We must treat them respectfully and kindly though we may not approve their plans."[2]

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[2] Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics*, 161; Smith, *Cross and Flame*, 99; Andrew to Wightman, 6 July 1844, James Osgood Andrew Papers, Box 1 Folder 4,

James Andrew, in other words, empathized with the concerns of William Booth, and even Henry Clay and Daniel Webster. He believed that "the continued union of the church would have been desirable mainly in view of the perpetuity of our political union," and conceded his concern that "our division will be unfavorable in that regard." At the same time, he mused, "I don't know but that we attach more importance to ourselves in that regard than we deserve. We are a numerous people but I doubt very much whether we possess half the political importance which we sometimes appropriate to ourselves." Andrew comforted himself with the fortune and blessing he ascribed to prior ecclesiastical schisms. He referenced both John Wesley's American followers' break with the Anglican/Episcopal church and Martin Luther's protestant rupture with Catholicism, affirming that if "more good could be done toward converting sinners and spreading scriptural holiness over the land by two or even ten divisions on the principles laid down I should go for it with all my heart." Ever seeking to preserve Wesleyan legitimacy and identity, Andrew qualified his examples by noting that "we shall not be two distinct churches but simply two divisions of the same church divided in territory but united in the same fellowship of doctrine and discipline … for the more successful accomplishment of our great work of saving souls."[3]

Most southern Methodist leaders heartily agreed with Andrew's sentiments, and following the provisions of the Plan of Separation, voted to reorganize their annual conferences into the MECS, which held its first General Conference in May 1846. Sixteen annual conferences throughout the South sent delegates to the organizing session,

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Emory; Andrew to Wightman, 19 August 1844, James Osgood Andrew Papers, Box 1 Folder 5, Emory.

[3] Andrew to Wightman, 19 August 1844, James Osgood Andrew Papers, Box 1 Folder 5, Emory.

and the organization proceeded in a straightforward manner. Joshua Soule and James Andrew formally continued in their episcopal role, and two additional men, Tennessean Robert Paine and much-loved South Carolinian William Capers, joined the episcopacy. The Conference made provision for several publications and journals, with editors and agents elected. The delegates also reaffirmed and emphasized the mission to the slaves, and proposed and recommended new missionary efforts to China, Africa, and American Jews. Finally, the MECS formally maintained the *Discipline* as its governing constitution with scant changes. It even preserved the controversial Rule on Slavery, with only a clarifying note added to mark that the Rule's interpretation should be guided by the 1836 and 1840 MEC General Conferences' resolutions, which were decidedly conservative and anti-abolitionist. Accordingly, in its actions, the southern church reaffirmed its "noninterference" stance toward politics and slavery. Among its final actions, the organizing conference appointed one of its patriarchs, Lovick Pierce, as a fraternal delegate to the 1848 MEC General Conference.[4]

By the convening of the 1848 conference, however, relations between the sectional branches of episcopal Methodism had begun to deteriorate sharply. At least in part, developing political sectionalism and the ideological climate created by the Mexican War likely shaped this increasing antagonism. Although southern Methodists more consistently supported the Mexican War and its potential implications for slavery's expansion, historian Luke Schleif points out that both Methodist branches celebrated the war's inherent prospects for anti-Catholic evangelism and Protestant notions of

[4] Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 44-50; Harmon, "Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 130-43; Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, 202-03.

republicanism. The continental conflict propelled an intensely competitive missionary spirit, and in that environment, the question of whether Methodism would increase its borders also involved the question of *which* Methodism would expand.[5]

In the midst of these developments, alterations and variations appeared in northern Methodists' sentiments toward the Plan of Separation. At the 1844 General Conference, the Plan had received overwhelming support; each of the various provisions individually passed in bipartisan votes ranging from 135 to 153 affirming against thirteen to eighteen dissenting. Supporters included some of the most prominent northern Methodists, including church historian Nathan Bangs, educational pioneer Stephen Olin, and even Charles Elliott. The northern bishops, particularly Thomas Morris and Edmund Janes, expressed support for the binding nature of the Plan and encouraged adherence to it.[6]

Other northerners, however, most notably editor Thomas Bond, opposed and attacked the Plan as soon as it was announced. By the 1846 MECS General Conference, the northern view of the Plan had swung from broadly supportive to predominantly opposed. The stickiest points of opposition were threefold. First, northern Methodists, prodded by Bond and others, increasingly questioned whether the 1844 General Conference held authority to divide the church. Second, the Plan poorly accounted for the border conferences, which had strong contingents of both ecclesiastical unionists and separationists. Both divisions of the church had poached border territories, leading to intense rivalry and charges of violating the terms of the Plan. Third and finally, the Plan

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[5] Luke Schleif, "That Her Religion May be Uprooted: The Methodists and the Mexican-American War," *Methodist History* 52 (October 2013), 19-32.

[6] Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 32, 52-54.

mandated an equal division of shared profits derived largely from the Methodist Book Concern, but that division required suspension of one of the "Restrictive Rules" of the *Discipline*. Southern conferences, predictably, ratified the suspension quickly. As sentiment changed in the North, ratification votes reflected the shift, and the northern conferences ultimately decided against suspension of the Restrictive Rule. The Book Concern agents informed the 1846 MECS General Conference that they were awaiting instruction from the 1848 MEC General Conference before paying any dividends, triggering a diplomatic, but strong response from the MECS challenging the constitutionality of their decision based on the terms of the Plan of Separation. Such appeal to the Plan, however, shortly proved futile. Reflecting the altered northern attitude, only thirty of the delegates who had voted in favor of the Plan in 1844 returned as representatives to the 1848 MEC General Conference. And at that session, the MEC renounced the Plan of Separation and declared it void. Further, the General Conference rejected Pierce as an official delegate, denying fraternal recognition to the MECS. In short, the MEC formally branded the MECS a secession rather than a division.[7]

For southern Methodist leaders, the repudiation of the Plan of Separation, like the Andrew case that preceded it, challenged not only their conception of ecclesiastical constitutionality, but also their Methodist identity. The MEC essentially had declared the MECS illegitimate, an unsanctioned departure from its Wesleyan heritage. That action prompted an ideological struggle, with many physical manifestations, between the sectional branches of Methodism over ecclesiological recognition and legitimacy that

[7] Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 15-16; Arthur E. Jones, "The Years of Disagreement," in Bucke, *History of American Methodism*, 150-51, 159-67, 173-74. Also see Crowther, "'Religion Has Something … to Do with Politics,'" 321-24.

would continue for nearly thirty years. Following the rejection of fraternal recognition, Pierce sent a letter to the MEC General Conference laying out terms for future reconciliation, stating, "[The MECS] can never renew the offer of fraternal relations between the two great bodies of Wesleyan Methodists in the United States. But the proposition can be renewed at any time, either now or hereafter, by the M. E. Church. And if ever made upon the basis of the Plan of Separation, as adopted by the General Conference of 1844, the Church, South, will cordially entertain the proposition." He closed the missive with an assurance of "Christian fellowship," but fellowship and fraternity carried different distinctions. Nevertheless, the MECS continued its emphasis on coequal legitimacy. Throughout the antebellum period and into the postwar phase, southern Methodist spokesmen affirmed that they were "not … a secession nor a separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church, but only from the jurisdiction of the General Conference of said Church." Referencing Bishops Soule and Andrew, they celebrated their jurisdictional reorganization as "complete as well as legitimate—the Church furnished with the Episcopal incumbency and the first General Conference with a Constitutional Presidency."[8]

Material considerations, of course, did matter to the MECS. The denomination brought suit in New York and Ohio against the MEC for property rights and dividend equity, winning one case and losing the other. The losing case was appealed to the Supreme Court, which ruled unanimously in favor of the MECS in April 1854, nearly ten years following the formal schism. Property dispute cases continued in Virginia as late as

[8] A. H. Redford, *Life and Times of H. H. Kavanaugh, D.D., One of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville, 1884), 293; Thomas M. Finney, *The Life and Labors of Enoch Mather Marvin, Late Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (St. Louis: James H. Chambers, 1880), 438-39.

1856, and would be renewed by actions during the Civil War. As Richard Carwardine perceptively notes, "issues of church finance had not caused the midcentury schism in Methodism, but after the fracture money matters infected the wound." Material concerns alone, however, cannot adequately explain the enduring struggle over the Plan of Separation between the Methodist churches. Well into the 1870s, southern Methodist spokesmen continued to demand as prerequisite to reconciliation that the MEC rescind its repeal of the Plan of Separation. Such rescission would not affect the property question in any material fashion, but *would* affirm the MECS's coequal legitimacy.[9]

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By the late 1840s, having separated from the MEC and formally organized their denomination, southern Methodists set out to continue their practice of faith and evangelism in a uniquely *southern* and *Methodist* manner. As Beth Schweiger argues, denominational schisms presented a potent opportunity for sectional faith communities to claim renewed vigor in the public cultural sphere. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and other groups competed for respectability and social standing. In the process, they expanded their physical infrastructure and displayed a more formal, professionalized face to their surrounding society. In urban settings, southern ministers' wealth could quadruple the average American's assets. In some cases, professionalization and rivalry

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[9] Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 56; "VA Church Suits," *RCA*, 29 May 1856; Richard Carwardine, "Trauma in Methodism: Property, Church Schism, and Sectional Polarization in Antebellum America," in Noll, *God and Mammon*, 210; Fuller, *Appeal to the Records*, 12-14. Carwardine's excellent essay is the best concise analysis of the property conflicts. See also Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 59-61.

became an internal matter: the South Carolina conference of the MECS conducted a fundraising drive in 1847 to secure a respectable parsonage for their beloved Bishop William Capers, because another conference was seeking to attract his residence with a home in their jurisdiction. Future MECS bishop George F. Pierce related the sentiment of progressive southern Methodists when, while speaking at an Emory College event, he noted that if Methodists failed to keep pace "in these days of light and progress and achievement," they "must inevitably grow imbecile, effete, and disreputable." Many southern Methodist clergy, however, still occupied humble positions financially, and respectability came with its own pitfalls. Bishop Andrew, musing on the potential loss of ecclesiastical-unionist members in late 1844, comforted himself thus: "Perhaps we should lose our respectability that is we should not point to over million of members but then possibly with smaller bands we might boast less and give and work more and depend less on man and more on God."[10]

Moreover, southern Methodists, while proud of their regional identity, continued to display moments of authentic tension caused by their equally powerful religious identity. As Christopher Owen rightly affirms, "southernization" progressed slowly and imperfectly among Methodists even up to the Civil War. Although they defended the continued existence of slavery, southern Methodist leaders often clashed with fellow southerners on the expected conduct of the institution. In a prizewinning essay later

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[10] Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, especially 78, 129-48; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 68-71 (but also note Owen's qualifications on this point, 70-71); Randy J. Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 114-16; Letter to "Brethren," undated, Whitefoord Smith Papers, Folder 1, Duke; Circular, 22 March 1847, Whitefoord Smith Papers, Folder 1, Duke; Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 169; Andrew to Wightman, 19 August 1844, James Osgood Andrew Papers, Box 1 Folder 5, Emory.

published as a booklet entitled *The Duties of Christian Masters*, influential editor and future bishop Holland McTyeire strongly implied that cruel slaveholders would receive eternal damnation, and warned that slaves would testify before God as to their master's conduct. Methodists also frequently promoted black literacy and reprimanded the breakup of slave families. In 1849, Charlestonian Methodists faced the ire of other denominations for their appointment of black class leaders and failure to require white oversight of black worship services. In the process, Methodist clergyman Whitefoord Smith ardently defended the MECS's system of organization and trust in its black membership.[11]

The same year, the South Carolina Conference Missionary Society described difficulties to its work that threatened the "very existence of our missions." The difficulties may have been connected to the Charleston conflict. Whitefoord Smith, writing for the Missionary Society, blamed "jaundiced eye … and a narrow sectarianism" for the troubles. He defended the Society's southern heritage and the MECS's course relative to slavery, but vowed that the society would continue its missions and maintain fidelity to its practices toward blacks. Certainly some MECS slaveholders practiced cruelty and brutality, even by American slavery standards, but the Methodist experience generally conformed to Charles Irons's cogent observation for Virginia: "White evangelicals received just enough resistance to the [slave] mission to convince them that

[11] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 59, 87; John J. Tigert IV, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire: Ecclesiastical and Educational Architect* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1955), 108-09, Vanderbilt; Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, 206-12; Unaddressed letter by Whitefoord Smith, 10 July 1849, Whitefoord Smith Papers, Folder 1, Duke.

they were sacrificing themselves on behalf of black Virginians and in the name of Jesus."[12]

Southern Methodists also faced periodic tension between their southern socio-political tendencies and their religious "spirituality of the church" doctrine. This principle proclaimed that churches ought to remain aloof from the temporal matters of government and politics, and focus strictly on religious matters. As Christopher Owen avers, Methodist conceptions of political neutrality or nonparticipation were not a cover or smokescreen for secessionism or even proslavery sentiment, but rather a pragmatic and effective means of balancing their evangelistic and reformist tendencies with their political realities. Numerous southern Methodist leaders considered adherence to the "spirituality of the church" principle a vital component of their sacred identity. Thus, despite the general political popularity of Charles Sumner's caning, for example, many southern Methodists condemned Preston Brooks's actions. George Pierce intensely opposed Democrats privately, but avoided public political participation. MECS bishop Robert Paine went even further in his pursuit of sacrificing politics for faith. He noted in the midst of the secession crisis of 1860 that "for thirty years past I had not voted for a President, in order to give an example to younger ministers, and thus to reserve my influence for moral and religious ends." In the midst of an annual conference years before, a preacher commented on his political differences with another preacher, as part

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[12] Manuscript by Whitefoord Smith, 1849 [attributed], Whitefoord Smith Papers, Folder 1, Duke; Irons, *Origins of Proslavery Christianity*, 204. On p. 171, Irons also argues that "defending the mission from slavery's most rabid supporters at home gave Virginia's white evangelicals a feeling of integrity when defending their treatment of slaves from critics abroad." For Methodists such as Whitefoord Smith and Holland McTyeire, those "rabid supporters" often included fellow evangelicals, reinforcing a sense of Methodist superiority. On examples of Methodist slaveholder cruelty, see Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 79.

of a broader recommendation for the latter's admission to the conference. Paine, not realizing the purpose for which politics was mentioned, cut the speaker off and sharply rebuked him for mentioning partisanship in an ecclesiastical capacity. The MECS was by no means immune to politics, and often participated fully in its machinations, but nonetheless exhibited a sense of resistance and tension in doing so. [13]

Ecclesiastically, the MECS dealt with a variety of issues in the years between schism and civil war. It shared with other denominations a concern over "worldly amusements," such as dancing, that tempted its members. The denomination also highly encouraged education, developing an impressive infrastructure of academic institutions that emphasized peculiarly-southern secular teaching and peculiarly-Wesleyan religious instruction. Sabbath schools and denominational periodicals and magazines further aided this educational mission. Internally, issues of constitutionalism and organizational polity remained relevant. Bishop Robert Paine twice intervened in local conference matters to ensure that ministers received due process and trial before facing church discipline. To remain in good standing, Methodist clergy had to pass periodic examinations of their ministerial and personal "character" at their annual conference sessions. During one such examination of Methodist minister Charles Force Deems, fellow clergyman Washington Chaffin voted against passing Deems's character based on a technicality in policy. Deems was acquitted of a charge in an earlier hearing, but Chaffin considered the acquittal unconstitutional because the case had been settled by third-party settlement rather than by

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[13] Harlow, "Slavery, Race, and Political Ideology in the White Christian South Before and After the Civil War," in Mark A. Noll and Luke E. Harlow, eds., *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2007), 216; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 63-65, 87-89. See also Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 129-32; Rivers, *Life of Robert Paine*, 99-100, 142.

a rising vote of the conference members. And in 1854, Whitefoord Smith represented a contingent protesting the MECS's decision to merge the Book Concern profits into a separate capital fund, based on a variant interpretation of the *Discipline*'s sixth Restrictive Rule.[14]

The denomination repeatedly considered lay representation in annual and general conferences in the antebellum period, but tradition and conservatism overrode the democratic challenge. Both the MEC and MECS General Conferences denied lay representation in 1852 and 1854, respectively. Although some annual conferences would later experiment with the concept during the Civil War, lay delegates would not be welcomed to either denomination's General Conference until after 1865. The length of the pastorate was another issue of contention. Many preachers sought to lengthen the two-year term of residence in a given location, but again the hierarchy held firm. The one exception prior to the Civil War was New Orleans. Yellow fever constantly plagued the city, and while stationed there, future bishop Holland McTyeire secured a suspension of the rule so that fewer preachers might be exposed and endangered. McTyeire, however, paid an ecclesiastical price for his action; angry fellow clergymen refused to elect him to the 1862 General Conference.[15]

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[14] Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 121-24; Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 329; Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 55-75; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 74-75; Rivers, *Life of Robert Paine*, 104, 130-31); Washington Sandford Chaffin, journal entry, 56, Washington Sandford Chaffin Papers, Box 1, Journal: 1858, Jan. 1 – March 1; 1863-64 & Notebook, 1851-1863, Duke; Whitefoord Smith, untitled manuscript, May 1854, Whitefoord Smith Papers, Folder 2, Duke.

[15] Norwood, *Story of Methodism*, 208; Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 340, 352-54; Tigert, *Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 113-14; Moorman, "Holland Nimmons McTyeire," Vanderbilt, 30-31.

A particularly intriguing topic was the long-pesky Rule on Slavery. Many prominent southern Methodists, sharing Joshua Soule's understanding that the rule applied only to the international slave trade, perceived little threat from its continuation in the *Discipline*, particularly after ecclesiastical separation. The Holston Conference, for example, instructed its General Conference delegation to challenge any alteration of the Rule, contending that it was fine as it stood, and that the North had held the "revolutionary" interpretation of its applicability. Indeed, James Andrew in 1848 remarked that although he may "regret [the Rule on Slavery's] existence in the book as unnecessary and calculated to prejudice," still it "is regarded by large numbers of our people in every one of the southern conferences as embodying plain and palpable truth." Knowing from very personal experience the constitutional sensitivities of the MECS, Andrew concluded that "we must … abide by the book as it is or break up the unity of the southern connexion." As late as 1857, Methodist preacher and future bishop Alpheus Waters noted that the Tennessee Conference was in nearly unanimous opposition to changing the Rule, and expected that other border conferences agreed. Nevertheless, in a powerfully symbolic move, the following year's General Conference formally revoked and removed the Rule, but did so with great caution. Voting abstentions counted neither for nor against the measure, and a carefully worded clarification noted that the removal in no ways altered the MECS's stance toward either slavery or the slave trade. According to the clarification, the Rule's removal made the denomination's published views toward the institution more overtly consistent. At the same time, "piracy" was a crime by United

States law, and the *Discipline* required adherence to civil law, thus forestalling any complications relative to the slave trade.[16]

The MECS also faced its share of intra-denominational squabbles. Modernist "progressives" and traditionalist "conservatives" clashed on virtually all issues within the church. Such was to be expected, but church leaders worried especially about the role of newspapers in such quarrels. In 1848, James Andrew sardonically lamented the presentation of Methodism given by newspaper battles: "Verily the world has an edifying spectacle of christian meekness in the quarrels of the religious press. Well so the world and the church go."[17] At times, the newspapers themselves were the subject of clashes. At the organizing conference of 1846, John McFerrin, editor of the MECS's Nashville paper, successfully fought the establishment of a new paper in Louisiana. Members of the Louisiana, Florida, and Mississippi conferences believed selfish motivation drove McFerrin. The conferences tried again with greater success in 1850, and the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* was created.[18]

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[16] R. N. Price, *Holston Methodism: From its Origin to the Present Time, Vol. IV: From the Year 1844 to the Year 1870* (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1913), 71; Andrew to William Wightman, 24 March 1848, James Osgood Andrew Papers, Box 1 Folder 11, Emory; Wilson to wife, 14 November 1857, Alpheus Waters Wilson Papers, Box 1 Folder 4, Emory; Methodist Episcopal Church, South, *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, May, 1858* (Nashville, 1859), 456-61.

[17] Andrew to William Wightman, 24 March 1848, James Osgood Andrew Papers, Box 1 Folder 11, Emory. Wightman was editor of the *Southern Christian Advocate* (hereafter *SCA*). Lewis Purifoy notes that the *SCA* was significantly more moderate than many other papers in the 1844 crisis; perhaps Andrew's friendship and frequent communication with Wightman served a tempering role. See Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 79.

[18] John G. Jones, *A Complete History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Volume IV: From the Beginning of 1852-1869*, Chapter XV, 15-17, unpublished manuscript, J. B. Cain Archives of Mississippi Methodism, Millsaps College, Jackson, Mississippi (hereafter

Representing the more conservative element of the MECS, Soule expressed great concern in 1849 over "innovations" creeping into Methodism. Spurred by a question regarding males and females in the same family sitting together at worship services, Soule took the opportunity to share his thoughts on numerous issues. He bemoaned not only the practice of families sitting together, but also "the introduction of 'Pews to sell or rent'" and "choirs and instruments of music," the omission of the Lord's Prayer, and giving sermons on topics other than "the holy scriptures." Lastly, he complained that "kneeling in prayer, especially in the pewed churches, is almost extinct." Soule's only consolation was that "these departures from primitive Methodism" were largely consigned to the MEC, and had not "pervaded to any considerable extent in the Southern division of the Church." Mississippi minister William Winans agreed with Soule's views, but believed the problem was indeed rampant in the South as well as the North, and he blamed the influence of professionalism and wealth. For both Soule and Winans, however, Methodist "liberalism" and innovation went much deeper than antislavery and abolition.[19]

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cited as Millsaps). Jones, a minister in and historian of the Mississippi Conference in the mid-nineteenth century, never published his fourth volume. These manuscripts are uncatalogued and have only recently been discovered. Access to the ongoing transcription of the manuscripts was graciously provided for this dissertation.

[19] Soule to J. Lane and L. Pierce, 7 July 1849, Joshua Soule Papers, Box 1 Folder 1, Emory; Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 114-15. Soule and Winans were not anomalies. The 1845 Holston Conference session, for example, passed strongly worded resolutions condemning pew rental, instrumental music in worship, and the establishing of seminaries. Price, *Holston Methodism*, 21.

As southern Methodist identity continued to develop, the MECS established nuanced and often-complicated relations not just with the MEC, but also with other faith communities in the South. Antagonism, or at least chilly neutrality, characterized most of the interactions between southern and northern Methodists in the antebellum period. By far, the border states and conferences witnessed the most opposition, as the rival churches competed for adherents and influence. Especially following the MEC's repeal of the Plan of Separation in 1848, both sides pressed unabashedly into the border regions. Southern Methodists even sought to establish a denominational paper, known as the *Methodist Expositor and True Issue*, in Cincinnati. The paper failed, although the MECS did maintain a fairly consistent membership in the city into the 1850s. In 1857, MECS bishop George Pierce boasted to his daughter Ella about his efforts promoting southern Methodism in western Virginia. He described his mission as "a perfect triumph," but anticipated he would "appear in the Northern papers as a beast with more than seven heads and ten horns." MEC preacher—but future MECS bishop—Alpheus Wilson commented dejectedly on the ecclesiastical border wars in Virginia, blaming much of the conflict on religious periodicals and newspapers. Writing to his wife in 1857, Wilson wished for the circulation of denominational papers to cease altogether, but acknowledged that they were "very popular," and that most people in his county supported the abolitionist views of MEC editor Abel Stevens.[20]

At the same time, not all interactions between the MEC and MECS were hostile. In 1856, Bishop Pierce agreed to participate with northern bishop Matthew Simpson in a

[20] Redford, *H. H. Kavanaugh*, 331-32; Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 328-29; Wilson to wife, 14 November 1857, Alpheus Waters Wilson Papers, Box 1 Folder 4, Emory.

joint dedication of an MEC church in New Jersey. While there, he preached numerous times for MEC congregations. After the event, both the northern *Pittsburg Christian Advocate* and the southern *Richmond Christian Advocate* [*RCA*] celebrated the spirit of fraternity exemplified by the dedication. Similarly, the 1858 MECS General Conference continued to refer to northern Methodists as "brethren," although such language conveniently reinforced the "amicable split" interpretation of 1844 and its constitutional implications. In a practice that would continue through the Civil War, many southern Methodist obituaries and epitaphs described deceased MECS members as lifelong members of the "Methodist Episcopal Church," with seemingly no cognitive dissonance. Such was the case even for Georgian Ann Pierce, wife of a patriarch and mother of an architect and bishop of the southern denomination. Yet even in the midst of positive engagement, sensitive tendencies and ongoing rivalries continued to mark MEC-MECS relations. In 1859, while on a visit to California, George Pierce complained that while he had been "allowed" to preach in an MEC church, he had not been specifically "invited" to do so.[21]

Just as the MECS sought to frame a uniquely *southern* identity in its relations with the MEC, it pursued a distinctly *Methodist* identity relative to other Christian communities in the South. As Mitchell Snay contends, southern evangelicals' "desire for denominational distinctiveness … furnished the major impetus for the formation of religious institutions." The Holston Conference of the MECS, in the crucible of North-South Methodist rivalry, saw its primary duty after 1845 as the promulgation of

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[21] Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 270; "Bishop Pierce's Correspondence," *RCA*, 29 May 1856; Methodist Episcopal Church, South, *Journal, 1858*, 394; Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 165, 423.

Methodist identity rather than *southern* character, and established a regional newspaper, the *Methodist Episcopalian*, to that end. Appalachian southern Methodists engaged in bitter and nearly constant theological conflict with various religious groups, particularly Baptists and Hopkinsian Calvinists. In the late 1850s, when the *Nashville Christian Advocate* absorbed the *Holston Christian Advocate* (as the *Methodist Episcopalian* was then titled), Holston members protested that Methodist interests needed continued defense. In response, *Nashville Advocate* editor John McFerrin contended that renowned southern Methodist apologist William Brownlow was more than capable of striking down any theological challenges in the area. Nevertheless, local Methodists attempted no less than four replacement periodicals over the next several years, one of which finally achieved recognition as a formal conference organ. Similar conflicts occurred in Georgia, where theological and ecclesiastical rivalries led Methodists to alternate in alliances with Baptists against Presbyterians, or vice versa.[22]

Inter-denominational relations proved tricky, particularly in terms of evangelism. Southern Methodist spokesmen demonstrated great sensitivity both to their own evangelistic efforts and to others' perceived encroachments. In one Alabama Conference incident, a squabble began over the question of evangelistic poaching. Numerous conference members displayed great displeasure toward a preacher some thought "had been stealing into other people's folds to *proselyte*," which would comprise "a grave

[22] Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 104; Price, *Holston Methodism*, 18-26, 175-76; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 69. Beth Schweiger similarly notes that southern clergy "encouraged their congregations to work not as Christians, but as Baptists or Methodists," although her broader work clearly indicates a simultaneous "southernization" of denominational infrastructure. See Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 87.

objection to the passage of the preacher's character." The presiding elder, however, explained that the new Methodists converted by the preacher had freely attended an open-invitation revival, and under no compulsion asked to join the MECS. This explanation satisfied the conference, which passed the preacher's character. When their own membership was at stake, however, southern Methodist leaders were not always forgiving. While an editor, McTyeire challenged an Episcopal bishop in Mississippi who invited Methodists to rejoin the Protestant Episcopal Church. According to later MECS bishop Oscar Fitzgerald, McTyeire responded with cutting humor: "That is cool! The next proposition, we presume, will be to turn the Mississippi River into Buffalo Bayou." Another Methodist preacher became indignant when, in the midst of his sermon, a "Campbellite" preacher interrupted him to invite the audience to hear a Restorationist sermon instead. Methodist Peter Doub warned his brother to be on guard against the Baptists, telling him that "it would be well to give the proselytizing spirit of the Miss[ionary] Baptists a check, and let the people know, that somebody besides them, know one or two things on Baptism." Otherwise, Doub feared, the Baptists "will certainly lead as many of your converts into the water as they can. It has always been their way." Such incidents and their periodic success led North Carolina circuit rider Washington Chaffin to lament Methodism's lack of evangelistic aggression. If the Bible's promise was true that "'It is more blessed to give than to receive,'" Chaffin satirically mourned, then "as a church we ought to be abundantly blessed because we have ever been giving members to other branches of the Church."[23]

[23] Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 323-24; O. P. Fitzgerald, "McTyeire as an Editor," John James Tigert IV Papers, Box 4 Folder 4, Vanderbilt; Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 87; Doub to brother, 31 July 1847, William Clark Doub Papers, Box 1,

Antebellum southern Methodist leaders thus often found themselves at theological odds with their neighbors. McTyeire blasted a California preacher who mocked John Wesley's Arminianism, suggesting that Wesley had flipped a coin to determine his theology. In 1852, the *RCA* printed a Presbyterian preacher's attack on Methodism, excoriating the sermon as a "remarkable specimen of sectarian glorification." In 1859-60, Methodist preacher William Anderson Roberts faced trial in conference for sowing "seeds of discord and dissension … by inveighing against the doctrines and Discipline of [the southern Methodist] church." Specifically, Roberts was teaching Restorationist doctrines and promoting a denominational paper opposed to Methodism. While he awaited trial, Roberts received frequent communication and encouragement from a Disciples of Christ preacher, who enjoined Roberts that "there is a day coming when you and they will have to stand before the Righteous Judge who will not judge you by the Methodist Discipline But by that precious Book the Book of Books the Bible."[24]

Ecumenical and benevolent societies provide an interesting lens for viewing the nuances of southern interdenominational engagement. Methodists joined Baptists, Presbyterians, and others in benevolent giving and in support of groups such as the American Bible Society and American Colonization Society, although the formality of such participation varied. Methodist conferences in Georgia and South Carolina, for example, did not officially support the American Colonization Society because of

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Duke; Chaffin to sister, 10 June 1860, Washington Sandford Chaffin Papers, Box 1, Journal: 1858, Jan. 1 – March 1; 1863-64 & Notebook, 1851-1863, Duke.

[24] Fitzgerald, "McTyeire as an Editor," John James Tigert IV Papers, Box 4 Folder 4, Vanderbilt; *RCA*, 22 July 1852; W. B. Bowe, "Charges preferred against W. A. Roberts," 20 September 1860, William Anderson Roberts Papers, Box 1 Folder 2, Duke; D. H. Spencer to Roberts, 1 August 1860, William Anderson Roberts Papers, Box 1 Folder 2, Duke.

antislavery associations, but Lovick Pierce and James Andrew both served as officers in the Society into the 1850s. Holland McTyeire attended American Bible Society events in New York as late as 1859. While the MECS would transfer its support primarily to distinctly southern societies after secession, the line between ecumenism and denominational rivalry remained precarious even in the Confederacy.[25]

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By the close of the 1850s, southern Methodism had developed significantly, but continued to demonstrate the tensions inherent to its identity. The 1858 General Conference displayed some of these tensions. MECS leaders remained abreast of growing sectional conflicts, certainly, but much as with the Mexican War, official church policy and discussions revolved primarily around matters of organizational self-interest and theological legitimacy and autonomy. The Rule on Slavery still occupied significant attention and debate at the General Conference, and territorial disputes with the MEC garnered additional consideration. In the wake of violent ideological and physical clashes surrounding the Kansas-Nebraska crisis, these ecclesiastical topics cannot be wholly removed from secular and political influences. Nevertheless, the formal framing of these

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[25] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 44, 73; Moorman, "Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire," Vanderbilt, 35. Christopher Owen points out that the MECS's break with the American Tract Society was "as much because the ATS was 'anti-Methodistical' as from 'Southern Patriotism.'" Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 78. On the evolution of southern attitudes toward national benevolent societies and the demographics of southern cooperative benevolent organization, see John W. Quist, "Slaveholding Operatives of the Benevolent Empire: Bible, Tract, and Sunday School Societies in Antebellum Tuscaloosa County, Alabama," *Journal of Southern History* 62, No. 3 (August 1996), 481-526.

issues focused on constitutional legalism and preserving the spirit of the Plan of Separation in 1844.[26]

Besides these two dominant subjects, several other issues came up. The Conference emphasized the importance of denominational education and communication, but also warned of overproduction. The *Nashville Christian Advocate* shifted from a local conference publication to the central organ of the MECS, with McTyeire as editor. The denomination warned its other publications to "defend the institutions of Methodism, and not … discuss and promote innovations upon our established doctrines or usages," and chided against "personal or local quarrels." The Conference also denounced efforts by Baptists to produce a new translation of the Bible, condemning the attempt as "a sectarian measure designed chiefly, if not wholly, to sustain the doctrine of baptismal immersion."[27]

Tensions in the southern conception of the episcopacy also presented themselves. Both contributing to and continuing from the 1844 schism, southern Methodism embraced a distinctively sovereign and autonomous episcopacy. According to one prominent southern Methodist historian, "the bishop … was responsible to no authority save to God." Yet in the democratically charged world of the antebellum South, some even in the MECS challenged what they perceived as too much exercise of episcopal power. At the 1858 General Conference, several members targeted Bishop John Early, whom aggrieved parties charged with discourtesy and impropriety toward preachers under his charge. The Conference proceeded cautiously, recognizing the gravity of

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[26] Methodist Episcopal Church, South, *Journal, 1858*, 448-61, 501-06.

[27] Methodist Episcopal Church, South, *Journal, 1858*, 393, 397, 481; Tigert, *Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 117-19.

charges against a bishop. Delegates proposed and modified a series of resolutions, culminating in a recommendation that his character pass, but "allowing" him, in light of "age and declining strength," "to be released from taking any part of the regular episcopal work in the future." Ultimately, the Committee on Episcopacy ruled that Early had not been charged with "immorality," but instead poor exercise in the "manner of his administration," and passed his character. Even then, delegates passed a resolution stating that "this Conference does explicitly and emphatically disavow any intention to interfere with the Episcopal prerogative." The college of bishops finally dismissed the General Conference with a pastoral address summarizing the events of the session, and sanguinely celebrating "our unity as to doctrine, and … our freedom from all disturbing questions both as to theology and government."[28]

The MECS on the eve of secession and civil war, then, displayed a largely successful adaptation to its role as a sectional denomination. Nevertheless, it was unable to suppress fully the tensions of its dual identity. Dee Andrews describes early American Methodism as a "universal American church … beset by universal American dualisms." The same proved true for southern Methodism, and the greatest dualism was simply seeking to be both *southern* and *Methodist*. As Charity Carney notes, antebellum southern Methodists "were descendants of a church tradition but they were also southern," and

[28] Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 206; Methodist Episcopal Church, South, *Journal, 1858*, 466, 474, 583. For a fuller explication of the early MECS's views on episcopacy, see Finney, *Enoch Mather Marvin*, 442-54. Further context on the Early case may be found in the MECS *Journal, 1858*, pages 406, 462-66, and 474-75. Early would continue to be controversial, as discussed in later chapters. Even as described by an overly flattering biographer, Early was known for a "truculent championship of his personal views," which led to many clashes within the MECS. See J. Rives Childs, "Bishop John Early," in Charles H. Ambler, ed., *The John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College* 4, no. 1 (June 1913), 64-65.

their attempt "to live up to the expectations of society and the church … ultimately helped define religion in the South."[29]

Prominent southern Methodist minister William Winans of Mississippi powerfully encapsulates these tensions and dualities. Winans carried planter status, but bore none of the trappings of upper-class living, and he condemned materialism and hoarding of wealth. He supported the biblical defense of slavery, but renounced racial and spiritual superiority after experiencing a biracial "love feast" celebration of the Eucharist. Indeed, he was a slaveholder who, according to various accounts, sincerely hated slavery and longed for its demise.[30] This paradox of identity created a later dilemma that captures the problematic nature of southern Methodism. The man Winans himself requested to write his posthumous biography struggled to deal with the complications in Winans's views, particularly as sectional positions hardened. The biographer's problem, as described by a later MECS commentator, was that "to publish [Winans's opinions on slavery] … would do damage to our Church; to suppress it would violate the rule Dr. Watkins [the biographer] had adopted at the beginning of his work—"to disguise no feature" of his subject." In the end, Winans's chosen biographer abandoned the project altogether. The irony is staggering: while Winans himself perceived no dissonance between his views and his role as an instrumental architect of

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[29] Andrews, *Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 236; Carney, *Ministers and Masters*, 139, 141.

[30] Numerous historians recognize Winans's curious and paradoxical views. See Startup, *The Root of All Evil*, 25; Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*, 87-88; Dale Edwyna Smith, *The Slaves of Liberty: Freedom in Amite County, Mississippi, 1820-1868* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 98-105; Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, 213-14; Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics*, 154.

MECS formation, the cognitive struggle faced less than twenty years later by his biographer proved overwhelming.[31]

In a classic essay, historian John Boles contends that "studying southern evangelical religion fairly and with all the sensitivity one can muster provides a unique window through which to observe antebellum southern culture with its nuances, subtleties, and apparent contradictions." His observation proves abundantly valid in the case of the MECS's formation and early development. As the 1860s dawned, however, the denomination faced an onset of new challenges and tensions. Political secession, civil war, and Confederate nationalism even further complicated the dual identity of a faith community seeking to express itself as both distinctly southern and fundamentally Methodist.[32]

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[31] T. L. Mellon, *Life and Labors of the Rev. William Hamilton Watkins, D.D., Late a Member of the Mississippi Conference, M. E. Church, South, and One Time President of Centenary College* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1886), 62, William H. Watkins Papers, Millsaps.

[32] John B. Boles, "Evangelical Protestantism in the South: From Religious Dissent to Cultural Dominance," in Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., *Religion in the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 34.

Chapter 3
"Our lives and our fortunes upon the altar": Southern Methodist Leadership and the Coming of War

In the midst of the secession crisis, Holland McTyeire reflected on the infamous 1844 Methodist schism and the positioning of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. McTyeire, editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate*, observed that "in 1844 we were hot, and the Union-savers poured cold water on us: in 1860 we are not hot enough, and the fire-eaters are down on us."[1] The editor represented many institutional leaders in the MECS who resisted the first wave of secession while also maintaining an ecclesiastical separation from the political whirlwind surrounding them. A few short months later, however, McTyeire again revealed a representative voice, but one with a far different tone. In an April article entitled "Civil War—Our Duty," he issued a sweeping declaration that "We must fight for our altars and firesides—*fight*, that is the word. … *There is no middle ground. He that is not for the South at this hour is against her*."

The secession crisis, especially from Abraham Lincoln's election in November 1860 to the wake of Fort Sumter's bombardment and the resultant onset of war during the following April, spurred an important shift in southern Methodist practice and philosophy. A denominational leadership that had prided itself for over fifteen years on staying aloof from politics and matters of state gradually spearheaded a church intricately involved in, and overwhelmingly supportive of, a breakaway nation and its war for continuation. This process was hardly seamless, to be sure, and remained incomplete even by the Confederacy's demise in 1865. The course of political secession and the

[1] *NCA*, 3 January, 25 April 1861. McTyeire's biography will be explored further throughout; he was one of the most influential figures in MECS history, and became a bishop at the 1866 General Conference.

commencement of war nonetheless exposed the institutional MECS's nationalistic tendencies and culturally-reflective identity while revealing continuing tensions created by an ecclesiology seeking to remain distinctly Methodist.

Earlier in 1860, as the presidential election had loomed, the organized channels of the MECS still operated largely as they had since 1844. It was a proslavery church, but one characterized by much more than slavery alone. MECS newspapers, the most dominant form of intra-denominational conversation beyond individual localities, reflected an awareness of the broader national political crisis, but were not obsessed with it. A typical mid-1860 issue of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* (hereafter *RCA*), already a staunchly pro-southern paper, nonetheless focused primarily on distinctly ecclesiastical issues. Thus, while an interior page gave much attention to slavery-related friction among the MEC's Baltimore Conference, the front page headlines included much more mundane matters: "Minutes of the Methodist Sunday-School Convention," "A Short Review of Universalism," "A Sabbath-School Dialogue," and "Latin Christianity." As late as early November 1860, the pattern remained. The 1 November front page headlines read: "Rev. Henry W. Bellman" [a tribute article], "The Baptists in Great Error, No. 2," "Kentucky Conference," "John B. Gough," [the transcript of a temperance speech], and "Religion of the Rebels—China." Another article entitled "A Word of Caution and Advice" did deal with the upcoming election, but primarily by decrying the presence of partisan politics in churches, declaring such action "unworthy prostitution" of the pulpit.[2]

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[2] *RCA*, 7 June, 1 November 1860.

The *NCA*, the MECS's official organ, demonstrated similar characteristics. In early November the editors gave more space and attention to Giuseppe Garibaldi's waning reputation in Europe and to recent successful harvests in Great Britain than to the electoral contest. Revealing optimism about the future, the *NCA* even touted a commissioned engraving of the 1858 General Conference, intended to raise money for "the erection of a fine church in Washington City for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South." In short, the corporate MECS still strove in its formal channels to maintain its politically-neutral "spirituality of the church" stance as late as election day.[3]

Abolition, however, proved the glaring exception to southern Methodist leaders' extra-ecclesiastical detachment. Although MECS representatives had severed any semblance of ties to the antislavery tenets of its Wesleyan heritage by removing the Rule on Slavery in 1858, denominational leaders and editors still felt compelled to vigilantly defend their church against intrusions of abolitionism. National events contributed to an intensifying climate of aggression, particularly in the case of John Brown's raid and attempted slave insurrection at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. In the wake of Brown's execution, McTyeire, in racist vitriol, declared via the *NCA* that "no worse fate could befall these [abolitionist] pests, than to let loose the Southern negroes upon them."[4] In a more benign sense, the financial secretary of the Southern Methodist Publishing House pleaded via the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* in early 1860 for a regional publishing

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[3] *NCA*, 1 November 1860; *NCA*, 8 November 1860.

[4] *NCA*, 22 December 1859. For analyses of the varying regional, racial, and gendered responses elicited by John Brown's raid and execution, see the essays compiled in Paul Finkelman, ed., *His Soul Goes Marching On: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

house to produce a distinctly southern literature in defense against the antislavery and anti-southern tendencies of northern prose and education.[5]

Later that year, lamenting the scarcity of events celebrating denominational anniversaries, James Duncan, editor of the *RCA* and a leading Richmond clergyman, again blamed abolitionism, deeming it "repellant to Christian union." And in an October invective against northern Methodist antislavery sentiment, Bishop George Pierce denounced abolitionists as "rank, rotten, with the foul virtue of an incurable disease, foes of God and man, spies and traitors to their country … let them stay where they belong."[6]

A particularly acerbic episode transpired when a Texas lynch mob murdered an antislavery MEC preacher, Anthony Bewley. A northern Methodist transplant from Missouri, Bewley had moved south as part of a fledgling effort to launch an MEC conference in Texas. Meanwhile, in late 1859, reports of John Brown's Virginia raid sent already volatile sectionalists in Texas into a paranoid frenzy. Based on poorly substantiated claims of conspiracy, proslavery partisans accused Bewley of seeking to incite slave insurrection. Although he fled after realizing his danger, vigilante bounty hunters captured Bewley, and summarily lynched him soon after. Bewley's murder,

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[5] Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 215. For an excellent detailed exploration of Confederate nationalism expressed and forged in southern intellectualism, see Bernath, *Confederate Minds*. Hutchinson, *Apples and Ashes* provides a more specific literary history of the Confederacy, surveying its broad themes.

[6] *RCA*, 7 June 1860; *SCA*, 4 October 1860. Duncan, in addition to working as editor of the *RCA*, pastored Richmond's prominent Broad Street Methodist Church. According to historian Margaret Kidd, Duncan "probably exerted more influence over public opinion on the war than any other member of the M. E. Church, South in Virginia, or throughout the Confederacy for that matter." Jefferson Davis and Robert Lee, although Episcopalians, often attended Broad Street. Kidd argues that although Duncan "did focus … on the needs of the soldiers" during the war, most of his influence was "aimed directly at those left at home," to "spread the gospel and instruct all people on matters of faith during the war." See Margaret T. Kidd, "Sins of a Nation," *Virginia United Methodist Heritage* 39 (Spring 2013), especially 8-13.

according to historian Donald Reynolds, represented "a dramatic coda to the most extensive … panic of antebellum history."[7]

MECS spokesmen's responses to Bewley's lynching were telling. On the one hand, he represented but one high-profile victim amidst a rash of broader sectional clashes. Antagonistic forces, predominantly prosouthern and antislavery, had committed many acts of violence against their opponents on the basis of political, racial, and religious affiliations. That Bewley was neither an outspoken politico nor an open abolitionist, however, highlights the intense association many southerners perceived between the MEC and radical antislavery action. Although most southern Methodist commentators did not celebrate the violence against Bewley, neither did they decry his murder and in some ways even excused it. In one typical editorial, the *Texas Christian Advocate* (hereafter *TCA*) blamed Bewley's death on "political … religious men and religious papers at the North," and further disparaged Bewley's character, contending that "the number here who believe him to have been a 'good man' is few." Editor D. R. McAnally of the MECS *St. Louis Christian Advocate* issued a blanket condemnation of northern abolitionists and the MEC. McAnally proclaimed northern representatives like

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[7] Wesley Norton, "The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil Disturbances in North Texas in 1859 and 1860," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 68, No. 3 (January 1965), 330-32, 340; Donald E. Reynolds, *Texas Terror: The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1860 and the Secession of the Lower South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 147. Reynold's narrative, especially 148-67, contains the fullest account of the Bewley episode and the broader abolition paranoia in Texas throughout 1860. A helpful comparison between Bewley and John Brown is given in Dunn, *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*, 57-60.

Bewley "murderers at heart" and also denounced "those by whose teachings they are incited to action."[8]

If the MECS leadership presented virtually unanimous views toward abolition, at least in print, secession proved a much more complicated issue.[9] Luke Harlow asserts that "the election of Abraham Lincoln to the U.S. presidency in November 1860 proved decisive in securing religious support for the Confederacy." In the case of the MECS, however, Confederate nationalism came more slowly and sporadically, at least until after Fort Sumter. Certainly, white majorities in the Lower South states embraced secession quickly following Lincoln's election, and MECS adherents in those states generally supported their states' actions, but the process was not seamless, even in the most rabidly secessionist states.[10]

Although the *TCA* discussed possible responses to Lincoln's election, including secession, well in advance, editor J. E. Carnes endorsed a "wait and see" approach as late

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[8] Reynolds, *Texas Terror*, 119-47; *TCA*, 8 November 1860; *St. Louis Christian Advocate*, 20 September 1860, cited in Norton, "Civil Disturbances in North Texas," 340. Editor McAnally's public expressions created trouble for him soon after. McAnally, a former seminary professor, had preached and edited in St. Louis for seventeen years. Under Federal occupation of St. Louis, the *St. Louis Christian Advocate* suspended, and military officers arrested and court-martialed McAnally. No verdict came back from Washington, so McAnally received indefinite parole and remained bound to the country for the duration of the war, after which he resumed editorial duties. See Walter Barlow Stevens, *St. Louis: The Fourth City, 1764-1909* (St. Louis: S. J. Clarke, 1909), 723-24.

[9] As Charles Irons argues in his study of Virginia Protestants, white evangelicals "considered slavery and secession distinct moral issues, though historians continually conflate the two." See Irons, "Reluctant Protestant Confederates: The Religious Roots of Conditional Unionism," in Peter Wallenstein and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, eds., *Virginia's Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 74.

[10] Harlow, "From Border South to Solid South," 141. Harlow qualifies his statement somewhat in reference to Kentucky, noting on pages 3-4 that "to be southern in Kentucky in the era of the Civil War did not initially require Confederate allegiance." A broad view of the corporate MECS, as this chapter demonstrates, supports the qualification, but only to a limited extent.

as 8 November. Within a month, however, the author of an ongoing column titled "The Crisis" staunchly advocated secession, rhetorically asking "if the Rubicon has not been crossed, what act, I would ask, is necessary to cause us to resist?" Following the excitement of the Bewley episode, Texan Methodists became particularly proactive against the abolitionism they perceived in Lincoln's victory; the "Crisis" author menacingly reminded readers about Bewley in his closing sentence.[11]

Uniformity in thought did not exist, however. In his analysis of Georgia Methodists' views on secession and war, Christopher Owen points out that while "a large majority [of the Georgia Conference] favored immediate secession" after Lincoln's election, several notable Methodists in the state opposed separation or at least only acquiesced reluctantly. When members of the South Carolina Conference attempted to pass resolutions supporting secession just after the election, for example, presiding bishop Robert Paine ruled the measures out of order and reminded his subordinate clergy that "politics cannot be allowed in a Methodist Conference."[12] Similarly, bishops Joshua Soule and James Andrew jointly and forcefully denied the possibility of secessionist resolutions in the Alabama Conference, preemptively vowing to rule any such motions out of order. Prominent Methodist judge and author Augustus Longstreet had zealously

[11] *TCA*, 8 November 1860; *TCA*, 6 December 1860. Carnes served as editor of the *TCA* from 1858 until its suspension early in the Civil War. Little else is known of him, except that he became a Confederate chaplain during the war. See David Young, William Harrison De Puy, and Samuel Hart Wright, eds., *The Methodist Almanac for the Year of Our Lord 1861* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1861), 26; and LeRoy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, eds., *The Papers of Andrew Johnson, Volume 3, 1858-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1972), 363 n. 3.

[12] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 91-92; Rivers, *Life of Robert Paine*, 145. In late November, Paine had also met with lame-duck president James Buchanan at the politician's request. When beseeched for his thoughts on the potential action of southern states, Paine reminded Buchanan that per his religious views, he "studiously avoided partisan excitement." Ibid., 142.

embraced the justification and possibility of secession in 1859 while delivering a starkly pro-southern oration to graduates of the University of South Carolina, but even he had cooled off significantly by late 1860. By early 1861, Longstreet begged South Carolina to avoid any action that might precipitate violence, even if it meant forfeiting Fort Moultrie, the main stronghold of Federal troops in Charleston until the garrison fled to Fort Sumter.[13]

A presiding elder of the Louisiana Conference, J. B. Walker, mourned the implications of Lincoln's success, but also revealed the sentiment of a politically-resistant Methodist preacher when he wrote, "Though I had seldom voted, I voted for Mr. Bell because he was a Constitutional Union man, and I wished to show my love for the Union, as it might be my last opportunity ere it was dissolved." George Washington Bachman, of the Memphis Conference, expressed sorrow at the news that his home state of Mississippi had seceded, fearing they had "acted too hastily." Additionally, he found frustration in trying to focus on his studies and preaching, blaming his difficulties on the "excitement" caused by secession and impending war. Throughout the MECS, in other words, leading voices still spoke of secession in fearful or lamenting terms, even as the South progressed toward political separation.[14]

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[13] George G. Smith, *The Life and Letters of James Osgood Andrew, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, with Glances at His Contemporaries and at Events in Church History* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1882), 473; Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 216-17. Although these actions suggest something of a division between denominational leadership and lower clergy, the bishops cannot be accused of a regional bias: Paine was a Mississippian, and Andrew a longtime Georgian. Meanwhile, as will be explored later, the most ardently nationalist MECS bishop was Virginian John Early.

[14] J. B. Walker, "A Sketch of My Life," manuscript journal, 57, J. B. Walker Papers, Millsaps; G. W. Bachman, "Sketches and Incidents of Life, Vol. 1: 1839-85," 10-11, G. W. Bachman Papers, Millsaps.

The MECS's central organ also provides an intriguing lens for viewing the complex and varied perspectives of southern Methodists toward secession in its early phase. In late November 1860, following Lincoln's election, McTyeire published a measured article entitled "Pray for the Country." Acknowledging the "roused" spirit pervading the nation since the election, McTyeire nonetheless expressed hope in God's continued plans for the Union, and suggested that "readers can judge for themselves the ultimate result and their present duty." Another illuminating editorial appeared in January 1861. While traveling, McTyeire recorded a conversation with a friend in New Orleans, who had claimed that "the [Southern] Methodist Church is falling in the background" in relation to the drive for secession. Meanwhile, the friend pointed out, Presbyterian clergymen were "immortalizing" themselves as leaders of the separatist movement. Asked why Southern Methodists "don't speak out" for secession, McTyeire answered that "our preachers and editor [in New Orleans] are doing right" and expressed hope that "they have courage to resist this outside pressure always." McTyeire connected the theology of the "spirituality of the church" doctrine to southern constructions of Methodist polity, asserting that avoiding politics had been precisely the reason for the Methodist schism in 1844.[15]

The point is significant. Whereas other denominational bodies essentially were reacting to abolitionism as a *political* issue in 1860-61, McTyeire contended that Southern Methodist leaders had "cut short the quarrel and acted in 1844" when the issue was strictly a *religious* one. Shortly after the publication of McTyeire's editorial, a Kentuckian applauded the *Advocate's* "timely" protest against fire-eating preachers,

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[15] *NCA*, 29 November 1860, 3 January 1861.

whose political path the writer felt was "following in the footsteps of their brethren of the North, whose conduct we have all hitherto so heartily condemned." Not all readers affirmed the *NCA's* purportedly apolitical course, of course, particularly as more southern states opted for secession. If the November 1860 article "Pray for the Country" educed no outcry of political engagement, others edged closer to that ethereal line dividing current events from "politics." An early December 1860 article recorded a Georgia politician's speech, which outlined the South's grievances and proposed methods for rectifying these alleged wrongs. The article appeared in the *NCA*'s "General Intelligence" section, however, with an editorial defense that the paper sought to "do justice" to all sides in the matter. It did not elicit any backlash.[16]

The climate began to change significantly from January through April, however. As the secession winter progressed, the line between social identity and ecclesiastical identity continued to blur, and formal MECS channels differed on how best to respond. The result was often confusing. In mid-January 1861, the *NCA* began omitting mundane notices until further notice, as "our readers wish above all things to know about the revolution the country is passing through." But a *Memphis Christian Advocate* (hereafter *MCA*) article the same month took issue with a reader who complained that the *MCA* needed more current events news and fewer essays. *MCA*'s editor Samuel Watson asked, "If we make our Advocates simply *news*papers, wherein are they better than professedly secular journals?" The *RCA*, meanwhile, reported the basic news of Florida and Mississippi's secession progress, but without commentary. Indeed throughout January, the *RCA* presented an ardently anti-abolitionist yet secession-neutral stance to its readers,

[16] *NCA*, 24 January 1861; *NCA*, 5 December 1860.

perhaps best represented by an article entitled “The Spirit of the Hour.” The article encouraged firmness on the part of its readers, but also humility, kindness, and prayer, asserting that wisdom and calm were vital characteristics of the needed “christian spirit.” Hostile toward abolition, the *RCA* nonetheless could hardly be considered fire-eating.[17]

In a survey glimpse across several sister publications, the *RCA* in late February revealed the continuing tensions over secession and national conflict in the denomination. The *NCA* expressed optimism toward the maintenance of peace, noting that “we still have faith in the destiny of the American people,” and that “Providence is not done with us.” Assured by the flood of prayers offered throughout the land, the *NCA* concluded that “the Lord reigneth; let us rejoice in that.”[18] The *TCA*, however, apparently wracked by subscription losses over its pro-secession stance, was not so peace-invoking. The editor issued a frustrated outburst to the cancelling subscribers:

> Our ex-readers, who secede from the Advocate because the Advocate has chosen to defend the South against the principles of [Joshua] Giddings, [William Henry] Seward, and [Charles] Sumner … are requested to make their Parthian epistles as brief as possible. We do not care to be ridden abusively, for half an hour on the back of spavined orthography and broken-winded syntax, merely to reach the conclusion that some brother, whose reading and writing came by nature, has stopped his paper.[19]

Certain southern Methodist spokesmen flouted the formal channels of conference and denomination altogether, and took it upon themselves to express their views, as

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[17] *NCA*, 17 January 1861; *MCA* article reprinted in *RCA*, 31 January 1861; *RCA*, 10 January, 31 January 1861. *MCA* editor Watson was a longtime MECS preacher, going back to the 1830s, and spent nearly his entire career in Memphis. Prior to the war, Watson pastored three different Memphis churches at various points, presided a women’s college in 1859, and also worked briefly as a regional agent for the American Bible Society, all while working as an editor. In 1872, he withdrew from the MECS after apparently embracing universalism. See William S. Speer, ed., *Sketches of Prominent Tennesseans* (Nashville: 1888), 566.

[18] Reprinted in *RCA*, 21 February 1861.

[19] Reprinted in *RCA*, 21 February 1861.

evidenced by a group of Alabama Conference members. Prevented by their bishops a short time earlier from publishing formal pro-secession statements through their annual conference, they met in Montgomery just after Alabama's January secession and issued a series of belligerent resolutions in favor of their state's hardline stance against Lincoln's government. They notably declared that "African slavery, as it exists in the Southern States of this republic, to be a wise, humane, and righteous institution, approved of God," and affirmed that because "several millions of the African race have been committed to our care as a people, we should be miscreant to that trust if we did not defend our right to their service against any and all enemies, now and forever." The group further proclaimed absolute hostility to Lincoln and the Republican government, and deemed his election to have "in fact, if not in form, dissolve[d] the compact of union between the States." Finally, announcing their solidarity with fellow southern states, the Alabama Methodists pledged to "place our lives and our fortunes upon the altar of our State, content to abide in her prosperity, to share her adversity, and determined … to preserve her honor unsullied."[20]

Secession aside, the Alabama Conference members' stance reflected the view toward war among many southern Methodist spokesmen. They asserted that they did not want war and were not seeking it, but were quite willing to embrace a martial spirit if hostilities came. *SCA* editor Edward Myers presumed that southerners "deprecate violence, they do not seek war; but we mistake the temper of the South, if they will not be as brave in action, as they have been bold in speech, if attack upon them render it necessary." Similarly, responding to charges of unionism and coercionism, the editor of

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[20] *RCA*, 7 February 1861.

the *North Carolina Christian Advocate* (hereafter *NCCA*) assured readers that "in case of war … the Editors would be found true to their native soil against all the world; and if the one-eyed Editor could get a left-handed gun, he could hardly resist the inclination to 'march to the sound of the drum.'" The *NCCA* editor nonetheless avowed spiritual detachment from the matters of politics, asserting that "we mean this paper to occupy a guarded neutrality, while it is consecrated to the cause of God and his Church." The *RCA* shared the somewhat ambiguous stance of the *SCA*. When the *New York Herald* charged *RCA* editor Duncan with delivering a "warlike" sermon on a fast day, he responded that he had merely acknowledged the South's willingness to fight "if war be *forced* upon us—which God forbid." Duncan snipingly added that "fighting parsons are products of the climate that is congenial to Beecherism—they don't grow in the South."[21]

These statements and ideological pressures did not take place in a vacuum, of course. In these months of early 1861, Lower South states were proceeding with the organization of a new political government and nation, while Upper South states debated and sometimes held referendums and conventions contemplating or coordinating alliance with their southern neighbors. The church leaders examined here generally do not appear to have been integrally involved in these formal decision-making and policy-forming convocations, likely because of their political and social positioning as an ecclesiastical body discussed above. But it is impossible that these men were unaware of the

[21] *SCA* and *NCCA* quotes reprinted in *RCA*, 7 February; *RCA*, 10 January 1861. *SCA* editor Myers, whose influence in the MECS will be explored further in later chapters, was a longtime Georgian preacher, and became one of the most prominent MECS spokesmen in ideological feuding with the MEC.

developments occurring around them, and quite unlikely that those developments did not shape the MECS leadership's tension-filled responses to the intensifying atmosphere.[22]

Indeed, in the swirling onset of secession and the early days of war, certain southern Methodist voices made overt connections between political separation and the religious schism of 1844. James Duncan in January 1861 felt "reminded of the scenes which immediately preceded the division of our own beloved Methodism in 1844." Similarly, Matthew Foulds notes that Methodists in southwest Virginia "legitimized secession" through appeals to 1844, challenging the opposition to explain how secession could be unjustified if the schism had been justified. A letter sent to the *NCA* by a Virginian appealed to the state of the MECS as evidence, stating, "Let the unexampled prosperity and success of our church during the past sixteen years attest the infinite wisdom and righteousness of the policy enacted by us in 1844." And in June of 1861, McTyeire accused the MEC-published *Pittsburg Christian Advocate* of encouraging the secession of western Virginia from the rest of the state, and decried such encouragement as base hypocrisy in light of the MEC's stance toward the MECS in 1844.[23]

Borderland Methodists, in fact, were practically reliving the fateful events of 1844. The Baltimore Conference of the MEC was a particularly diverse group that had adhered North during the schism. Indeed, some of the most vitriolic opponents of the

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[22] For an example of southern Methodist leaders' ambivalence toward formal affiliation with secessionism, see Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 91-92. In regard to the Upper South state of Virginia, similarly, a survey of the secession convention delegates available at <http://secession.richmond.edu> reveals none of the MECS leaders represented here, but one delegate, later CSA general Jubal Early, was the brother of MECS bishop John Early, then residing in Lynchburg, and Richmond pastor/editor James Duncan would certainly have stayed abreast of the city's ongoing decision-making processes.

[23] *RCA*, 10 January 1861. Foulds, "Enemies of the State," 219-226; *NCA*, 29 August 1861; *NCA*, 6 June 1861.

bourgeoning MECS had represented the Baltimore Conference. It experienced a tense struggle when the 1860 MEC General Conference pursued an alteration to the *Discipline* that would bar slaveholders from all membership in the denomination. In contrast to 1844, the 1860 General Conference sought to enact the change through overtly constitutional channels, but the proposed change's reach nonetheless would be far greater than the resolutions against James Andrew had been. Moreover, as Matthew Foulds points out, Baltimore Conference clergymen after 1844 had pursued a distinctly moderate course, promising congregants that the Conference would not tolerate any blanket restrictions on slaveholding. Ultimately, the 1860 General Conference did not make a formal constitutional change, but added an "advisory" rule to the *Discipline* condemning—but not excluding—slaveholders in the MEC. Many Baltimore Conference members immediately began exploring options beyond the MEC.[24]

MECS leaders, especially in the upper South, monitored these affairs closely. Early on, the *RCA*'s editor was skeptical of the Baltimore Conference's intentions. When Virginian and MECS clergyman John Cowper Granbery in February 1860 wrote an impassioned defense of the Baltimore Conference, arguing that their Methodism was the same as that of the MECS, and moreover that the MECS should welcome them if they left the MEC, Duncan responded curtly and skeptically. "Till that Conference shall have proved, unequivocally and satisfactorily, that in principle and action, on the subject of slavery, it is in harmony with Southern Methodism" they wrote, "… we shall regard all defense of it, on that subject, as defective in reason, and questionable in prudence." If the Baltimore Conference was indeed not hopelessly lost to abolitionism, the editor

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[24] For an excellent overview and analysis of the situation, see Foulds, "Enemies of the State," 197-206.

concluded, "we want the proof—such as the South gave in 1844. Give it—and here is our hand."[25]

But a few short months later, in June 1860, the *RCA* sounded much more optimistic. The advisory rule had by then been passed, and the clearly expressed anger of Baltimore Conference led MECS leadership to eagerly anticipate union with the conference in the near future. John McFerrin of Tennessee waxed eloquent on the possibility of annexing Baltimore Conference, and praised the conference's stance toward slavery in the Methodist church. The Baltimore Conference's request to remove all mention of slavery from the MEC *Discipline* mirrored "the very ground taken by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South—the New Testament ground," McFerrin affirmed, and "like the New Testament, the Discipline of the Church, South, is neither *pro* nor *anti*-slavery."[26]

Ultimately, the Baltimore Conference finally broke with the MEC in March 1861, but opted to remain independent until after the war, when it formally united with the MECS. As late as February 1861, Baltimore Conference leaders exerted strenuous efforts at compromise within the MEC. Presiding elder S. V. Blake outlined a plan, republished by the *RCA*, to address grievances and potential redress through a special General Conference session, to be held during the 1862 midterm. After both the Baltimore Conference's separation and the onset of war, prominent conference member Alpheus Waters Wilson complained to his wife of fellow Baltimore Conference preachers fraternizing with abolitionism through MEC newspapers. The Baltimore Conference's reluctant break with the MEC, much like the MECS's own, was a messy affair. But the

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[25] *RCA*, 2 February 1860.
[26] *RCA*, 7 June 1860.

episode also demonstrates the fragility and competitiveness that accompanied changing conceptions of political and sectional identity during the war, a topic explored more fully in Chapter 7.[27]

In March 1861, with the new Confederacy of seven states organizing in Montgomery, Alabama, a few readers even began to detect distressing notions of "politics" in the central organ's pages. A Williamson County, Tennessee, subscriber, for example, requested his paper stopped, as "it contains too much 'disunion' for me." A second letter, published in tandem with the request from Tennessee, also asked to have the author's paper stopped, because the subscriber "shall hereafter only patronize Southern papers." The latter subscriber sardonically opined that "an open enemy is better than a secret friend." McTyeire replied that only submitted editorials, "General Intelligence," or correspondence comprised potentially "political" portions of the *NCA*, and moreover that great effort went into representing all sides, so that readers could "draw their own political conclusions." If readers detected something political in the "general tone" of the *NCA*, McTyeire resignedly acknowledged that the channels of the MECS overseeing the periodical "are Southern and to the manner born," and would not apologize for their sectional leanings. Nonetheless, the word "sectional" did not, to

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[27] Fuller, *An Appeal to the Records*, 305-08; *RCA*, 21 February 1861; Wilson to wife, 6 May 1861, Alpheus Waters Wilson Papers, Box 1 Folder 4, Emory. Besides the independent Baltimore Conference itself, four independent "Methodist societies" existed in the city of Baltimore during the Civil War. In 1866, three of the four societies opted to join with the Baltimore Conference and unite with the MECS. See John Paul Tyler, "Old Trinity, The Historic Church of Southern Methodism, Baltimore," in *Methodist Sesquicentennial* (Baltimore: American Methodist Historical Society, 1934), R. V. Taylor Papers, L7 Box 3, Memphis Conference Archives of the United Methodist Church, Lambuth University, Jackson, TN (hereafter cited as Lambuth). It should be noted, however, that in the period since this research was conducted, Lambuth University closed, and the Memphis Conference Archives relocated to the Memphis Conference headquarters, also in Jackson, TN.

McTyeire, equate to "political." He reiterated that he would continue to "conduct this paper as an organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, ought to be—free from politics."[28]

The *NCA*'s dilemma grants a glimpse into the tensions that both secessionist and unionist expectations created in the ecclesiastical identity of Southern Methodism during the stormy months of early 1861. McTyeire's defense of his position as a Southern Methodist reminded readers of their higher calling as a people of God, but two earthly nations were calling upon their loyalty as well. By March, seven slave states had seceded to begin creating the Confederacy, while eight others remained in the Union. Irrespective of whether all of the non-Confederate slaveholding states opted to leave the Union, "no reason exists for a Church division . . . the Methodists of Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, Missouri, are just as sound on the platform principles of the M. E. Church, South, as those of Louisiana." The delegated leaders of the institutional MECS, he added, "are from different States and Conferences. As men they have their opinions, but as servants of the Church they mean to adhere to the line of official duty." For southern Methodists who had experienced the clash of 1844, McTyeire's point addressed salient principles of theological and constitutional identity. Back then, members of the church had drawn stringent ecclesiastical lines based on "political" differences, according to the MECS narrative. To do so again in the context of secession would represent base hypocrisy.[29]

Other MECS voices sympathized with the position stated in the central organ. C. C. Gillespie, the editor of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* (hereafter *NOCA*) noted

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[28] *NCA*, 7 March 1861.
[29] Ibid.

in March that "we live in a state which has seceded; our paper is patronized principally by States which have seceded. Yet, nevertheless, we support the Publishing House, the Missionary Treasury, and all other interests of the Church, which are located in the non-seceding states, precisely as though the Union had never been dissolved. Secession makes no 'foreign country' so far as our Conferences and our Church interests are concerned." *RCA* editor Duncan meanwhile complained about the wrongful confluence of religious topics with political engagement. "Preachers and editors cannot consent that the Christianity they proclaim to the world authorizes this crusade against slavery," he argued, but to defend Christianity in such cases led to charges of "becoming politicians." And the charges came, as evidenced by a former subscriber's scathing letter to the *NCA*. "Being a uncompermising Methodis and union man," he wrote, "I want to ask you two questings . . . did Christ Call you to Preach Peace and Good will to the world or Seacession & Desunion & Destruction to the church & this Grate republic?"[30]

Most official MECS channels, in short, struggled to present a general air of neutrality on secession and political sectionalism, although the events of late 1860 and early 1861 certainly evoked strong emotion and induced even stronger attention and awareness. In the wake of Fort Sumter, however, ecclesiastical institutions surrendered all sense of opaqueness on the issue of southern separatism. As noted above, the 25 April 1861 issue of the *NCA* included an article on the "duty" of Southern Methodists in the

[30] Quoted in *NCA*, 14 March 1861; *NCA*, 18 April 1861. *NOCA* editor Gillespie, who had served as the founding editor of the *TCA*, remained until the paper suspended under Union army occupation of New Orleans. Gillespie became a colonel in the Twenty-Fifth Texas Cavalry, and later commanded the prison at Camp Groce toward the close of the Civil War. Following the war, he returned to editorial work at the *Houston Telegraph*, where he ardently criticized Reconstruction policies in the South. See Stephen Chicoine, *The Confederates of Chappell Hill, Texas: Prosperity, Civil War, and Decline* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2005), 167-71.

face of "a fanatical party . . . a sectional government . . . a civil war." Nor was there any subtlety as to the recommended course regarding potential armed conflict. "We must fight for our altars and firesides—*fight*, that is the word."[31] Similarly, a 13 June *RCA* article entitled "To Arms! To Arms!" encouraged enlistment in strident language, urging that "there now be no laggards, but let every man come forward at once, take his position, and discharge his whole duty."[32]

A cynical view might characterize such shifts in tone as the result of a "last straw" that shattered a poor façade of political neutrality. A more nuanced approach instead notes a firmly held distinction among southern Methodist leaders between a sectionalism of "politics" and a sectionalism of "war." Not everyone understood the difference; the 25 April *NCA* article elicited scores of letters demanding the stoppage of subscriptions. The *Advocate*'s response to such stoppages aimed to clarify matters. To those "opposed to preachers and religious press meddling with politics," McTyeire noted, the "North is making war upon the South." If hardline adherents to the "spirituality of the church" doctrine viewed open support for the Confederacy as politics, "by that name, or any other you like … we are for the Confederate States and their success in this war." Contending that the *NCA* still remained neutral in politics, McTyeire asserted nevertheless that

[31] *NCA*, 25 April 1861. Lewis Purifoy notes this editorial as a pivotal statement for McTyeire, describing it as having "the ring of a passionate outburst of an intense Southern nationalist." Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 218-19.

[32] *RCA*, 13 June 1861. The alteration in many MECS channels concurs with the argument that Fort Sumter, and especially Lincoln's resultant call for military mobilization, served as the tipping point for most remaining southern neutrality and moderation. See Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), especially 334-52; and William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 499-534.

neutrality "in politics is one thing; neutrality in war is another … it is not worth while to talk now of the abstract right of secession. It is a Revolution that we are now in."[33]

The *NCCA*, likewise forsaking their earlier "guarded neutrality," shared McTyeire's sentiments. "We have carefully excluded party politics from this paper," the editor wrote. "We shall continue to do so. … We were for the Union. But we are against a military despotism … Self-defence is no less a law of religion than of nature; and we hope to be enabled to recognize this law in these columns without abating the claim of the paper to be a religious journal." These assertions, although pivotal to the rationale and establishment of Confederate nationalism, were not merely semantic machinations. MECS leaders applied a complicated framework of theology and hermeneutics to their conceptions of sectional and political identity, both leading up to the war and continuing throughout the conflict. Their religious identity shaped and often bolstered their nationalism, but also qualified it in important ways.[34]

Even with such distinctions and qualifications parsed, a few southern Methodist voices were unsatisfied. C. W. Charlton of the *Holston Journal* chided McTyeire and the *NCA* for what he viewed as an overly political stance, northern coercion notwithstanding. More importantly, the Confederate stance of these papers cost the MECS, and not merely

[33] *NCA*, 23 May 1861.

[34] Reprinted in *NCA*, 9 May 1861. The historiography on Confederate nationalism is increasingly voluminous. This dissertation shall explore the relevant contributions of individual scholars in later chapters, but a concise and effective synopsis of the schools and categories within the Civil War subfield is found in Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 23-26. An additional work beyond those surveyed by Noe, and one contending for a view of Confederate nationalism well preceding the war, is Robert E. Bonner, *Mastering America: Southern Slaveholders and the Crisis of American Nationhood* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). The framework utilized by this dissertation most approximates that set forth in Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*. Rubin portrays a nationalism both independent of and ultimately outlasting the political Confederate nation itself.

in subscription revenues. In one of a series of submissions titled "Thoughts for the Times," Bishop James Andrew noted that because a few former subscribers "don't like the Advocate they won't give missionary money." At least one former subscriber, who requested that the remainder of his balance be transferred to the missionary fund, provided a counterpoint to Andrew, but the bishop's commentary was nonetheless noteworthy. Missionary money would be hard to come by for any number of reasons as the Civil War progressed, but in mid-1861, MECS coffers already were experiencing a pinch wrought by readers expressing displeasure with the church hierarchy's embrace of secession.[35]

Nonetheless, in this period of political secession and the onset of war, the majority of formal southern Methodist voices exhibited a bourgeoning religious nationalism for their adopted Confederacy. As early as February 1861, the *SCA*'s editors commented favorably on "how suddenly, how entirely, the respect and love for the Federal Union has passed away from the Southern mind" within the seceded states. The writer attributed such rejection to a principled constitutionalism on the part of the Confederate states, and assured readers that Confederate nationalism represented faithfulness rather than infidelity to the old Constitution. The author concluded, "What course our religion men should pursue in these circumstances, is plain. A man's religion must go into his civil relations, just as truly as it goes into his prayers. He cannot stand with one foot on holy ground and the other on secular." The *RCA* staff concurred in a June article entitled "The Revolution in the North," asserting that the Confederacy, far

[35] Purifoy, "The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery," 219. *NCA*, 19 September, 18 July 1861. Purifoy notes, however, that even Charlton by 1863 "was writing angry war editorials and calling President Lincoln a 'tyrant and desperado.'"

from being a revolutionary movement, "is rather a reassertion of the principles and policies of government which have always been held by the Southern States, and comprehending the vital interests for which our father struggled against the British Crown. … None of the signs of a revolution are visible in the seceded States." Southern nationalism thus straddled a rather gray line, seeking to align with the Revolutionary legacy of the founders, but avoid the "revolutionary" stigma of more recent vintage.[36]

Around the same time, the editor of the *NOCA* tied southern nationalism to his own commercial and ideological ambitions, encouraging southerners to support sectional literature and press, especially religious papers. Referencing the abolitionist spirit of northern Christianity, the *NOCA* opined that "if ever that mighty tide of erroneous and unscriptural public opinion be rolled back, it is to be done by our press." Moreover, no less than ecclesiastical legitimacy—an enduring concern since 1844—was at stake. "Among Methodists, in the North and in Europe, the Southern Church is not recognized," the editors complained. "That recognition is to be won by the power of our Southern Methodist press."[37]

Others within the MECS applied a covenantal lens to their nationalism, believing firmly that God would bless the nation that most blessed God. An article published in the *NCA*, for example, warned of the necessity of Sabbath-keeping in the Confederacy. "A nation, as such, may not receive baptism or the holy supper, but it may keep the Sabbath," the editor proclaimed. "This was the heavy point in His indictment against Israel." Simultaneously, the *NOCA* compared "camp religion" to the wilderness

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[36] Reprinted in *RCA*, 21 February 1861; *RCA*, 13 June 1861.

[37] *RCA*, 7 February 1861. Bernath, *Confederate Minds*, 105-07 offers a nuanced summary of religious periodicals' wartime appeals, and the denominational variations therein.

tabernacle of the Old Testament, cautioning that the extent to which the presence of God among the camps was honored or desecrated would determine success. Conjoining the Confederacy's fight with the Church's own ideological struggle, the author urged that "our people awake to the fact that this is a religious war—a war in defence of freedom of conscience—the great struggle of modern Protestantism—not against Popery, but against Puritanism."[38]

Within this formative nationalistic vision, certain southern Methodist representatives assumed a "for us or against us" position, interpreting any action or language not supporting the Confederacy to be in opposition to it. Churchgoer A. G. Bledsoe of Georgia expressed frustration over the lack of overt nationalism by her pastor, writing her parents that "we have several preachers whose sympathies are for the north and our preacher is one of the number he has not prayed a good confederate prayer this year." The *NOCA* likewise warned readers against the "Peace Delusion," which it described as "the greatest bane of the Southern movement, from the beginning, and is its greatest danger still." From the *NOCA*'s perspective, "there is no danger of a Union party at the south, but there may be danger of a peace party," and the periodical hoped southern Methodists would not let such hopes for peace detract from the duty to fight and resist the Union army. Even at that early date, the *NOCA* editorial staff demonstrated a rather pragmatic view of the Confederacy's isolation in pursuit of its nationalistic autonomy. To peace advocates hoping for European recognition, the author suggested that the "idea that

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[38] Both articles reprinted in *RCA*, 11 July 1861.

England is friendly to us, farther than is necessary to secure the interests of her own commerce, which is dependent upon our cotton, is utterly fallacious."[39]

The MECS leadership prided itself on keeping its nationalism outside of the corporate assembly, at least in theory and in the most overt symbolic displays. Despite the presence in many churches of "good confederate prayers" such as A. G. Bledsoe longed to hear, and rampant participation as well in the Confederate cause by southern Methodist clergy, laity, and institutions, the MECS comforted itself by condescendingly disparaging the ostentatious zeal of northern Methodist nationalism. Southern Methodist leaders found one practice particularly galling. MEC congregations during the Civil War became the first churches to place American flags in their sanctuaries. An excoriating article in the *MCA* entitled "Ecclesiastical Patriotism" condemned such usage, as well as that of flags on steeples, as "evidence of the complete demoralization of the church." The *MCA* editor dramatically proceeded, "Christianity is wholly unchristianized by such unwarrantable ebullitions of political zeal. … Christianity is one thing—patriotism is another. … We hope the Southern land will be guilty of no such desecration of Southern pulpits. … We would deplore such sacrilege as an evidence of apostasy." The guidelines of practicable nationalism in southern Methodism may well have been nigh as circuitous and complex as the South's celebrated code of honor, but they also illustrate the internal boundaries between ecclesiastical identity and sectional identity crafted by MECS leaders.[40]

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[39] A. G. Bledsoe to "Pa and Ma," 24 November 1861, William Clark Doub Papers, Box 1, Duke; *NOCA* article reprinted in *RCA*, 18 July 1861.

[40] Reprinted in *RCA*, 27 June 1861. On patriotic display in Methodism during the Civil War era, see Andrew J. Wood, "Methodists and War," in Jason E. Vickers, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to American Methodism* (New York: Cambridge University

Yet even as questions of secession, nationalism, and war engulfed corporate southern Methodism, its spokesmen doggedly maintained significant attention on ecclesiastical concerns removed from the civil crisis. Throughout the secession crisis and onset of war, the *NCA*'s and *RCA*'s front pages focused overwhelmingly on "church" issues and general ecclesiastical interest rather than political and social events. Matters of state and politics generally remained relegated to interior sections designated for non-religious current affairs. And as those designated sections expanded or dealt heavily with secession and war matters, questions of priority and emphasis came to the fore. A few months into the war, the *MCA*'s editor acknowledged the difficulty of not getting caught up in the conflict's distractions, but nevertheless asserted that "we and our readers [must] make this effort," as "the social and religious interests of the people are matters of deep and lively import, and ought not to be overlooked or neglected." McTyeire of the *NCA* agreed with the sentiment, but also revealed the tension in the papers' position, warning that "perhaps a religious paper had better not lose sympathy with the public mind by ignoring the current thought."[41]

The complexities of theology and organization also weighed on the minds of southern Methodist leaders. In the crucible of southern conflict with northern religious abolitionists, McTyeire nonetheless found opportunity to bestow praise on the MEC's *Western Christian Advocate*—an often MECS-antagonistic paper—for its harsh review of a Presbyterian book attacking Methodist theology. And in the wake of the Confederacy's

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Press, 2013), 335-51; and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, "The American Flag in Methodist Worship: A Historical Look at Practice," General Board of Discipleship, 2002, http://www.gbod.org/resources/the-american-flag-in-methodist-worship-a-historical-look-at-practice.

[41] *NCA*, 8 August 1861.

formation, an *RCA* article entitled "A General Glance at our Constitution" explored the MECS's *Discipline* and governing structures, noting a technical discrepancy involving the veto power of bishops and encouraging annual conferences to look deeper into the matter.[42]

Numerous other southern Methodists simply tried to avoid the worldly matters swirling about them. In his study of southern circuit rider John Wagg, Zachary Woods found that "Wagg and his contemporaries appear to have been drawn into the politics of the day with some reluctance." Among the many sermons Wagg delivered or authored during the secession and war period, only one set of notes explicitly touched on martial issues, leading Woods to suggest that Wagg likely "sought to keep such matters remote from the pulpit lest they distract from his primary goal, the salvation of souls." And "if the remains of his writings are any indication, he succeeded far more often than not."[43]

North Carolina clergyman Washington Sandford Chaffin cogently represents the ambivalence and tensions felt by many southern Methodist representatives during the era. Chaffin was not enthusiastic about secession, and openly mourned the mass mobilization of Union and Confederate troops following Fort Sumter. Within two months, however, he preached a fast day sermon rationalizing and defending both the Confederacy's course in the war and the maintenance of slavery—contingent, of course, on the Confederacy's faithfulness to God in these endeavors. From then on, Chaffin largely sought to avoid matters of politics and war in his ministry, focusing instead on social ills and evangelism. Chaffin revealed the continued duality of ecclesiastical southern Methodist identity: his

[42] *RCA*, 21 February 1861.

[43] Zachary J. Woods, "The Digital John D. Wagg Papers" (master's thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2011), 25-27.

heart sided with the South, but his Methodism significantly tempered his views. Although Chaffin, like John Wagg, succumbed at least once to overt sermonizing on the CSA's behalf, it was a rare deviation from an otherwise intense focus on ministering to the people experiencing tumult and chaos around him. Indeed, in the wake of Lincoln's election and the beginnings of secession, Chaffin appeared remarkably detached from non-ecclesiastical matters. In a "Close of the Year" journal entry reflecting on 1860, his only non-religious comment was a passing mention of a "commercial" crisis. Long circuits and "ungovernable" congregants posed far greater problems for this traveling clergyman, who complained that lay members "suppose themselves better informed in theology, and church government than their preachers," and that they habitually exacted pecuniary threats to resolve disagreements.[44]

Ecclesiastical issues thus still loomed large in corporate southern Methodism, even in the face of increasingly dire social and political distractions. And as the scheduled 1862 General Conference approached, the seemingly detached question of extending the pastorate term became a matter of fierce ideological exchange within the denomination, providing a notable lens into the continuation of constitutional and organizational identity struggles. The existing pastoral term for preachers was two years, after which the supervising conference reappointed them to a different area. A contingent of the MECS sought to extend the term to four years, doubling the time between itinerant

[44] Elizabeth Whitley Roberson, *Our Legacy from the Past: A History of the First United Methodist Church of Williamston, North Carolina* (1988), 32-46, accessed 3 November 2014, http://nccumc.org/history/files/First-UMC-of-Williamston-History.pdf; Washington Sandford Chaffin, journal entries, 14 May 1865, 17 May 1865, Washington Sandford Chaffin Papers, Box 1, Journal: 1865-66, Duke; Washington Sandford Chaffin, journal entry, 84-86, Washington Sandford Chaffin Papers, Box 1, Journal: 1858, Jan. 1 – March 1; 1863-64 & Notebook, 1851-1863, Duke.

relocations. As mentioned in the previous chapter, New Orleans already had been granted a special exemption due to yellow fever outbreaks. That exemption caused not a little envy among surrounding southern Methodists. In fall of 1861, a majority of the Louisiana Conference thus ordered its delegates to the 1862 General Conference to vote for a repeal of the New Orleans exemption. In protest, multiple delegates resigned their seats, including John Christian Keener, presiding in place of the absentee bishops and who himself would be elected bishop in 1866. Ultimately, the 1862 General Conference would not be held due to the Federal occupation of New Orleans, rendering the matter moot.[45]

The pastorate extension issue became particularly enflamed, however, when bishop George Foster Pierce linked the issue to the growing power of denominational editors. Pierce was a staunch opponent of extending the term, and made his views clearly known. On a deeper level, Pierce believed *Christian Advocate* editors were unduly using their outlets to influence the dispute. Pointedly, he questioned "the right of church editors . . . to countenance and promote radical changes in our ecclesiastical affairs." Targeting *SCA* editor Edward Myers specifically, but implicating church papers more broadly, Pierce opined that "the *Advocates* belong to the church, not to the editors." While dissenting forces within the denomination may seek to "defeat [the church's] laws and plans of operation, break down the episcopacy, root up the eldership, change doctrine, agitate, revolutionize the church in her itinerancy, class meetings and missions," church editors and newspapers, according to Bishop Pierce, "were set for the defence of all these." Moreover, he contended, "you and I, and every Methodist preacher are bound not to *mend* but to *keep* the Discipline. If any tinkering is necessary, there is a time and a

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[45] J. B. Walker, "A Sketch of My Life," manuscript journal, 58-59, J. B. Walker Papers, Millsaps.

place to do it." And responding to an editor who had suggested that "if anybody in the Methodist Church ought to be *silent*, it is a Bishop," Pierce asserted that "I grant the doctrine, but except to the limitation. All church officers are under the same restriction. … It is inappropriate, in my opinion, for the press of the church to give its official sanction to *reforms*, while yet debatable and unsettled. Otherwise, editors, while speaking for themselves, might misrepresent the church." Finally, Pierce advised that church editors occupied a murky position within the ecclesiastical structure, and must be handled cautiously. "There is an important distinction between the Rev. E. H. Myers, a Methodist preacher, and E. H. Myers, the editor of an official church paper," he wrote.[46]

Commenting on the dispute, *RCA* editor James Duncan expressed his desire to "leave it to our readers to decide between us," as he did not want to enter into a "controversy" with the bishop. Unable to resist at least a brief foray into the issue, however, Duncan argued that the "results [Pierce] deprecates from an unguarded press will apply only to a *licentious*, not merely a free, press," and that "none but the editor himself can determine what is *his* duty." In a poorly-veiled show of ecclesiastical deference, Duncan added that "we receive, as becometh a 'man in the gospel,' the kind lecture and warning of our Bishop, in the full persuasion that no inconsiderate exercise of 'this liberty' of ours can ever 'become a stumbling block' to him."[47]

Duncan was not alone in his views. *Advocate* editors in New Orleans and Memphis also expressed solidarity with the *SCA* and *RCA* in what they perceived as an innovative notion that "church editors have no 'right' to express an opinion on ecclesiastical affairs." At the same time, at least one MECS preacher jumped to Pierce's

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[46] *NCA*, 17 October 1861; *RCA*, 14 November 1861.
[47] *RCA*, 14 November 1861.

aid. Clergyman Samuel Moorman, fearing he would be unable to fulfill his delegation to the upcoming General Conference, wrote the *RCA* to share his thoughts. Amidst encouragement for all sides to practice moderation and love, Moorman worried that "there has been a disposition by some to censure Bishop Pierce for an expression of an opinion, though he did nothing that his objectors had not done, and are doing." Moorman supported Pierce's rejection of the extension, raising the constitutional fear that the same arguments for a four-year pastorate could be argued for an indefinite term. Taken to its logical conclusion, he mused, the matter could well destroy the itinerancy that was essential to Wesleyan-Asburyan Methodism. In the end, many of the annual conferences reflected the conservatism of Pierce's stance. The Alabama, South Carolina, and Florida conferences, as well as Duncan's own Virginia Conference, all rejected resolutions to extend the pastorate term by significant margins.[48]

As secession gave way to war, the MECS leadership recognized that maintaining satisfactory separation between ecclesiastical and social/political spheres was likely unrealistic, even by the complex and somewhat paradoxical standards established for that separation. Nevertheless, church leaders hoped and sought to keep the MECS faithful to its religious integrity. A June 1861 *NCA* column warned against hatred, and condemning all northern Christians, recognizing that both sides in the conflict felt the involvement of Christian duty. The author even praised an MEC bishop's prayer in relation to duty, wisdom, and submission to God's sovereignty. The same week, the *SCA* cautioned southern Methodists against allowing the war to distract from spiritual exercises and

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[48] *NCA*, 17 October 1861; *RCA*, 21 November, 5 December 1861, 16 January 1862.

faithfulness; in particular, the paper encouraged readers to pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit during such a particularly fertile crisis period.[49]

As the first year of the war progressed, MECS leaders already felt the disruptions of the conflict. Reflecting on the previous conference year, the *RCA* acknowledged that already "our church enterprises are very much embarrassed; the condition of Newspapers—Book Depositories—Missionary Society—Schools and Colleges—Widows and Orphans' Fund, all sadly enough tell of the prevalence of war in the land." The following chapter will explore these difficulties in greater depth, but many in the MECS already recognized its predicament during the earliest days of war. Still, optimism and religious focus defined the *RCA*'s prognosis for the moment. "We do not believe [the denomination's] failures are justly due to any overwhelming difficulties, but to want of faith, of zeal, and of systematic Christian energy," the editor opined. "Piety ought to be too deep to be disturbed by any temporal excitements, and too earnest to give up its plans for any earthly interest." In language that likely resonated with ardently patriotic and fervently pious southern Methodists, the *RCA* advocated an exaggeratedly simplistic solution, stating, "The best way to take care of the country is to take care of the church." Southern Methodist leaders would work tirelessly to do both in the years ahead, but it would be a devil of a task.[50]

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[49] *NCA*, 6 June 1861; *SCA*, 6 June 1861.
[50] *RCA*, 21 November 1861.

Chapter 4:
"On God's anvil": Southern Methodist Leaders and the Trials of Wartime

In the early months of war, the institutional channels and facilities of the MECS faced disarray from financial privations, military disturbance, and general neglect. The remaining war years would witness continuing ecclesiastical trials, as the southern Methodist leadership worked tirelessly to support the Confederate war effort while maintaining a functional Wesleyan presence and witness. Both the denomination's membership and its ecclesiastical machinery mobilized to support the Confederate cause. Just as their MEC counterparts advocated for the Union, the MECS served as an ardent denominational booster of the Confederacy. That support carried a great cost, both organizationally and cognitively. Although the MECS hierarchy had navigated the secession crisis in a manner that honored their "spirituality of the church" principles, at least in their own minds, the clash at Fort Sumter found a church firmly planted on the side of the Confederacy. New questions and tensions associated with the war arose quickly. The complex problems of ecclesiastical disorganization and hopes of maintaining a sense of "normalcy" created a variety of struggles for the shepherds of a scattered wartime flock.

The war years generally were unkind to the organizational logistics of southern denominations.[1] The combination of voluntary (and sometimes involuntary) army participation of church members, the lack of reliable communication channels, the

[1] An excellent synopsis of the war's detrimental impact on southern churches is Daniel Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 15-25. A broader look at the precarious wartime situation of churches, particularly in or near federal occupation, is found in Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), especially 89-107.

damage and distraction caused by Federal armies, financial constriction, and sometimes community infighting or guerrilla activity all wreaked havoc on the execution of traditional church business. Annual Conference sessions were particularly hard hit. At the close of 1861, for example, the Virginia Conference reported great difficulty in conducting its session. Few itinerants attended, and as a result, "little information could be obtained in respect to the work in some parts of our territory. Absences also made it "a difficult task to make the [ministerial circuit] appointments." The Missouri Conference did not meet after 1861 until the war's end. In the midst of Union occupation, the Tennessee Conference did not meet in 1863, while in 1864 only Bishop Soule and thirteen of approximately two hundred conference members gathered to conduct business. Nor was the disruption limited only to border territories; the Mississippi Conference met in unofficial regional sessions from 1862 through 1864, reuniting again only in 1865 following the war's end.[2] Even when Annual Conferences did meet, as in the case of the 1864 Tennessee Conference, they generally lacked traditional structure, leadership, and participation. By 1862, virtually all conferences outside the Deep South core—the western Virginia, St. Louis, Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Rio Grande, and the Louisiana Annual Conferences—required substitute presidents due to the absence of a presiding bishop.[3]

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[2] *RCA*, 5 December 1861; Finney, *Enoch Mather Marvin*, 358; Smith, *Cross and Flame*, 145-46; G. W. Bachman, "Sketches and Incidents, Vol. 1," 25, G. W. Bachman Papers, Millsaps.

[3] *RCA*, 16 January 1862; statistical data drawn from the *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South,* 1858-1862 (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, South). The MECS would not elect a residential trans-Mississippi bishop until 1866, when Enoch Mather Marvin of Missouri became the first.

The disorganization of the conferences became only more exacerbated as the war continued.[4] Any number of issues played into the disruption of Annual Conference sessions. Sometimes communication was the problem, especially when Federal occupation physically intervened. After the Tennessee Conference reported a substitute president in 1862, bishop John Early wrote a letter to the *SCA* to "prevent any misunderstanding … and to relieve me from apparent neglect" in missing his assignment. Early explained that he had been slowed in his travels by the Federal presence in middle Tennessee. Delayed communication about a timing change for the conference did not reach him until the session was already completed. Several weeks later, John B. McFerrin, who presided in Early's absence, replied via the *SCA* that the disrupted mails were to blame, and that "the brethren thought that it was better to have a Conference without a Bishop than to have a Bishop without a Conference."[5]

Conferences could also prove rather burdensome for war torn host cities, which traditionally had provided lodging and other amenities for visiting clergy. In fall of 1864, for example, *RCA* editor James Duncan asked Virginia Conference preachers to not attend the upcoming session at Lynchburg unless absolutely necessary, so as to alleviate the burden on the citizens' hospitality. Those ministers able to conduct business via letters to their jurisdictional bishop or presiding elders should do so, Duncan continued,

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[4] Using data from the *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South,* 1861-1866 (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, South), the following number of Annual Conferences either had a non-bishop presiding or did not submit minutes for a session: in 1861, 9 conferences; in 1862, 14 conferences; in 1863, 15 conferences; in 1864, 16 conferences; and even in 1865, 14 conferences. In 1866, following the General Conference, every conference reported a bishop presiding and submitted minutes, including the Columbia and Pacific conferences, in Oregon and California, respectively.

[5] *SCA*, 20 November 1862, 8 January 1863.

while those attending the session needed to be hasty and leave promptly at its conclusion. Such "efficiency" required leeway and cutting corners. The conference reported afterward that "few changes in the appointments of the preachers were made," and that "the two years rule [for itinerant assignments] was not rigidly observed. Lynchburg was not facing the intensity of chaos that dominated the eastern portion of the state, where fighting and the siege of Petersburg continued, but necessity nevertheless demanded a strict adherence to austerity and efficiency."[6]

Mission efforts had already experienced financial constriction during the secession era, but traditional missionary work ground to a near standstill as early as the war's second year. At its 1862 session, the Florida Conference formally abandoned its plans to establish a mission in Bogota, Colombia, blaming the war generally and the Federal blockade particularly. The Louisiana Conference the same year did not even bother to take up a missions collection, believing that "it was impossible to do anything for Foreign Missions, and [that] the domestic missions would sustain themselves." The conference did raise $700 for religious literature to be supplied to Louisiana soldiers. In May 1862, following the occupation of Nashville by Union troops, the *RCA* noted that Missionary Society funds were essentially drained. Because federal forces also shut down the denomination's Publishing House, which held a significant amount of the MECS's assets, the various "Bishops are therefore now *wholly dependent upon the direct* liberality of the people for support." In other words, it was crucial for the Annual Conferences to pay their equitable share for their respective assigned bishops.[7]

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[6] *RCA*, 20 October 1864, 8 December 1864.
[7] *SCA*, 25 December 1862, 8 January 1863, 12 March 1863; *RCA*, 29 May 1862.

Later that year, James Duncan praised the collections raised for military religious literature, but expressed concern that "little has been sent us" for the bishops, and hoped that money was being sent to conferences or directly to the bishops. At the end of the year, the Missionary Society of the Alabama Conference reported that "many of our domestic missions, both among the destitute portions of our white population and the colored people, have been utterly broken up." Summing up the affairs of the society, the conference admitted that "we have never presented a Missionary Report under circumstances as embarrassing as the present." And by summer of 1863, the Financial Boards of the South Carolina and Georgia Conferences were corresponding through the *SCA* to arrange a proper increase in the bishops' salaries, recognizing the increasing crisis of inflation.[8]

As in other denominations, MECS academies and colleges struggled to remain open during the war, and many did not succeed.[9] Several of the southern Methodists' most important schools closed during the war, including Georgia's Emory College in late 1862 and Virginia's Randolph-Macon College the next year. At least one school, however, sought to use the exigencies of war to its advantage. Late in the war, Ephraim Wiley, a prominent Virginia preacher and the treasurer for Emory and Henry College, attempted to pay off the sizeable debt the college owed to the Holston Conference. The conference, recognizing the losses it would incur by accepting heavily depreciated Confederate currency as payment, respectfully declined, adding that the school needed to use all its available resources to weather the trying times.

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[8] 13 November 1862; *SCA*, 25 June 1863.

[9] On the Civil War's detrimental impact on colleges both religious and secular, see Michael David Cohen, *Reconstructing the Campus: Higher Education and the American Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 19-51.

The MECS's network of denominational newspapers fared ruinously. Financial deprivations or military intervention forced the suspension or sporadic publication of most of the various *Christian Advocates* early in the war. Problems faced included direct federal opposition and takeover, disruptions of printing or delivery because of battles and campaigns, depreciation of existing subscription revenue, lost subscribers, and the rising costs and decreasing availability of paper. The *Baltimore Christian Advocate* and the *North Carolina Christian Advocate* barely survived the secession crisis, and suspended publication in the summer of 1861 (the *NCCA* would publish sporadically through later periods of the war). By fall, the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* had folded, and the *St. Louis Christian Advocate* was close to suspension and publishing only a half-sheet. The editor of the *Memphis Christian Advocate* announced his resignation in January 1862, citing the financial necessity of reentering the pastorate and declaring the condition of the paper to be precarious. The central organ, the *Nashville Christian Advocate*, shut down along with the MECS Publishing House in February 1862, following Ulysses Grant's victories at Forts Henry and Donelson and the exposure of Nashville to Federal forces. By mid-April 1862, James Duncan of the *RCA* reported that within "the Southern Confederacy, *only* THREE *of our church papers are still published*—the *Southern*, the *Memphis*, and the *Richmond Advocates*." Within a month, the *Memphis* would suspend operations too.[10]

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[10] *RCA*, 27 June 1861; Moorman, "Holland Nimmons McTyeire," Vanderbilt, 38; *RCA*, 14 November 1861, 16 January 1862; Smith, *Cross and Flame*, 143-44; *RCA*, 17 April 1862, 15 May 1862. The relative stability of the *RCA* and *SCA* through the war, notwithstanding that both had brief periods of lapse, accounts for this dissertation's wartime reliance on them. In addition, the two papers respectively represent Upper South and Lower South perspectives, although both were run by ardently pro-Confederate editors and also contain an eastern bias. Although this restricted sample therefore has

The various Annual Conferences did their best to support the surviving periodicals. At its 1862 meeting, the Mississippi Conference resolved to transfer its support to the *SCA* in the absence of the *NOCA*, which the conference had traditionally sponsored in cooperation with the Louisiana Conference. In 1863, following the failure of the *MCA*, the Memphis Conference recognized the *SCA* and *RCA* as the only surviving papers, and pledged its aid to both. The following year, the conference happily added a resurrected *NCCA* to the list. But even with the added funding, the remaining newspapers struggled to continue production. In December 1862, the *SCA* reported a subscription list of approximately three thousand. Eight hundred additional papers went weekly to the Confederate military, paid for through a special fund established by the "liberal contributions of friends." The *SCA* had also moved from Charleston, South Carolina to Augusta, Georgia, in an attempt to provide more stability and safety to the enterprise. Just a few months later, the number of papers sent to soldiers had increased to an estimated eighteen hundred weekly, although the editor cautioned that the special "fund is nearly exhausted."[11]

In April 1863, however, the *SCA* had to cut back to publishing a half-sheet, consequent to an accidental fire at the Confederacy's largest paper mill at Bath, South Carolina. Both the *SCA* and the *RCA* remained at half size for most of the remainder of the war. Some subscribers felt cheated. In addressing calls for the *RCA* to return to a full sheet, editor James Duncan wistfully noted recent pledges of financial assistance made to

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definite limitations, the periodicals nevertheless remain the primary and most consistent forum for news and leadership voices across the denomination during the war years.

[11] *SCA*, 8 January 1863; *The Minutes of the Memphis Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for the years 1862-1867* (Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1984), 34, 64; *SCA*, 11 December 1862, 19 March 1863.

the *SCA*. He then colorfully issued a challenge, appealing to readers to "give us a support similar to that pledged to the S. C. Advocate, and if we do not give the Church a paper worthy her dignity and an honor to her name, then we will consent to be hauled over the coals of ecclesiastical censure until we are well scorched." Clergyman and later church historian John Jones likely would have celebrated even a half-sheet. Lamenting the suspension of the various newspapers, Jones remarked that many in the Mississippi Conference "had been literally without Church intercommunication for many long weary months" during the war. [12]

For all their struggles, the few surviving *Advocates* served an important function for the MECS, both in helping to keep internal information and organization going and in providing a voice of outreach from the denomination to the broader population. Indeed, the papers occupied a sort of middle ground between purely evangelistic literature, institutional communication, and secular news. For example, the scope was broad enough to publish public addresses from Jefferson Davis or Robert E. Lee, yet narrow enough for Bishop Robert Paine to communicate with Bishop George Pierce about conference assignments because they doubted the reliability of private communication through the mails. Although "military newspapers" provided by various denominations (including the MECS) were much more widely available, soldiers craved copies of the *Advocates*. One chaplain requesting copies of the *RCA* for his battalion admitted that "many [soldiers] will read a religious paper, who will not read a tract." Historian Sidney Romero suggests that the perception revealed by the chaplain spurred the creation of the MECS's two

[12] *SCA*, 19 March 1863; *RCA*, 8 December 1864; Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XV, 14, Millsaps. Harrison Daniel estimates that the cost of weekly newspaper production increased over 400 percent from 1861 to 1863; see his *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 154.

military papers, the *Soldier's Paper* and the *Army and Navy Herald*. Romero still finds the military periodicals containing "tractish nature," however. James Silver, in his classic assessment of religious Confederate propaganda, contends that "the religious weekly press was undoubtedly more influential with the reading public than secular newspapers."[13]

For ordinary southern Methodists on the home front, the disruption of circuits, classes, and worship services proved the most tangible aspect of denominational disorganization. In the Mississippi Conference, according to clergyman John Jones, ministers "endeavored to keep our churches and congregations together as best we could, but the attendance on public worship had greatly fallen off. Large numbers of the effective men … were in the army, and of those at home, both men and women, many were left in circumstances that did not permit their regular attendance at public worship." Several ministers in the conference "were left without appointments as well, 'not because of any complaint against them,' but because of the exposed condition of their families." At the close of 1863, the Memphis Conference reported that "entire circuits and stations have been broken up, so that there have been neither sermons nor sacraments within their bounds." The following year, the conference mourned conditions similar to that of the Mississippi Conference, noting that "in many cases … the entire male membership have left their places and gone into the service, leaving what remains of the church to the preacher." In these chaotic conditions, one Tennessee circuit gave up trying to assign all

[13] *SCA*, 22 January 1863; *RCA*, 5 December 1861, 29 January 1863; Romero, *Religion in the Rebel Ranks*, 103; Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*, 58. On the religious military papers more broadly, see Kurt O. Berends, "Wholesome Reading Purifies and Elevates the Man," in Miller, Stout, and Wilson, *Religion and the American Civil War*, 131-66.

their preachers and simply directed one itinerant "to get as many … appointments as possible and to preach to the Negro wherever he can." Similar incidents occurred in western Virginia during the war, as well as Arkansas and Texas, which lacked episcopal supervision for four and five consecutive years, respectively.[14]

Circuit riders trying to make do in this improvisational climate also found it a rather difficult task. Louisiana clergyman J. B. Walker began the war appointed to ministry in New Orleans. When Union forces arrived at the close of 1861, "finding the City was not going to be defended, but would be surrendered, I determined to leave the City and go up into Mississippi." Walker's decision had drastic consequences for his wartime experience. "It was April 26," he noted. "I left as I supposed for a month or two, but it was for three years and four months." Walker eventually managed to gain an appointment in Port Gibson, but for the first six months of his accidental exile, he found work wherever he could, "preach[ing] every Sunday and frequently in the week," and living off the charity of others, by which he was "kept in money, supplies, and a home."[15]

Mississippi preacher George Washington Bachman fared similarly, suffering numerous setbacks during the war, but persevering through in his ministry. Bachman preached in a heavily disrupted circuit, sustaining bilious fever and frequent Union raids, which resulted in generally small congregations. "Indeed," Bachman nonchalantly recorded in his diary, "most of the people preached to were negroes." After the death of

[14] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XII, 18; ibid., Chapter XIII, 16, Millsaps; *SCA*, 3 December 1863; *Minutes of the Memphis Conference, 1862-67*, 59-60; *Extracts of the Minutes of the Wesley Circuit of the Methodist Church, 1826-1865*, Memphis Conference Archives, Lambuth; Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 159-60.

[15] J. B. Walker, "A Sketch of My Life," manuscript journal, 60, J. B. Walker Papers, Millsaps.

his horse, Bachman could no longer fulfill his circuit-traveling duties, so he conducted a school until Federal raids shut it down. When he had saved enough money to procure a new horse, Bachman returned to "the 'regular work'" of ministry, and later opened another school while preaching on weekends. Bachman, whose theological scruples forbade him from entering the military, paid a high cost in convenience and money, but he represented a fair number of fellow MECS preachers such as J. B. Walker and Holland McTyeire who, whether wealthy or poor, made legitimate home front ministry their chief wartime priority.[16]

Funerals were another important church function that suffered through neglect. As historian Drew Faust has amply demonstrated, the Civil War significantly shaped and reshaped American conceptions and approaches to death and mourning. Southern Methodists were not immune to this phenomenon. Editor and future bishop Holland McTyeire, self-exiled from Nashville and living in rural Alabama, wrote in 1863 that their community had "so few men at Church nowadays, and this is even more striking at funerals." Adding that there often not enough white men to serve as pallbearers, McTyeire revealed that "a new custom is introduced of allowing slaves to assist."[17]

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[16] G.W. Bachman, "Sketches and Incidents, Vol. 1," 13-20, Millsaps; Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War*, 183-84. While removed from Nashville, McTyeire preached in and around Butler County, AL, until taking an appointment to preach in Montgomery for the remainder of the war. See Moorman, "Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire," 39-41, Vanderbilt, and *SCA*, 7 January 1864.

[17] Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009); *SCA*, 14 May 1863. During the war, McTyeire wrote a series of letters to the *SCA* entitled "Letters from the Country." He used the pseudonym "M.P.," which his biographer suggests likely stood for "Methodist Preacher." See Tigert, *Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 126-28, and Moorman, "Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire," 40-41, Vanderbilt.

For some areas, even a funeral itself was a luxury not always available. After the war ended, northern MEC preacher William George Matton recorded a heartbreaking episode he experienced while assigned to rival MECS territory in North Carolina. While passing through a particularly rural region with a fellow clergyman, he stopped at a house to ask about the potential of holding worship services in the area. The poor woman who came to the door answered their questions, then asked if the men were preachers. When they answered affirmatively, she ask if they "would … mind preaching the funeral of my little children as died along in the war." She explained that her husband went to war and "left me and the five children, to do the best we could." Following the death of their cow, the family "run out of most everything, and the two youngest died." Her husband survived the war, the woman said, but returned "broke down, and no account much. And there ain't been no preacher here since the first year of the war, and I do wish youns would preach a funeral for them little children." Matton, deeply moved, wrote that "of course we consented." They performed the funeral in a vacant building, then shared a meal with the family at its insistence, despite the "extreme poverty of our hosts." As the clergymen returned home, Matton concluded, they "were too deeply moved to converse."[18]

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In the face of all these disruptions, there were copious reasons for serious concern about the long-term health of the MECS. Thomas Summers wrote in February 1863 that

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[18] William George Matton, *Memoirs*, 5-6, transcript of original, unpublished manuscript, William George Matton Papers, 1859-87, Duke.

"the Church is in great danger of disintegration—demoralization … and our connectional officers, especially the Bishops, have a grave responsibility devolved upon them." The postponed (and ultimately never-held) General Conference of 1862, as discussed in more detail below, drove Summers's anxieties. Other clergy took a more optimistic view of the wartime chaos. In an editorial titled "Influence of the War on the Church," "Alpha" asserted baldly that "the principle, if not only end" of the war "is the purification and augmentation of the piety of the Church." The signs already demonstrated this cleansing effect, as "the Church has been relieved of many of its hypocritical or self-deceived, and consequently inefficient and burdensome members." In other words, MECS members willing to remain in the midst of such travails and difficulties must necessarily be of faithful stock. Moreover, "Alpha" pointed out, the war served to make the MECS more aware of its blessings, more benevolent, and more prayerful. The prominent minister Enoch Marvin, an expatriate Missouri Conference member who spent the duration of the war in the Lower South, revealed a grim yet faith-revealing perspective on the trials of war. While giving a sermon on "the benefits of affliction," and using language theologically more Calvinist than Wesleyan-Arminian, Marvin emotionally yelled, "I am on God's anvil in this war, and while I take this view of the subject, I will say, 'Strike on! strike on! strike on!'"[19]

Whether southern Methodist leaders believed God or Satan to be striking the anvil, most agreed that the Union army served as a primary physical manifestation of the hammer. The war devastated southern institutions across the board, through actions incidental and intentional, but religious infrastructure fared particularly poorly. Whether

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[19] *SCA*, 12 February 1863; *RCA*, 19 March 1863; Finney, *Enoch Mather Marvin*, 416.

various southern denominations received blame for instigating the war (and many did), the churches collectively served as a prominent morale-booster for the Confederate effort, and therefore were an obvious and easy target for reprisal or occupation. As noted above, one of the earliest and most demoralizing losses for the MECS was its official Publishing House in Nashville. Holland McTyeire and John McFerrin, fearing arrest for their outspoken support of the Confederacy, abandoned the Publishing House to its fate as Federal occupation became imminent in February 1862. McFerrin fled southward, leaving everything except his family, clothing, and his horses, believing that he would have otherwise joined "other beloved brethren who have been imprisoned for opinion's sake, or it may have been worse as I was regarded as the chief of sinners, because of my course in the great Secession movement."[20]

"Not wishing … to subject myself and family to the uncovenanted mercies of Lincolndom," McTyeire also rationalized that "Yankee officials would hardly allow me to edit such a paper as I liked, and I would not edit such a one as they liked." Thus, the *NCA* suspended for the duration of the war at his absence. McTyeire in part blamed the loss of the Publishing House on Confederate military leadership for failing to fight for the city. Joining a chorus of southerners criticizing Albert Sidney Johnston after the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson for the retreat from Nashville, McTyeire stated that "had Gen. Johnston made a stand before the city, its citizens would have rallied to him with pikes and every other available weapon." "But," he continued, "when Generals give up, and armed hosts retire, what can unarmed citizens do? The tameness of the surrender, without a blow, must have made the bones of Andrew Jackson turn in his grave at the

[20] Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 150-65; *SCA*, 18 December 1862.

Hermitage." Union forces soon utilized the Publishing House as "a printing office, an arsenal, and a hospital" throughout the war, according to Richard Moorman. Although the battle over the Publishing House well outlasted the war itself, the denomination did manage to salvage much of the "movable property," thanks to the efforts of Financial Secretary Richard Abbey. Abbey remained in Nashville to monitor the Publishing House's use, and received an enthusiastic postwar resolution of gratitude from his home Mississippi Conference for his "constant presence and well directed vigilance" over the building's contents. Nevertheless, the MECS sustained great financial harm because of the confiscation of the Publishing House; one historian of American Methodism reports an asset loss from 1862 to 1866 of "nearly a quarter of a million dollars."[21]

After the Publishing House, the loss of the MECS Book and Tract Depository at Vicksburg was perhaps the next single greatest forfeiture to Union forces. Following the surrender of Vicksburg in July 1863, the entire stock of the Depository, valued at nearly eighteen thousand dollars, was "appropriated and scattered by the Federal army." The nature of the loss dismayed the Mississippi Conference even further. Clergyman Alston Mygatt, charged with overseeing the Depository, had "turned his back on his Southern

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[21] Holland N. McTyeire to *SCA*, "Reliable News From Nashville," 6 March 1862, John James Tigert IV Papers, Box 1 Folder 3, Vanderbilt; on the criticism of Johnston, see Steven E. Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 84-85; Moorman, "Holland Nimmons McTyeire," Vanderbilt, 30-31 (see also Tigert, *Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 122-28, which follows McTyeire's experiences in Butler County, Alabama, for much of the war); *Minutes of the Fifty-First Session of the Mississippi Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Held in Brookhaven, Miss., Nov. 28-Dec. 5, 1866* (Nashville, Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1867), 26; Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XVI, 15-16, Millsaps; James W. May, "The War Years," in Bucke, *History of American Methodism*, 245. A succinct biographical article on Abbey is Charles B. Galloway, "Rev. R. Abbey: Author, Philosopher, Theologian," in *Quarterly Review of the M. E. Church, South*, Vol. 14 Issue 1 (April 1893), 135-151.

friends and brethren, and affiliated actively with the invaders." He "claimed ownership of the stock on hand, and gave them to the Christian Commission of the Federal army," from whence "they were carried away as trophies of the surrender of Vicksburg." Unable to recoup either their stock or its monetary value, the conference bitterly declared the Depository "a total loss."[22]

Beyond the Publishing House and the Book and Tract Depository, lesser instances of Union occupation or damage of MECS property abounded. Sometimes the army repurposed properties, as with the Publishing House. Such use gave little comfort to the sour and skeptical former tenants, although there were occasional silver linings. At the 1864 Tennessee Conference session, Bishop Soule pointedly opined that "in Nashville … I have seen churches turned into hospitals and barracks but not a single theatre."[23]

The same year, the Memphis Conference revealed in a colorful rant a particularly humiliating use of several church properties:

> Eleven church edifices have been burnt to the ground, and many others desecrated in a manner too abominable to mention. Alas for creatures in human shape, who can stable their horses in the temple of God, or display their beastly orgies in the Sanctuary of the Most High! We have been further robbed by the same inglorious hands, of Church records, Sunday School papers and libraries. Neither the altar nor the furniture of the Solemn Sacrament, nor has the Holy Bible itself escaped their vindictive hate. Our Conference Journal has also gone the way of *Yankee thieving*.[24]

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[22] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XV, 13-14, and Chapter XVI, 17, Vanderbilt; *Minutes of the Fifty-First Session of the Mississippi Annual Conference*, 23. Mygatt later aided Radical Reconstruction in Vicksburg, no doubt endearing him even less to his former MECS compatriots. See James T. Currie, *Enclave: Vicksburg and Her Plantations, 1863-1870* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1980), 197-200.

[23] Tigert, *Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 131.

[24] *Minutes of the Memphis Conference, 1862-67*, 59.

Often, Federal troops simply acted capriciously in the damage done to churches and denominational property. The trustees of the MECS church in Columbia, Kentucky, for example, reported in February 1863 that "Soldiers of the Federal Army lately stationed at this place, entered the church building and tore up the floor, carried off benches, and doors of said building, leaving it in such condition as to be unfit for use as a place of worship." The Mississippi Conference, viewing such destruction, occupation, and confiscation, issued a scathing condemnation. It stated that "we believe that thousands of Federal soldiers have forestalled their eternal salvation by stealing … valuables from non-combatants and innocent parties, and appropriating them to their own use, with no intention of ever returning them … to the rightful owners. Verily their sin will find them out when repentance will be unavailing."[25]

A final source of denominational disruption, and from a leadership standpoint likely the most detrimental, was the inability to hold the planned General Conference of 1862. Union occupation of New Orleans, the scheduled host city, necessitated first postponement and ultimately cancellation of the session. This lapse in ecclesiastical governance created two distinct problems for southern Methodist leaders. First, they needed to create an alternate plan for executing essential denominational business. That led to a number of improvised meetings, communication by proxy or through newspapers, and in general reversion to a sort of "survival mode" that carried the church through the war. The second problem lay in a variety of constitutional questions and dilemmas associated with the cancelled General Conference. Following the formal

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[25] Vista Royse Allison, *Methodist History of Adair County, Kentucky, 1782-1969*, p. 134-35, Genealogy Room, South Central Kentucky Cultural Center, Glasgow, KY; *SCA*, 19 November 1863; Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XVIII, 22, Millsaps.

postponement of the session in March 1862, it was unclear whether a General Conference could be legally held at a later date under the existing *Discipline*, and if so, whether the already-selected delegates should remain so. In his history of wartime Mississippi Methodism, John Jones notes that the cancellation of a General Conference was a unique occurrence in American Methodism, and that no laws clearly governed how to deal with the case. For a denomination that cut its teeth on legalistic framings and nuances of church law, this lack of clarity proved both particularly troublesome and enthralling.[26]

The stickiest point of contention following the postponement concerned the status of the delegates. Jones, who later recalled that the "spirited discussion" over the delegate question lasted several months, contended in the *SCA* in August 1862 that a specially-called session of the General Conference would be valid, but that all prior elections for the postponed meeting were "now null and void," requiring new elections. Later that fall, the Georgia, Virginia, and Mississippi Annual Conferences all passed resolutions encouraging the bishops to call a special convening of the General Conference, and also affirming their prior delegates as continued, although the Virginia Conference noted a vigorous debate over the delegate issue. This did not solve the problem, however. In January 1863, the *SCA* hosted further debate on delegates, regarding whether population changes within conferences demanded alteration of the delegate proportion. Later that month, clergyman P. P. Smith, a delegate to the MECS's founding session in Louisville, wrote to the *SCA* challenging the authority of Bishop Andrew to postpone the scheduled General Conference at all. But since he had done so, Smith believed that no session was

[26] May, "The War Years," 244; the postponement announcement from Bishop Andrew is published in *RCA*, 20 March 1862; Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XII, 16-17, Millsaps.

needed until the next planned meeting in 1866, especially, he warned, because any intermediate convening would not follow the "prescribed" disciplinary order. Without getting into constitutional issues, James Duncan also argued against a special wartime General Conference. In an *RCA* editorial, Duncan reasoned that the various Annual Conferences were capable of taking care of essential business until the war's end, and following the war, either a General Conference or a called convention would be necessary regardless.[27]

In 1863, Bishop Andrew again announced that the bishops had decided not to call a General Conference for the time being. A substitute gathering of bishops, Missionary Society members, and Book Committee leaders would meet instead to conduct "essential" business. But the issue came back up at the close of 1863. Most conferences again requested that the bishops make a decision about the General Conference. Duncan then requested through the *RCA* that the bishops make their wishes known. He acknowledged the legality question, but concluded that he had "no doubt on that point, especially since, if convened, it would be in view of the action of the Annual Conferences, which authorized the Bishops to call … such a meeting." Instead, Bishop Andrew called merely for another meeting of the bishops, the Missionary Society, and the Book Committee, which met in May 1864 in Montgomery. That meeting dealt with a variety of issues, including "the Army Missions, the publishing interests, provision for

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[27] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XII, 17, Millsaps; *SCA*, 21 August 1862, 11 December 1862, 1 January 1863, 8 January 1863, 22 January 1863; on Smith's delegation, see *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: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1845), 200; *RCA*, 26 February 1863.

the orphans of soldiers, the state of the Church, the extension of the term of pastoral service during the war, and the propriety of proposing … to call a Convention of the Church."[28]

By the close of 1864, new seeds of discontent began to bear fruit in the North Carolina Conference. At its annual meeting, the conference passed resolutions blasting the alternative session, and especially the terminology associated with the smaller meeting:

> WHEREAS, of late an assembly of certain ministers of our church, understood to be invited by the Bishops […] have seemed to constitute themselves into a "Council," assuming *quasi* authority for their acts; and, whereas, there has been a tendency to relaxation of law in certain quarters; therefore,
>
> *Resolved*, That the North Carolina Conference utterly disapproves this annual meeting, accomplishing no good and fraught with elements of harm.
>
> *Resolved*, That nothing done by this Committee, Council, or by whatever name it may be called, has any authority whatever imparted to it by any constitutional or statutory law of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.[29]

After the *RCA* published these resolutions, the *NCCA* wrote to assure its editors that the resolutions "in no wise intended to reflect upon the course pursued by our Bishops," but rather "to refer to the *prospective* or future acts of the Bishops or any other officers of the Church, 'which relaxes any of our rules or overrides any of the laws of our Church.'" In contradictory language, the *NCCA* continued, saying that "the meeting of the Bishops and the Missionary Board was legal, necessary, and expedient. Nor do we call in question the right or propriety of the Bishops inviting brethren to meet and advise with them in the present exigency of the Church, but we do protest that the Bishops had any right to call a

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[28] May, "The War Years," 244; *SCA*, 19 March 1863, 14 January 1864; *RCA*, 11 February 1864; *SCA*, 11 February 1864; *RCA*, 2 June 1864.

[29] Published in *RCA*, 26 January 1865.

'Council' of the Church." Here the North Carolina Conference sought to maintain an intricate dance between standing its ground constitutionally in relation to the *Discipline* and not besmirching the character and leadership of the bishops. That Bishop Andrew, the icon of 1844, served as the representative voice of the bishops during this period likely did little to ease detractors' concerns in the matter. In the end, the bishops determined to wait until the next scheduled General Conference, in 1866.[30]

The postponement and cancellation of the 1862 General Conference, as well as the possibility of rescheduling it via a special convention, led to the raising of other, related constitutional issues. In late August 1862, "A Local Preacher" contended in the *SCA* that the upcoming Annual Conference sessions should not meet, because it would be "next to impossible to hold Conferences in the States of Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and the northern part of Arkansas … to say nothing of the number of preachers who are in the service of their country" as chaplains or soldiers. "Local Preacher" anticipated opposition to his proposal on the basis that "it will be a departure from the usages of the Church," but "to that objection I reply; we have already departed from the usages of the Church in a number of instances." He listed failing to hold the scheduled General Conference and clergymen participating in armed combat as two primary examples. A reply weeks later by "Itinerant" countered that the failure of the Annual Conferences to meet, especially in view of the lost General Conference, "would result in the complete disorganization of the Church." As it was, the various conferences made do as best they could, both in 1862 and throughout the war.[31]

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[30] *RCA*, 23 February 1865.
[31] *SCA*, 28 August, 18 September 1862.

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Throughout the war, southern Methodist leaders tried in other ways to retain a sense of normalcy. Although heavily concerned with military and political affairs, they simultaneously kept a strong focus on familiar church and ecclesiastical matters. As Christopher Owen points out in his study of Georgia Methodists, “Along with other Methodist newspapers, [the *SCA*] provided a sounding board for Southern Methodists. Denominational debates continued throughout the war.” Indeed, “the *Southern Presbyterian* expressed wonder that Methodists showed such interest in church controversies while southern society crumbled and wished Presbyterians evinced like concern.” Issues that raged in the periodicals and among southern Methodist leaders spanned fine points of theology and doctrine, traditional components of Methodist practice, and minute matters of stylistic change and constitutional application.[32]

For example, Lovick Pierce, the father of bishop George, used his considerable voice to highlight what he viewed as a crisis regarding Methodist class meetings. Utilized from the earliest days of Methodism as a means of instruction and study of biblical and Wesleyan precepts, the class meeting had in the later antebellum period begun to wane in favor and usage. Pierce believed the abandonment of class meetings had created no less than a “*mutilated* Methodism.” In a series of articles from February through April 1863, notwithstanding the crucible of war and the ongoing ecumenical revivals in the Confederate army, Pierce called for the mandating of class meeting participation as a

[32] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 107.

term of membership in Methodist churches, proposed other modifications, and answered questions and replies through the *SCA*. At one point, Pierce linked the predicament to his appeal for a General Conference, calling the need for a special General Conference "a moral necessity" for the church. At this point, even editor Edward Myers interjected his opinion, disagreeing with Pierce and accusing him of being overly dramatic. But Pierce was not the only prominent clergyman concerned with class attendance. In its fall 1863 session, the Mississippi Conference criticized the lack of reporting on Sunday School statistics, and resolved to not pass the character of any member in the future who "neglects the instruction of children, and the promotion of Sunday schools," wartime exigencies notwithstanding.[33]

Other church matters popped up frequently. A December 1862 issue of the *SCA* contained arguments from various contributors over the finer points of Arminianism and atonement theory, as part of a "Questions for the Times" series. In early 1863, Holland McTyeire, writing as "M. P.," proposed removing "Moveable Feasts" from the MECS church almanac, and a supporter wrote in to "second" the proposal, so as to "eliminate the offending matter and give us pure, intelligible Protestantism." Sometimes stylistic and doctrinal questions arose as a result of the war. A correspondent wrote the *SCA* in summer 1863 to ask Bishop Pierce's opinion on using blackberry wine for sacramental purposes rather than grape wine, due to difficulties of availability (Pierce shut down the possibility, stating that scripture only allowed grape wine). An army chaplain, during an update letter to the *RCA*, asked editor Duncan if it would be "proper for an unordained preacher to administer the ordinance of baptism to a dying man, when no ordained

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[33] *SCA*, 19 February, 26 February, 5 March 1863, 7 April 1864, 26 November 1863.

minister is near," and if "such baptism [would] be valid … and would the preacher be liable to censure for it, when it was the earnest request of the subject?" The chaplain had been asked by the Catholic "Sisters of Charity" to baptize a man near death. The chaplain had refused, believing it beyond his authority and jurisdiction, but had "offered him my prayers and gave him all the instruction and consolation in my power." And R. C. Oliver, an MECS preacher and later a leader in the postwar Holiness movement, condemned the practice of Methodist ministers preaching funerals "commemorative of one who has died out of the Church, and who leave no evidence of repentance toward God and faith in Christ." "I fear," Oliver concluded, "it is because the Church and the world are too friendly."[34]

Another pseudonymous preacher, "Timothy," appealed to the circumstances of war to propose an extension of the two-year pastorate term. He averred that an extension would be at least as legal and constitutional as postponing or cancelling a General Conference. In response, a fellow modern-day Pauline acolyte, "Titus," challenged that allowing "every preacher to take his own course" negated the very premise of the itinerancy. If such a fundamental piece of American Methodism were lost, "Titus" rhetorically mused, then "where is the Methodist Church?" Finally, during the summer of 1863, the *SCA* commented on the *NCCA*'s publication of "a long article attacking the right of the [Missions] Board" and bishops to institute their new plan for army

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[34] *SCA* 18 December 1862, 2 April, 16 July 1863; *RCA*, 27 February 1862; *SCA*, 17 September 1863. For more context on the Sisters of Charity, see Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 210-13. On R. C. Oliver's Holiness role, see Randall Stephens, *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 44-45, 61, and Briane K. Turley, *A Wheel Within A Wheel: Southern Methodism and the Georgia Holiness Association* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1999), 127, 134.

missionaries. E. H. Myers, the *SCA*'s editor, and notably the Mission Board's treasurer, defended the missions plan on a pragmatic basis. "True," Myers acknowledged, "there was no clause in the Discipline which precisely authorizes this special mission, but when the Discipline was framed a war was not anticipated." The logic may have well made the southern Methodist constitutional sticklers of 1844 cringe, but it demonstrates one more arena in which the MECS struggled in, debated over, and adapted to their dual national and religious identities in the midst of war.[35]

Annual Conferences sought to proceed as normally as possible during the war. The Mississippi and Louisiana Conferences instituted lay delegation to their annual meetings, allowing non-clergy to attend and participate to a limited extent in conference governance. In 1864, the MECS divided the Alabama Conference into two separate conferences, creating the Montgomery and Mobile Conferences. The Mississippi Conference's influential missionary to China, J. W. Lambuth, had been sidelined stateside during the early portion of the war, but managed enough support by 1863 to return to China to continue his evangelistic efforts. Even the specter of conference newspaper rivalry arose in the denomination.[36] The *SCA* in late 1862 reported the formation of a new Holston Conference paper, which was believed to be titled simply "*Christian Advocate*." The name caused the *SCA* annoyance, as displayed by Myers's comments on the matter:

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[35] *SCA*, 19 November, 3 December 1863; 13 August 1863.

[36] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter IX, 1, and XI, 1, Millsaps [Ironically, the Mississippi Conference would vote against broad denominational lay delegation in the 1866 General Conference, but it passed anyway; see Chapter XI, 8-9.]; Moorman, "Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire," 45, Vanderbilt; *Fifty-First Session of the Mississippi Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, 12-13.

> We suspect there must be some mistake about the title—that some differential word has been left off, as it is hardly probable that our Holston brethren have appropriated the title given by the General Conference to the "Great Official," at Nashville—during the very unfortunate temporary (as we trust) suspension of the latter paper. 'Christian Advocate' is a *family* name, and no one paper can appropriate it to itself—except the *central* organ of the Church—without at least remonstrance on the part of other members of the family.[37]

The *RCA* believed the new paper's name to be "*Holston Christian Advocate*," a name that presumably would cause no offense and be in line with the other members of the *Advocate* network, but both the *SCA* and the *RCA* were mistaken (or the name was quickly changed). The new paper's name was "*Holston Journal*," and it formed, according to the earliest history of the Holston Conference, in response to the suspension of the *NCA*. It was to be a short-lived wartime endeavor, however; by September 1863, the *SCA* reported the suspension of the *Holston Journal*.[38]

* * *

The war years brought disruptions of unprecedented nature to the leaders of the MECS. Such difficulties, however, enormous as they were, did not prevent the denomination from granting its zealous support to the Confederate war effort. Historians have disagreed about whether southern Christianity served ultimately to bolster or hinder Confederate morale and nationalism.[39] The four authors of *Why the South Lost the Civil*

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[37] *SCA*, 20 November 1862.

[38] *RCA*, 11 December 1862; Price, *Holston Methodism*, 313, 348; *SCA*, 10 September 1863.

[39] While now a bit dated, an excellent historiographical survey of whether Christianity supported or subverted the Confederate cause is Kurt O. Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," in Beth Barton Schweiger

War contend that as Confederate "victories decreased and casualty lists lengthened, doubts about God's favor (never very far beneath the surface) began to arise and southern will weakened." Other historians, however, have challenged this internalist assumption. Kurt Berends contends that "the Confederacy [losing] the war does not mean the churches failed to adequately support the war." Jason Phillips goes further, stating that "the popular idea that Southern religion, particularly its Christian fatalism, lowered Confederate morale and eroded the war effort is grossly inaccurate."[40]

In separate views of Methodists and Baptists in wartime Georgia, Christopher Owen and Bruce Gourley each offer more nuanced language to evaluate denominational Confederate support. Owen acknowledges that "there is some justification for both viewpoints"--churches as stalwart bulwarks of Confederate nationalism or as lukewarm or guilt-wracked defeatists--but argues that "the wartime ethos of southern evangelicals was less monolithic and more subtle than either historical camp has realized. … Inherent in the ideology of many southern evangelicals were principles that placed limits on devotion to the Confederacy." Similarly, Gourley contends that "Baptists in Middle Georgia responded to the war and Confederacy in patterns both similar and different than their contemporaries in the South at large, while also exhibiting significant internal diversity." In general, leaders and urban churches supported the Confederacy more

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and Donald G. Mathews, eds., *Religion in the American South: Protestants and Others in History and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 99-101.

[40] Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still Jr., *The Elements of Confederate Defeat: Nationalism, War Aims, and Religion* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 41. For much greater context on the internalist position, see Beringer, Hattaway, Jones, and Still, *Why The South Lost The Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), especially 268-397. Berends, "Wholesome Reading Purifies and Elevates the Man," 153; Jason Phillips, "Religious Belief and Troop Motivation: 'For the Smiles of My Blessed Saviour,'" in Wallenstein and Wyatt-Brown, *Virginia's Civil War*, 102.

fervently than small, grassroots congregations. Both scholars demonstrate evidence that white southern Christians, at least at the leadership levels, supported the achievement of Confederate wartime aims.[41]

This dissertation agrees with Owen and Gourley. Taken collectively, southern Methodist leadership overwhelmingly desired Confederate victory and independence, and in a variety of manners worked to see those goals accomplished. Those desires and that support did not noticeably flag throughout the war, even as the prospects of victory approached nil. At the same time, however, the MECS maintained great concern for its own ecclesiastical health and independence. Church traditions and theological beliefs significantly shaped the way that denominational leaders viewed their obligations to church and state, not, by lessening devotion toward either entity, but in the manner, extent, and location of supportive expression. Like the Presbyterian divine Stuart Robinson, prominent southern Methodists grappled with the proper delineations and limits of the border between sacred and secular in the midst of war. This struggle proved especially potent in a denomination whose jurisdiction spanned such complex and varied regions as Missouri, Louisiana, Kentucky, East Tennessee, North Carolina, and the Deep South. It was an arduous task to balance powerful social, theological, and personal pressures to support Confederate aims with a similarly resilient Wesleyan orientation and deeply ingrained (if sometimes inconsistent) "spirituality of the church." Yet southern Methodist leaders tried to do just that. The result produced a swirl of ambiguities,

[41] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 94; Gourley, *Diverging Loyalties,* 5.

tensions, and periodical contradictions within a general trend of broad participation on the Confederacy's behalf.[42]

First of all, the MECS put its denominational resources to broad use for the Confederate cause. Certainly the denomination produced tangible secular support for the war effort. Just as other Confederates did, Methodists served in the military. They purchased war bonds. Women formed societies and circles to help clothe and comfort soldiers. Churches donated resources such as pews and carpets for Confederate use. James Duncan stated in fall of 1864 that "for several weeks [the *RCA*'s] printers have been doing military duty, and therefore the Advocate has not been issued."

While willing to help the Confederate military, however, Duncan did not do so enthusiastically. He blamed northern soldiers for the inconvenience and cursed them accordingly, noting that "thus our enemies invade all our interests and interfere with all our Church enterprise. May God rebuke them and give us peace." Sometimes others in the denomination granted its physical resource equally grudgingly, or resisted granting them altogether. John Jones, speaking of the Mississippi Conference, bitterly remembered that "towards the close of the war we suffered more from the constant demands of the Confederates than from the Federal soldiers, in the way of letting them have horses, beef cattle, corn and other supplies." And while the Confederate army put

[42] See Graham, *A Kingdom Not of This World*, especially the introduction, 1-10. Admittedly, Robinson faced a particularly complicated context in Louisville, Kentucky, which Graham deftly maneuvers. But, especially in the context of this dissertation, it is important to remember that southern Methodism spanned both areas that were both deeply Confederate and divided powerfully between Confederates and Unionists. Neither side, however, was more or less "Methodist" than the other, and MECS leadership had to manage and navigate all these territories. Without challenging any region's religious "legitimacy," therefore, a denomination-wide view therefore amplifies the tensions and complexities of local and state-focused studies, as this chapter and Chapter 5 will explore.

many southern denominational colleges to work as barracks or hospitals, some institutions resisted such use and educational disruption. Georgia's Wesleyan Female College was one establishment that heavily supported the war effort in the abstract. But when the Confederate government repeatedly sought to use the campus as a military hospital, the college refused, ultimately taking the matter to court. According to Cohen, Wesleyan was one of a fortunate few schools to successfully resist Confederate takeover.[43]

These contrary examples aside, Methodists contributed a great deal of time, effort, and money, especially when those gifts promised to bring about the spiritual conversion or sustenance of Confederate soldiers. Robert Miller contends that "whatever else the Civil War did, it brought about a literal mountain of charitable religious support for soldiers … the War led to nothing less than a philanthropic revolution." Bruce Gourley, acknowledging that Methodists far outstripped Baptists in financial giving, attributes Methodist success in large part to "its ecclesiastical structure," which lent much greater cohesiveness to Methodist efforts than to their next largest denominational competitors. These efforts will be further explored later, but here it should be noted that southern Methodists contributed heavily to charitable and war-related causes ranging from the Soldier's Tract Association to feeding the hungry on the home front to providing care and education for children orphaned by the war.[44]

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[43] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 98-99; Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 35-36; *RCA*, 20 October 1864; Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XIV, 21, Millsaps; Cohen, *Reconstructing the Campus*, 37-38, 43-44.

[44] Robert J. Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God: Religion and Faith in the American Civil War* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 85, 89-90; Gourley, *Diverging Loyalties*, 128.

But MECS leadership also gave sanction and moral support to the Confederate war effort. Sometimes such endorsement took enthusiastic or even vehement forms. Bishop George Foster Pierce and other leaders officially blessed regiments heading to the front, and participated in recruiting rallies. Arkansas's Methodist *Ouachita Conference Journal*, in strikingly virulent language, stated early in the war that "we are thankful for the war, [and] believe it to be, like African slavery, a blessing in every point of view." Moreover, the paper opined, "we hope to whip out Lincoln and the Devil as the final result." The battle at Wilson's Creek buoyed the hopes of the editors.[45] The secessionist governor of South Carolina, William H. Gist, meanwhile wished that one pro-Confederate renowned clergyman would be a bit more zealous in his moral support of the war. Writing to Wofford College professor Whitefoord Smith, Gist proposed the following course of action:

> You express regret that you can do so little for the country and ask "What can I do?" I answer you can do much; it seems to me that if I were a minister gifted as you are I would go to the army on the coast, and like Peter the Hermit preach a crusade against the north, or at least preach resistance to their foul domination until not a man is left to tell the tale of our destruction.[46]

There is no evidence that Smith took up Gist's challenge, but his support for the Confederacy continued.

Some Methodist leaders did opt for a more moderate course. Christopher Owen contends that the southern "spirituality of the church" philosophy never quite disappeared during the war, especially in Methodism. Methodists, according to Owen, lacked the

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[45] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 95; Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 30; Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 461-62; *Ouachita Conference Journal* quoted in *NCA*, 19 September 1861. The best account of Wilson's Creek is William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher III, *Wilson's Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[46] Gist to Smith, 21 March 1862, Whitefoord Smith Papers, Folder 2, Duke.

Calvinist theological underpinnings that so explicitly led Presbyterians and some Baptists to embrace the Confederacy as an elect, preordained people *a la* Old Testament Israel. Similarly, they lacked the Episcopalian inclinations toward church-state identification, and resisted too close an identification of Caesar with God. Prominent southern Methodist clerics thus celebrated the Confederacy's recognition of God, and consistently pushed the political government to go further in its philosophical adherence to Christian values, but few went as far as Georgia Methodist patriarch Lovick Pierce in arguing for a national theocracy.[47]

Still, it is important to clarify nineteenth-century Methodist understandings of just what moderation was. William L. Green, the biographer of Alexander L. P. Green, a prominent Nashville clergyman and part of Vanderbilt University's founding board, framed the concept this way in 1877: "To say that any sane man … with a knowledge of passing events, was neutral during the late war … is to affirm an absurdity. We do not mean neutrality as to overt acts, but as to sympathy. I neither heard of nor saw that neutral man." William Green admitted that his subject "warmly espoused the Southern cause," and even that "he delivered a number of lectures on the Crisis." Yet A. L. P. Green "kept his commission as a minister of righteousness unstained," because his lectures contained "nothing inflammatory or abusive," and because he "carried no slavery

[47] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 99-105. Owen engages the paradoxical elements of his argument further in these pages and in 106-07, relying on a delineation between peacetime "politics" and a wartime posture of "defense," which allowed Methodists such as Bishop Pierce to "frequently [deliver] pro-Confederate philippics" while disavowing politics in the pulpit. On Lovick Pierce, see letter from Pierce to L. Pierce, Jr., in Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 461-62.

or Confederate independence into the pulpit." "His sermons," his biographer continued, "were clear of the 'things of Caesar.'"[48]

In the southern Methodist mind, then, violations of neutrality and moderation regarding the war occurred in corporate ecclesiastical contexts, specifically the pulpit. Much more license was allowed in private and individual settings. The closing 1861 session of the Mississippi Conference illustrates this view of moderation. The conference established a representative committee to create a pastoral address on the state of the country and of the church. According to one of the committee members, the address "was very conservative in its spirit and language, and did not commit the Church either for or against the war, but urged our people, that, while they should submit 'to the powers that be,' and conduct themselves worthily … they should 'let their moderation be known unto all men.'" Moreover, the address called Mississippi Methodists to "earnest prayer for the early pacification of the country." At the same conference session, however, resolutions were proposed "which we thought breathed too much of the war spirit for a Christian people, and we quietly disposed of them." Conferences anticipated Confederate support among their members, and did not chastise such sympathy, but sought to keep that support in the proper temporal context. Doing so did not always happen seamlessly or successfully, of course. As noted in the previous chapter, bishops intervened on numerous occasions during the secession crisis to prevent conferences from transgressing these ethereal boundaries. A later chapter will explore in detail the complicated nature of

[48] William M. Green, *Life and Papers of A. L. P. Green, D.D.* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1877), 231-34.

Confederate nationalism in the MECS. Yet the importance of the ideal should not be overlooked.[49]

The great majority of southern Methodist leaders did support the Confederate cause, and looked optimistically for Confederate victory throughout the war. To survey these men's opinions on the duration and successful conclusion of war is to view a range of idealism and pragmatism that waxed and waned depending on circumstances, but which generally show a confidence in Confederate armies and divine will. There was also a willingness to believe that victory might be withheld, especially if the nation did not adequately honor God through moral reform.[50]

In his magisterial *Battle Cry of Freedom*, James McPherson contends that in 1861, "many Americans had a romantic, glamorous idea of war," and that "many people on both sides believed that the war would be short." McPherson's assertion may well be correct, but neither sentiment was universally held. Writing shortly after the Battle of First Manassas, Bishop James Andrew was wary of the "war excitement" prevalent among young men. He urged Methodist college students to refrain from rushing to enlist. He worried that "very few young men who now abandon their studies will ever hereafter

[49] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XI, 2, Millsaps.

[50] On this point, a personal observation should be noted. An adage states that "there are no atheists in foxholes." Whether that statement is true is well beyond the purview of this dissertation, but it seems apparent that in the Civil War, at least, there were no radical Arminianists in foxholes. Methodist leaders overwhelmingly joined their Presbyterian and Baptist counterparts in viewing the grand course of the war through a Calvinist lens, wherein the outcome of battles and of the war necessarily reflected God's accomplished will.

return to college," and shared his "fear that you will yet have plenty of time before this war closes."[51]

For the most part, however, southern Methodist leadership held a strikingly optimistic attitude toward the war, even as it continued to drag on into its middle years. James Duncan wrote in the *RCA* that "Methodists have great confidence in the result of the war … and a separate nationality, for they have been through it all before." Continuing his comparison of Methodist schism with political rupture, Duncan argued that "thus far in the progress of the two great movements, there is a striking parallel, and we believe the parallel will hold out to the end." Duncan's assessment bolsters the argument made by several historians that many Confederate Christians in the Civil War were "diehard rebels" holding firm to the end, in large part because they believed they were struggling for religious freedom and the existence (or independent existence) of their churches. As Duncan later stated, "peace is what we all desire, but not peace for the sake of ending trouble. The war is infinitely preferable to peace upon the degrading and ruinous plans of our foes."[52]

Peace through victory, however, proved elusive. In February 1863, Georgian MECS bishop George Pierce wrote to his son that "the signs of peace grow stronger." Referring to the recently-enacted Emancipation Proclamation, Pierce happily noted that "whole regiments have thrown their arms in to the river … the Union they say is gone

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[51] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 332-33; *NCA*, 3 October 1861.

[52] *RCA*, 20 February 1862; Jason Phillips, *Diehard Rebels: The Confederate Culture of Invincibility* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 30-39; Berends, "Wholesome Reading Purifies and Elevates the Man," 131-32; Harry S. Stout and Christopher Grasso, "Civil War, Religion, and Communications: The Case of Richmond," in Miller, Stout, and Wilson, *Religion and the American Civil War*, 345-46; *RCA*, 13 November 1862.

and they are not willing to fight for the nigger. Lincoln's policy will ruin him for which I answer so be it." But close to the same time, *SCA* editor E. H. Myers asserted that while some believed the war to be winding down, "I would gladly see it so, and yet I doubt such an issue." At heart, Myers believed that although the Confederate condition was strong and both sides indeed sought peace, "we want peace with independence; they, peace and the union." Nor should Confederates put their hopes in a foreign *deus ex machina*. In one of his communications to the *SCA*, Bishop Andrew warned fellow Methodists against widespread hopes of outside help. Complaining that "we have been constantly befooled with rumors of foreign intervention and foreign recognition," Andrew suggested that "we had done with all these floating bubbles, and learn that we have naught to rely on but the great God."[53]

Bishop Pierce, ever the optimist, provides an intriguing if not entirely typical case study of MECS leadership through the turning point of the Civil War. In April 1863, he wrote, "The goal of our hopes is just ahead." Noting positive circumstances in Charleston and Vicksburg, and further expressing buoyancy in Braxton Bragg's prospects against William Rosecrans, Pierce predicted that "two more months will decide the contest … the Waterloo of Yankeedom is just ahead." Following Gettysburg, and not realizing that his son had been wounded in the battle, the bishop admitted that "the war-cloud thickens lately, but I am hoping and cheerful still." His son Lovick's injuries were not life-threatening, and he returned to the army in early 1864. As late as September 1864, after the fall of Atlanta, the bishop remained steadfast. Despite the great loss and Sherman's

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[53] George F. Pierce to son, 18 February 1863, Methodist Leaders Papers, Box 1 Folder 6, Emory; *SCA*, 22 January 1863, 23 March 1863. Despite his misgivings, Myers still expected the war to be "virtually" concluded by summer of 1863. The eventful first week of July, then, must have proved a rude awakening.

"no little generalship," Pierce found comfort that "our army is unbroken," and believed that "if proper plans are adopted I think Sherman can be compelled to capitulate in forty days."[54]

Indeed, through 1864 and even into 1865, numerous Methodists continued to express their faith and hopes for the Confederacy. At the same time, they also displayed concern for the worsening prospects of victory, and they began to adapt to a bourgeoning belief that God might not grant them independence. An anonymous writer to the *SCA* criticized the MECS and its bishops for a lack of spiritual zeal and too great a focus on the temporal conflict, arguing that "our controversy is with the Lord of the vineyard, and not with Mr. Lincoln. … It is not the Yankee, but the Divine displeasure, with which we have to contend." Although E. H. Myers believed that "the unconquerable Spirit of the people has escaped demoralization" following Sherman's capture of Atlanta, Bishop Andrew demurred into spiritual solace, asking "what then is left us, but trust in God and in our own skill and courage. May God pity and save us. 'The lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.'"[55]

Providence, ever a murky ally, seemed to several Methodist leaders to be forsaking the Confederacy by 1865. Clergyman John McFerrin, traveling as a missionary with the Army of Tennessee, experienced the devastating Tennessee Campaign in 1864. Writing afterward of a conversation with John Bell Hood, McFerrin agreed with the general's perhaps self-serving words: "God saw that we were not ready, not sufficiently humbled as yet to receive the blessings of peace and independence."[56]

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[54] Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 478-86.
[55] *SCA*, 11 February 1864, 8 September 1864, 22 September 1864.
[56] *SCA*, 2 February 1865.

Mississippi preacher and historian John Jones had struggled through much of the war to believe that the Confederacy would ultimately be victorious. At a point late in the war, he experienced a prayerful epiphany that brought him to peace with whatever conclusion the war displayed:

> After praying at full length our whole being sunk into the most perfect resignation to the will of God, and we felt that our all was in his merciful hands. From that day we were resigned to a state of affairs for which we did not feel accountable, and which it was not in our power to change. We never read our Bible or prayed more in the same length of time than we did during the war, and we often noticed that while we could pray with a comfortable degree of faith for the protection of our family at home, and for the lives of our sons and wards in the army to be spared, we never could pray in faith for the ultimate triumph of the Confederacy. … Confusion would come upon us and our prayers would seem to go off in empty space.[57]

Numerous southern Methodist leaders, then, fit the pattern that Anne Sarah Rubin characterizes when writing that "Confederates needed to believe that God was on their side, for that meant that no matter the setbacks they faced they would eventually emerge victorious." When the setbacks proved conclusive, Confederate Christians struggled to reconcile the seeming incongruity. The argument should not be taken too far. After all, hardly any group or nation has ever gone to war believing it lacked the approval of its collective deity. Union-supporting Christians could be characterized the same way that Rubin diagnoses the Confederacy. But even to the end, a variety of southern Methodist leaders not only held strong in their own support, but also challenged the waning support of fellow Confederates. During Sherman's devastating march to the sea, Georgia soldier-chaplain Morgan Callaway wished "that the Gov. of GA—and other prominent men, Mr. Stephens among them—would cease their questionable complaints against the

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[57] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XIV, 12, Millsaps.

government, and more energetically vest themselves for the common cause. … The soldiers love our country – and in that idea we include Mr. Davis as the exponent of our country." And as late as February 1865, the *SCA* published a letter from an Army of Northern Virginia chaplain, encouraging those on the home front while revealing the ever-decreasing morale being communicated to the soldiers. The writer noted that "the spirit of the army is good—the soldiers are as cheerful and defiant as ever," but asked preachers at home to "tell [the people] *to write no gloomy letters to their friends in the army—to send back the absentees, to feed and clothe the troops and with the blessing of God we shall succeed*."

Still, Confederate Methodists *did* grapple with the ultimate reality of defeat, and that struggle mandated coming to grips with the disconnect between their beliefs about God's will and their nationalist ideologies. As Christopher Owen points out, it is "difficult to support the view that southern evangelical attitudes sapped Confederate will," but it is conversely true that "most southern Wesleyans accepted Union victory as a final, enigmatic decree of God."[58] This connection between Methodist theology and Confederate nationalism will be explored much further below. But first, the nature of MECS clerical involvement in wartime must be noted. MECS leaders and adherents gave much of their material and institutional resources to the cause of Confederacy and of church during the war. More than anything else, however, they gave of themselves.

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[58] Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, 34-35; Callaway to wife, 22 November 1864, Morgan Callaway Papers, Box 1 Folder 2, Emory; *SCA*, 23 February 1865; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 110-12. Owen also notes on p. 95 that "unlike the secular press … little criticism of the central government appeared in southern Methodist newspapers" during the war. For information on the criticisms referenced by Callaway, see Beringer et al, *Why The South Lost*, 286-93.

Chapter 5
"God bless the Church and State": The MECS Clergy and Interdenominational Relations in Wartime

MECS leadership mobilized virtually all components of its infrastructure for service to nation and society in the Civil War. Overwhelmingly, its denominational resources backed and bolstered the Confederate cause. But for all its modes of Confederate support during the war, the MECS's most prominent contribution was its people. Hundreds of southern Methodist clergymen took up the mantle of the war effort as chaplains, missionaries, soldiers, and non-official ministers associated with the Confederate military. In so doing, most of these men sought to fulfill their perceived twin duties to God and nation. But many also endeavored to prioritize those loyalties in the proper order. Consequently, tensions periodically arose. To be clear, this is not to say southern Methodist preachers experienced divided loyalties; the vast majority of Confederate Methodist clergymen appeared to see no dissonance whatsoever between serving God and serving the Confederacy. The appropriate modes, manners, and extents by which they offered service to those two entities, however, received much attention and proved sometimes to be problematic.

MECS preachers desiring to tangibly serve the Confederate cause faced their first issue in choosing the role through which they would labor. At the start of hostilities and through the first half of the war, the two primary modes of service available were the chaplaincy and enlistment as a regular soldier or officer. For clergymen, the chaplaincy offered a far more analogous form of employment to their prewar occupation, and therefore a more "natural" landing spot in the military. To be sure, the Civil War utterly transformed the military's religious landscape in terms of human resources. When the

Mexican War began, for example, the entire American military employed only thirteen chaplains. Of those, only nine actively served in hostile territories during the war. During the next war, well over 3,500 combined chaplains served the Union and Confederate armies throughout the Civil War.[1]

While far more southern Methodist clergymen ultimately served as chaplains rather than as soldiers, the first year of war witnessed similar numbers. Only as the war progressed did new appointments and enlistments skew increasingly heavily toward the chaplaincy. Throughout the war, John Brinsfield calculates that among fully ordained elders/ministers, the MECS provided the Confederate Army 318 chaplains and 109 line officers or soldiers.[2]

Whether to pursue soldiering or a chaplaincy became a hot topic among some members of the MECS in 1861. While many clergymen opted for regular enlistment, and seemingly experienced no moral qualms in doing so, several leading denominational voices questioned whether soldiery was an appropriate duty for men of the cloth. In early June 1861, an influential presiding elder in the Tennessee Conference, G. W. D. Harris, wrote to the *NCA* to argue against preachers entering the military except as chaplains.

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[1] A wealth of historiography exists on the Confederate chaplaincy and clergy involvement in war. A survey of the major works includes Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 54-76; Brinsfield et al, *Faith in the Fight*, 51-92; Romero, *Religion in the Rebel Ranks*, 8-43; Smith, *Smite Them Hip and Thigh!*, 43-73; Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 92-101; Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 107-19; and Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On*, 145-59. On chaplaincy numbers from the Mexican War through the Civil War, see Brinsfield et al, *Faith in the Fight*, 55, ix.

[2] Brinsfield et al, *Faith in the Fight*, 89 n. 43. Purifoy, *Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Slavery*, 220, provides a valuable year-by-year display of the increasing shift to the chaplaincy among MECS preachers, although his raw data is dated and not as precise as Brinsfield et al, who provide much more detailed and immensely useful roster counts of chaplains for both armies (see *Faith in the Fight*, 129-256).

Harris exhibited concerns primarily for the preachers' chief obligation of fulfilling their duty to the church. He gave two reasons against enlistment, "that their services are not really needed," and because "no one, not even the Bishop who gave them their appointments, in the interim of the Conference, has the right to release them from their present engagements, unless he were to send them as chaplains." An *RCA* article published the next week, entitled "Preachers and War," recognized that a significant controversy over the issue existed, but the heavily pro-Confederate paper defended enlistment from naysayers such as Harris. Presumably written by editor James Duncan, the article contended that southern preachers certainly were not "in favor of war, or disposed to shed the blood of their fellow-men," but that it was their duty to defend "those who suffer for right and virtue." The author concluded, "if ever there was a time when the servants of Christ may fight, it is this hour of peril to the Church and the State."[3]

Similarly, a September article in the *NCA* recognized that many Christians in the army, clergymen or otherwise, struggled with their consciences over killing. Editor McTyeire sought to assuage those concerns by framing the biblical injunction of "Thou shalt not kill" in terms of private violence versus obedience to government in a defensive war. In such a context, concluded McTyeire, "the volunteer who goes forth with the Confederate army may have a good conscience." The MECS's bishops generally agreed, insomuch as they willingly allowed many preachers to enlist. They were more concerned with the healthy operation of the denomination than the sixth commandment. A June 1861 article by Bishop Andrew qualified Confederate service as a noble desire, but

[3] *NCA*, 6 June 1861; *RCA*, 13 June 1861.

cautioned preachers to ensure that they were not abandoning their congregations, and to seek approval from their presiding elders before enrolling. Above all, warned Andrew, "never let the Christian minister be merged in the soldier." In other words, good Methodists were not to sacrifice their faith or influence for any temporal cause, especially in the vices and temptations of military life. The zealously pro-Confederate bishop John Early quickly oversaw a series of resolutions during the 1861 Tennessee Conference session, sympathizing with the Confederacy and declaring "the defense of the South" to be "a just and holy cause." The conference affirmed that volunteering conference members "have not thereby invalidated their relation to the Conference, and have our approval"; still, "others should not do so without first consulting the proper authorities of the Church, and ascertaining that the work to which they have been appointed can be supplied."[4]

The range of Methodist reactions to clergy involvement in the war may be seen in the disparate views of four MECS ministers, each one somewhat extreme or an outlier in their stance, but together representing a broad spectrum of thought on the issue. Thomas Summers took an ardently pro-involvement position, stating that "patriotism is to be wedded to piety, and who but God's ministers are to solemnize the service? … Every minister will have to be, as it were, a chaplain in the army, mixing, perhaps, not a little gunpowder with the Gospel." So did a minister only identified as "Ed." Shortly after the onset of hostilities, future MECS bishop Alpheus Waters Wilson wrote to his wife about a conversation with his friend about the war. In Wilson's words, "Ed says this is no time

[4] *NCA*, 5 September 1861; *RCA*, 27 June 1861; *NCA*, 14 November 1861.

for praying. We ought to be fighting. I am, you know, constitutionally averse to lead and never did like the smell of sulpher. So I am not 'in' on Ed's proposition."[5]

At the other end of the spectrum, George Naff, president of Tennessee's Soule Female College and a supporter of the Confederacy, agreed with Wilson. He not only opposed preachers abandoning their congregations, even as chaplains, but the office of chaplain itself. Drawing on either libertarian or Baptist principles--perhaps both--Naff wrote in the *NCA* that "no office of religion [should] be constituted by the civil authorities," for such merging "always results in a depreciation of the Christian ministry." Chaplaincies, he contended, should be filled on a volunteer basis by enlisted men of a regiment, and paid by the contributions of fellow soldiers if paid at all. He boldly concluded, "Let the divorce, then, be proclaimed anew: 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.'"[6]

Mississippi itinerant George Washington Bachman represented a middle ground. Bachman opposed secession, but following Fort Sumter, "my sympathies were all in favor of the South." Even so, Bachman repeatedly refused pleas to join the army, because he "did not think it doing right to give up the work of the ministry for that of a soldier." Indeed, Bachman opposed any preacher enlisting as a soldier, "believing as I do that it is inconsistent with our high and holy calling, and that God does not approve of such conduct of his Ministers." Nevertheless, Bachman repeatedly prayed for blessing on those who "fight the battles of our country." Again, the tension surfaced not in any sense

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[5] For Summers's quote, see *SCA*, 22 May 1862; Waters to wife, 18 June 1861, Alpheus Waters Wilson Papers, Box 1 Folder 4, Emory;

[6] On Naff, see *NCA*, 3 October 1861 (quote), and *RCA*, 31 January 1861 (occupation).

of disloyalty to the Confederacy, but in the proper context and limits that men of God should give their service to the country.[7]

According to Methodist historian John Jones, the Mississippi Conference at large reflected Bachman's middle position. As he notes, "We never opposed our ministers from going with the army as chaplains in order to minister to the soldiers, in every way necessary, the consolation of the gospel. Many of them were members of our Church, and others were the sons of Methodist parents, and it was a duty to send pastors with them, to the tented field and the battle ground, to watch over their spiritual interest both in health, sickness, and death." The Mississippi Conference, like the denomination broadly, generally consented fully to its members serving the war effort in any regard, although in at least one instance, it regretted one of its preachers going to battle. James Griffing, a local minister, spent the early days of war looking for work in teaching. Not finding a position, Griffing ultimately enlisted and died at Sharpsburg. When the conference heard of his death, "we mourned over his death no little. We deplored the circumstances that led him to the army. It was not his proper place or providential calling, so we honestly feared." A "calling" mattered to Methodists, as it always had. While the MECS understood and encouraged duty to nation, it deemed that duty as auxiliary to, not equal to, Methodist preachers' divine mission of ministry. Such was the case as well with Holland McTyeire following his exodus from Nashville. After his death, McTyeire's biographer acknowledged that "it may be wondered why McTyeire did not fight in the Confederate army. He considered it his duty to preach the gospel even during the war and

[7] G.W. Bachman, "Sketches and Incidents, Vol. 1," 11-12, Millsaps, and Timothy B. Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War: The Home Front* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 183-84.

he had six small children to care for." Nevertheless, his loyalty and passion for the Confederacy never wavered, and "the man who called him a coward," warned his biographer, "would have taken a severe licking."[8]

In some cases, the line between calling and preference in terms of ministry and soldiery became blurry. While MECS leadership more universally encouraged chaplaincy as opposed to enlistment, preachers unwilling to serve in either capacity could, as McTyeire's biographer implies defensively, be tinged with suspicions of cowardice. Indeed, an 1864 letter published in the *RCA*, written under the pseudonym "Delta," charged just that: "*They are cowards!*" The letter raged against home-front preachers shirking the vacancies of army chaplaincy. "Hear it, ye ease-loving sluggards of the Virginia Conference. Ye are cowards!" "Delta" mocked preachers who "took refuge under the cloak of some Presiding Elder, who '*must have him for a particular place*.'" Relying on the time-honored traditions of southern honor and Methodist pride, the letter finally appealed, "we call upon you, in the name of God, the Church and the country, at once to show yourselves worthy of the name you bear, that of a *Southern Methodist*."[9]

Yet the southern Methodists who did assume Confederate chaplaincies often did not feel particularly welcomed and embraced by the nation they served. The Confederacy delayed in formally creating the chaplaincy position, and established it without rank, unlike in the presumably godless Union army. Chaplain wages were set at eighty-five dollars a month, less than that of a second lieutenant, then nearly immediately reduced to a mere fifty dollars a month. Over the course of the first year and a half of war, chaplain

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[8] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XII, 3-4, and Chapter XI, 4-5, Millsaps; Moorman, "Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire," 40, Vanderbilt.

[9] *RCA*, 14 April 1864.

pay and privilege slowly increased, culminating in a pay of eighty dollars a month, rights to rations, and forage provisions for horses if they provided the horse. Still, chaplains received considerably lower compensation than their Union counterparts, and they recognized clearly the lack of enthusiasm and resources their service inspired in the government.[10]

Some Methodist leaders did not care for the government's cold shoulder. The *RCA* in late 1861, prior to the salary increase to eighty dollars, noted that the government devaluation of chaplains was an "evil of which men justly complain." George Naff bitterly denounced the CSA government's pay and treatment of chaplains, noting that "politicians" rather than "the people or the volunteers" devalued undermined the importance of chaplaincies. "Though I had hoped and supposed that the Confederate Congress was composed entirely of *statesmen*," Naff proclaimed, "their action on this subject makes me believe there is a large sprinkle of *politicians* to be found among them." The *NCA* later approvingly published a letter from a resigned chaplain near December of 1861, which further disparaged the Confederate Congress. As the writer pointed out, the blow against chaplains would not have been taken personally if it were "part of a general system of retrenchment" among all parts of the military. As it stood, however, chaplains were singled out by the government for salary decreases, improper motives, and a general lack of necessity in the army. Thus, according to the former chaplain, "the action of our Congress in this matter is an *undeserved slur* upon the Christian ministry in the Confederate States"; a slur made even more egregious by the lip

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[10] Brinsfield et al, *Faith in the Fight*, 54-59. Although treated better by comparison, Union chaplains also experienced their own struggles with the government and military; see ibid., 9-47.

service to Christian nationalism found in the Confederate constitution and the plentiful fast days pronounced by the government.[11]

Chaplains found other antagonists beyond the government. Military clergymen sometimes faced friction from the soldiers and officers for whom they ministered. A chaplain in 1863 complained about the conditions they faced, and the prevalence of chaplain resignation. Chief among this chaplain's grievances was the lack of formal rank. Lacking any enforceable authority, he grumbled, chaplains had to rely on commanding officers' support for efficient ministry. Another chaplain, recently resigned, agreed. He wrote to the *SCA* that "chaplains are greatly hindered by Officers who care nothing for Ministers or the cause in which they are engaged." These issues, of course, occurred across national and battle lines; perhaps the clearest denunciation of the chaplaincy, if perhaps tongue-in-cheek, occurred in the vote of a Union brigade's vote on a chaplain. As the eventual chaplain recorded, "Over 400 voted for a Catholic priest, 154 for any kind of a Protestant minister, 11 for a Mormon, and 335 said they could find their way to hell without the assistance of clergy." Recognizing that southern chaplains "routinely faced opposition from both officers and soldiers," historian Beth Schweiger suggests that their experiences fit contextually into a broader long-standing antebellum narrative of "formidable opposition to religion that flourished in all ranks of Southern society." Under such opposition and meager resources, most chaplains eventually moved on. According to Bertram Wyatt-Brown, only fifty Confederate chaplains "served through the duration" of the war.[12]

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[11] *RCA* 21 November 1861; *NCA*, 3 October 1861, 28 November 1861.

[12] *SCA*, 19 February 1863, 2 April 1863; Brinsfield et al, *Faith in the Fight*, 14; Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 98-108 (quotes on 98-99); Bertram Wyatt-Brown,

Sharp criticism nonetheless greeted chaplains who resigned their posts, and sometimes preachers who elected to remain on the home front as well. A "Mississippi Soldier" wrote the *SCA* in mid-1863 to chastise those who resisted or resigned the chaplaincy because of poor pay and conditions. Appealing to a higher calling, the writer asked, "At the judgment day will preachers be held guiltless for their neglect of the soldier?" A particularly pointed editorial published in the Methodist *Ouachita Conference Journal* and reprinted in the *NCA* decried chaplain resignation as an act of faithlessness in God's providence and will. Likening any such chaplain to a modern-day Demas, the writer remonstrated, "If your post is not God-given, don't go to it; if it is, stay there or die . . . rather than forsake the battlefield where souls are to be rescued from Satan's grasp." A lieutenant of the 5th Georgia likewise complained to the *SCA* that "our Regiment now numbers about 650, and these men have not heard a sermon preached in *five months*. The officer, representative of many similar writers to MECS newspapers during the war, blamed the "ministry or the Christians at home" for this negligence, and issued a strident call for a chaplain. And "A Layman" wrote the *RCA* in August 1863 criticizing the MECS ministry, pointing out an officer's call for a chaplain for a regiment that had gone without for over a year. "Layman" coupled this call with a presiding elder's complaint that he had more preachers than appointments for his circuit. Preachers often appealed to self-denial and sacrifice to their congregants, "Layman" charged, but only

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"Church, Honor, and Secession," in Miller, Stout, and Wilson, *Religion and the American Civil War*, 104.

sought “comfortable” work for themselves. “Layman” apparently felt this message deserved a broad hearing; the exact same letter appeared in the *SCA* a month later.[13]

Still, if southern Methodist chaplains frequently faced antagonism, many also found eager audiences, passionate converts, and thankful Christians, particularly as the war progressed and strained out the unfit or immoral chaplains. Robert Miller, surveying several works on Union and Confederate chaplains, concludes that “a chaplain’s impact could be truly profound,” and agrees with Warren Armstrong that “the vast majority of chaplains served commendably.” Shirkers and comfort-seekers certainly existed, but many southern Methodist clergymen, whether serving as chaplains or preaching on the home front, took their wartime duties quite seriously, both physically and theologically.[14]

Georgian Morgan Callaway informed his wife in April 1862 that he had been appointed as a chaplain. Although he worried that his uniform “will cost me very high” and that “I will also have to purchase a horse,” Callaway did not express the common disdain for his salary. Indicating the lifestyle he lived away from war, Callaway noted that “my salary will be $80 per month and rations, and if it was not for the terrible higher price of everything I would do as well as I was doing at home.” Callaway later became an artillery captain, but remained the acting chaplain for his battery, unwilling to quit his ministry duties. Physically, he stayed busy; during the celebrated army revivals of 1863, Callaway described his regimen to his wife:

> Well darling, I reserve the best for the last as we do at our dinners. God is still blessing us with generous meetings. We have built us another church at our new camp—i.e. we have split some logs for seats—have services night and day—it’s a

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[13] *SCA*, 21 May 1863; *NCA*, 24 October 1861 [in the Bible, Demas is recorded as abandoning the apostle Paul in his ministry; the reference to Demas is found in II Timothy 4:10]; *SCA*, 28 May 1863; *RCA*, 6 August 1863; *SCA*, 15 October 1863.

[14] Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God*, 105.

> camp meeting in a double sense. I pray God that the work may deepen and progress. I think more of our preachers at home should come to the Army. There are thousands clamoring for the bread of life. I have never seen a time when men rec'd the word with such gladness. Any body preaching is acceptable—even mine.

Callaway also counseled many soldiers individually, and these dealings revealed his deep Wesleyan convictions of intense spiritual conversion and of denominational autonomy. He admitted that "I have not urged the profession of religion upon those who have been concerned, unless I thought I discerned unmistakable evidence of conversion. Much harm I think is occasionally done by encouraging the young and enthusiastic to make premature profession of religion." Additionally, when approached by "backslidden members" of non-Methodist denominations, Callaway, not wanting to use religious poaching to his clerical advantage, referred them to fellow pastors of their own tradition.[15]

Other chaplains revealed an intense devotion to their ministry. Tennessean John McFerrin, as diehard a Confederate minister as the MECS had, found himself in the midst of bloody chaos following the battle at Chickamauga. McFerrin wrote in his diary that "the slaughter was tremendous on both sides. … I remained on the battlefield eleven days, nursing the sick, ministering to the wounded, and praying for the dying." He offered his services willingly offered to both ally and enemy. As he recorded, "Among the wounded were many Federal soldiers. To these I ministered, prayed with them, and wrote letters by flag of truce to their friends in the North. They seemed to appreciate every act of kindness." To be fair, such courtesies extended from both sides in the war.

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[15] Callaway to wife, 24 April 1862, Morgan Callaway Papers, Box 1 Folder 1, Emory; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 97; Callaway to wife, 28 August 1863 and 31 August 1863, Morgan Callaway Papers, Box 1 Folder 2, Emory.

When Bishop Andrew's son was injured at Antietam in September 1862, the bishop noted that "the Federals treated him very well," and praised a family that housed and cared for his son. In sincere, if backhanded, praise, Andrew mused that while "the Yankees are bad enough … and do a great many wicked and cruel things," still "all are not bad, nor are they universally cruel. Let us give them credit for whatever good is in them."[16]

The Memphis Conference recorded a particularly devoted example in the 1865 obituary of clergyman William B. Owen. He became chaplain of the 17th Mississippi at the outset of war, ministering in various capacities up through the Battle of Gettysburg, where many of his unit's soldiers were injured and removed north as prisoners of war. According to the conference, Owen voluntarily remained with his regiment, preaching to and encouraging the soldiers in their prison, and was received so well by the Union soldiers that "they wished to detain him[,] that in like manner he might minister to them." Owen returned home briefly to visit his father, and died while traveling back to the army.[17]

Historian Kent Dollar's study of Confederate Methodist soldier Alfred Fielder reveals both the deficiencies and labors of Civil War chaplaincies. Fielder's experience

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[16] Quoted in Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 71-72; *SCA*, 5 February 1863. Christopher Owen suggests that Wesleyan-Arminian theology was distinctly suited to mitigate "southern Methodists' hatred of their enemies"; see *Sacred Flame of Love*, 103-04.

[17] *Minutes of the Memphis Conference, 1862-1867*, 88-89. The Memphis Conference's account of Owen's voluntary ministry service must be taken somewhat on faith, as the noncombatant status of chaplains, and the treatment of them as such, varied widely during the war. For more context on the combat status of chaplains, see William E. Dickens, Jr., "Answering the Call: The Story of the U. S. Military Chaplaincy from the Revolution through the Civil War" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998), 68-75.

early on agreed with Steven Woodworth's assessment of the impiety and temptations of army camps in 1861. Fielder observed that "camp life in … the war was not conducive to religion." But Fielder's wartime faith also demonstrated that spiritual nourishment could be found if pious soldiers chose to seek it. Fielder sometimes attended up to three different worship services on Sundays, and on at least one occasion persuaded another regiment's hard-working chaplain to conduct services for Fielder's own clergy-less unit. Although political sermons could be found frequently and easily on the home front, John Brinsfield concludes that most military chaplains "did not preach on the righteousness of secession or offer 'just cause' arguments for the war in sermons. They realized that discussing politics in the field produced few converts." In the words of Confederate chaplain and future MECS bishop John Cowper Granbery, borrowed from the biblical apostle Paul, army ministers determined "not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." It helped, however, as Granbery acknowledged, that it "was always assumed that the cause for which [Confederate soldiers] contended was righteous."[18]

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[18] Kent T. Dollar, "'My trust is still firmly fixed in God': Alfred T. Fielder, His Christian Faith, and the Ordeal of War," in Kent T. Dollar, Larry H. Whiteaker, and W. Calvin Dickinson, eds., *Sister States, Enemy States: The Civil War in Kentucky and Tennessee* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 269-72; Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On*, 175-98 [For more context on Fielder and comparison to other soldiers of faith, see Dollar, *Soldiers of the Cross*]; Brinsfield et al, *Faith in the Fight*, 79. For the counterpoint on political sermons, especially concerning the home front, see David B. Chesebrough, *God Ordained This War: Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 221-25.

In the second half of the war, the MECS began to embrace "army missions" as a way to maximize the reach and efficiency of ministry across entire armies. Delegated missionaries were not bound to any particular unit within an army, but traveled throughout a given department, preaching and ministering in as many capacities as possible, and in whatever manner they found most effective. Baptists and Presbyterians had already implemented a missionary system by the time the MECS initiated its own, and the three were all similar. Historian Gardiner Shattuck suggests that Methodists were late to appoint missionaries in large part because the MECS had "proved to be the most active denomination in sending ministers into the Confederate army as chaplains." Indeed, the connectional hierarchy and resilient organizational structure of the MECS lent itself much more naturally to the chaplaincy than to more independent and self-directed missionaries. Baptists, on the other hand, were more particularly suited to the ecclesiastical nature of army missions than the chaplaincy. Bruce Gourley notes that Baptist inclinations toward church-state separation spurred "a refusal to accept government funding of chaplain salaries," which in tandem with the general disruption and financial crisis of war led to a comparative dearth of Baptist chaplains. Relatively autonomous missionaries paid voluntarily by the denomination, however, fit the traditional Baptist evangelical model rather nicely. Still, southern Methodist leaders did not altogether slack in their missionary efforts; after organizing a missions plan at the start of May 1863, the Fall 1863 conference sessions reported a total of nineteen army missionaries and seventy-two active chaplains. Following these sessions, the MECS expanded to thirty-five missionaries in various military jurisdictions by early 1864.[19]

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[19] Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 84-86; Shattuck, *A Shield*

MECS army missionaries received respectable compensation by relative standards; they were paid $1500 or $3000, depending on whether they were single or married, and received additional stipends for each child. In return, as described in one missionary's appointment commission, he was "expected to devote your whole time and energies to the welfare of the corps." If performed to expectation, these positions were not cushy jobs, but they were certainly desirable positions. Indeed, some of the MECS's most well-known and influential preachers filled the ranks of army missionaries, such as John McFerrin, B. T. Kavanaugh (the brother of Bishop Hubbard Kavanaugh), A. L. P. Green, J. E. Evans, and John Cowper Granbery. John Brinsfield notes that missionaries sometimes "included chaplains who had been wounded but who volunteered to return" in a mission capacity (such as Granbery), given the greater leeway in physical exertion/discipline compared to a chaplaincy. W. Harrington, a missionary to the Army of Mississippi, wrote glowingly of his efforts and results to Bishop Robert Paine. "I preach to large and attentive audiences," he declared, "to larger audiences than ever before. I really felt when surrounded by large crowds of stalwart men, that the ministry was almost wasting labor, by preaching … in the Churches, when there was such a wide and effectual door open to them in the wilds of the forest."[20]

The conferences of the MECS did their best to support their missionaries adequately. In the Fall 1863 sessions, the Georgia Conference directed the Missionary Society to use all disposable funds to provide army missionaries, "one for each Brigade

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and Hiding Place, 47-48; 63-65; Gourley, *Diverging Loyalties*, 11-12, 65-71; *SCA*, 21 January 1864.

[20] Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 85; Finney, *Enoch Mather Marvin*, 372; *RCA*, 30 July 1863; Brinsfield et al, *Faith in the Fight*, 86; *SCA*, 6 August 1863.

composed wholly or principally of Georgia troops." Meanwhile, the Alabama Conference resolved to sustain as much as possible "our Foreign, Indian and Domestic white Missions, [but] it feels specially called upon to labor for … our Missions to the people of color, and … to the Army."

There was, however, legitimate discussion and debate about whether chaplaincies or missionaries served as the best stewardship of southern Methodist resources. The Virginia Conference in 1863 still "expressed [its] preference for ministers to hold a chaplaincy rather than to serve as missionaries." Similarly, the Montgomery Conference session of 1864 conducted a good-natured but serious debate between representative chaplains and army missionaries as to which position was the most difficult and useful. According to the *SCA*, most witnesses sided with the chaplaincy; chaplains were subject to military discipline, could not come and go as they pleased, and had more physical demands placed on them. The greatest reason, however, was more pragmatic: "this relation enables the minister to draw half or more than half of his support from the Government, thus relieving the Church treasury." The rationale may well have irked Baptists, but Methodist leaders held no qualms about utilizing the government to expand the MECS's influence and labors.[21]

At least a few prominent southern Methodists did not serve officially as either chaplain or missionary, but instead assumed a freelance ministry position with the Confederate army during the war. Charles K. Marshall of the Mississippi Conference followed along with the army, and simply "made himself useful as chaplain, army agent, or nurse in the hospitals," as circumstances demanded. After the war, his conference

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[21] *SCA*, 17 December 1863; Romero, *Religion in the Rebel Ranks*, 17; *SCA*, 19 January 1865.

proudly commended him "for his constant, laborious, and efficient services … and for the honor he has reflected on the Methodist Episcopal Church, South."[22]

Enoch Mather Marvin of Missouri experienced a similar wartime career, but the implications of his ministry during the war likely transformed his life. The Missouri Conference in 1861 elected Marvin as a delegate to the 1862 General Conference. His determination to attend the General Conference, as well as an equally firm determination to avoid a loyalty test oath, led him to wend his way through Union military lines and go south. He filled various vacant pulpits and appointments for about a year before meeting up with former Missouri governor Sterling Price's army. Price knew Marvin and had heard him preach several times while governor. He became an unofficial benefactor, providing him rations, bedding, and a mule for use while Marvin worked among the soldiers. Bishop Paine later appointed Marvin as missionary to General Richard Taylor's corps, but Marvin elected to remain independent, "continuing with the army wholly for the reason that he found a greater field of usefulness there than in any other field within his reach." Marvin's biographer attributes his independent ministry to his health, noting that he experienced several severe bouts of illness during his time in camp. Marvin remained with Price's army until settling with a Methodist family near Shreveport at the end of 1863. He continued to work among the soldiers as able after that, and filled various local pulpits at Methodist and Presbyterian churches through the close of war. Over three years following his sojourn from Missouri, his family finally joined him in Louisiana in March 1865, after securing travel permission from President Lincoln. Although an ardent supporter of the Confederate cause, Marvin, like George Washington

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[22] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XV, 20, Millsaps.

Bachman, opposed clergymen fighting in the army, and expressed regret when a close preacher friend chose to enlist. At the same time, Marvin's service to church and nation during the war set him on an unwitting path to the southern Methodist episcopacy. Already a prominent Methodist who had served as a delegate to previous General Conferences, Marvin gained significant acclaim for his notable exile. Ultimately, the following General Conference of 1866 elected him as a bishop. Ironically, and perhaps making his election all the more impressive, Marvin was not a delegate to the session, having been absent from his home conference throughout the war.[23]

Even the MECS bishops devoted considerable time and energy to ministering to and supporting the Confederate army, although generally in a purely unofficial and clerical capacity. Bishop James Andrew despised the war and consistently cautioned against reveling in the thrill of violence. At one point, shortly before his son's injury at Antietam, and contemplating Confederate successes near Richmond, Andrew opined that "my soul is sick of the contemplation of the glories of war." Yet he also raised and sent money to the army, especially for ministry use, and provided much encouragement to soldiers through letters and the newspapers. Bishop George Pierce participated in Confederate recruitment rallies and also worked hard to raise funds for MECS army ministry. In early 1862, Pierce apologized to his son that he could not visit until at least July, because "I am raising money to send missionaries to the army. … I am trying to do all I can for Church and Country." Still, his biographer notes that Pierce "preached almost every Sunday," even in the midst of his numerous roles.[24]

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[23] Finney, *Enoch Mather Marvin*, 358-75, 386-87, 403-10, 419-20.

[24] *RCA*, 14 August 1862; Brinsfield et al, *Faith in the Fight*, 72; Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 30; Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 454, 463.

Bishop Robert Paine spent a great deal of time visiting and ministering to soldiers in camp and hospitals in and near his home in Aberdeen, Mississippi. Newspaper references indicate that Bishop John Early did the same in Virginia when not traveling or occupied with other episcopal duties. Bishop Joshua Soule was the only bishop sidelined for most of the war, as his poor health kept him nearly entirely confined to Nashville. Thus, whether serving as chaplains, missionaries, soldiers, home front preachers, freelancers, or any combination of the above, prominent southern Methodist preachers paralleled the conclusion that Wayne Wei-Siang Hsieh found for Confederate Virginia Baptists during the Civil War. Hsieh wrote that "Baptist clergymen never stopped being Baptist clergymen." Neither did Methodist clergymen.[25]

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Interdenominational cooperation and interaction proved a noteworthy dynamic facing clergy and religious leaders of all stripes. Methodist preachers like Morgan Callaway often took care not engage in evangelistic "poaching," and other denominations often reciprocated. Besides his referrals to Baptist pastors, Callaway also recalled in a letter to his wife welcoming a Catholic chaplain who came to his company to minister to "about 15 or 20 Catholics" therein. Callaway and his Catholic colleague shared a cordial visit during the priest's stay. While settled in Little Rock for a duration of the war, Enoch

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[25] Paine's work is noted often throughout *The Journal of Reverend Robert Alexander Neblett, Compiled and Transcribed by J. B. Cain Archives of MS Methodism Staff*, Millsaps; *RCA*, 13 June 1861, 21 August 1862; *SCA*, 6 August 1863, 17 March 1864; Wayne Wei-Siang Hsieh, "Christian Love and Martial Violence: Baptists and War—Danger and Opportunity," in Wallenstein and Wyatt-Brown, *Virginia's Civil War*, 97.

Marvin not only stayed as guest with a Presbyterian preacher's family, but also preached "for several months in the Presbyterian Church" at his host's request. Notwithstanding the likely welcome relief afforded to the regular pastor, his invitation was a strong display of ecumenism. Additionally, the Holston Conference session of 1861 met in an Episcopal Church. A historian of Holston Methodism noted that "the reader may be surprised" at that occurrence, as Episcopalians and Methodists shared a longstanding rivalry, but he attributed the unusual event to "the uniting influence of the war pressure."[26] The *SCA* summed up the state of interdenominational cooperation and its rationale in late 1864:

> There has been, for a few years past, a sort of truce between the religious denominations of the Confederacy. … The modes of baptism, the rights of presbytery and Episcopacy, the decrees, and the perseverance of the saints, and such matters, may be waived for the present, in favor of the weightier matters of the law—judgment and mercy and the cardinal doctrines of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. … How out of place would a Methodist or Presbyterian or Baptist Chaplain be thought, who within sound of Yankee guns and within sight of Yankee lines, should harangue a brigade on immersion or effusion, on election and predestination?[27]

In general, then, Confederate Christians, along with their Union counterparts, shared an understanding that military and political strife demanded at least a veneer of religious unity.[28]

But that veneer periodically proved to be thin. The same *SCA* article that praised the interdenominational wartime "truce" went on to complain about the Protestant

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[26] John Wesley Brinsfield, Jr., *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: The Confederacy* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2006), 72-73; Callaway to wife, 24 March 1864, Morgan Callaway Papers, Box 1 Folder 2, Emory; Finney, *Enoch Mather Marvin*, 400-01; Price, *Holston Methodism*, 264-65.

[27] *SCA*, 29 September 1864.

[28] On Union cooperation, see Armstrong, *For Courageous Fighting and Confident Dying*, 52-58.

Episcopal Church, which was "as busy as ever, proselytizing." The author compared them, not kindly, to Catholics. Historian Sidney Romero acknowledges that "sectarianism undoubtedly influenced the feeling of some Confederate soldiers regarding their chaplains." Romero describes the Episcopalian Colonel William Pender's conflict with his unit's Methodist chaplain; when the chaplain took a furlough to recover from a cold, the "colonel expressed the hope that he would soon resign and if the chaplain did so, he would recommend an Episcopalian … for he believed there were already too many Methodist chaplains." And prominent MECS publisher and preacher Thomas Summers revealed a divided attitude between his personal and corporate opinions of an Episcopal bishop. Noting that the bishop had recently visited Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Summers wrote that "I did not hear him preach, as Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." He went on, "I should be glad, indeed, to reciprocate ecclesiastical courtesies with brethren of that communion, but I would not seem to sanction their exclusiveness." Summers did praise the reputation he had heard of the bishop, but also took the opportunity to belittle the Episcopal practice of "confirmation."[29]

One of the most frequent and public forms of interdenominational cooperation was ecumenical societies or associations. A variety of such leagues in both the Union and the Confederacy worked effectively to provide ministry resources and/or encouragement and care to their respective armies, and periodically served both armies. Beth Schweiger argues that these associations formed the crux of army ministry, contending that "in fact, printed tracts and Bibles, not army chaplains, were the great evangelists of the war." Ecumenical societies generally sought to steer clear of doctrinal and stylistic disputes.

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[29] *SCA*, 29 September 1864; Romero, *Religion in the Rebel Ranks*, 32; *SCA*, 7 August 1862.

Sidney Romero notes that the leadership of the Confederacy's Evangelical Tract Society (ETS), operating out of Petersburg, Virginia, contained equal representation of all major Protestant denominations, and that "no tract was published unless it met with the approval of every member of the committee." The ETS eventually published Bibles and hymnals as well, and translated their productions into multiple languages. Well after the war concluded, the Memphis and Shelby County Bible Society gave high praise to the northern-headquartered American Bible Society (ABS). It recorded that "we have received as donations from the American Bible Society $45,969 worth of books, of which $20,000 were received during the war and went, most of them, right into the pockets of our honored Confederate soldiers."[30]

One of the most interpersonal forms of ecumenical ministry during the war was the creation of a non-denominational "army church." Enoch Marvin spearheaded this effort, coordinating a leadership team that drew up five articles of faith, derived from the foundational tenets of traditional Christian creeds. Clergymen presented converts to the army church with certificates of membership intended to grant them membership into the denomination of their choice after the war, and churches generally accepted these certificates. After the war, Horace Jewell, an MECS presiding elder who helped Marvin organize the army church, registered his belief that "a much larger per cent. of the

[30] Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 101-03; Romero, *Religion in the Rebel Ranks*, 91; *Anniversary Exercises of the Memphis and Shelby County Bible Society* (Memphis: J.C. Rogers' Publishing House, 1878), R.V. Taylor Collection, L8 Box 3, Memphis Conference Archives of the United Methodist Church, Lambuth.

converts in these army churches have remained faithful than is usual in our ordinary revival meetings."[31]

Still, although denominations and associations pursued a non-sectarian nature, they did not always succeed, at least not to some southern Methodists' standards. In these instances, Methodists were perfectly willing to express their grievances, as they had been prior to the war. Southern Methodist leaders had a history of muting doctrinal differences in the name of ecumenical benevolence, but Wesleyan views and concerns never strayed far from their minds. Christopher Owen notes that the Georgia Conference of the MECS during the growth of sectionalism had "continued to cooperate with national benevolence societies, with the American Tract Society (ATS) until the 1850s, and with the American Bible Society until the outbreak of the Civil War. It broke with the former group as much because the ATS was 'anti-Methodistical' as from 'Southern Patriotism.'" And as revealed by the Bible society in Memphis, other Methodist groups maintained relations with the ABS even through the war. But both theological and patriotic concerns could impact relations. In early 1863, the *RCA* copied a secular paper's notes that "the American Bible Society has recently made a grant of 7,000 Bibles and Testaments for Circulation in the Rebel States." Contrary to the later Memphis and Shelby County Bible Society, editor James Duncan took great umbrage to this laudatory tone. "A more unblushing piece of Yankee impudence is hard to find than this boast of a '*grant* of 7,000 Bibles and Testaments," Duncan thundered. "The American Bible Society *owes* Virginia the Bibles. The money of the South paid for their publication long ago. … If the books

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[31] Finney, *Enoch Mather Marvin*, 376-80. For broader context regarding ecumenical cooperation and the army churches, see Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 90-118, and May, "The War Years," in Bucke, *History of American Methodism*, 242-44.

ever come to hand, we shall receive them for their value, because they belong to us of right, and be under no obligations to the gracious American Bible Society."[32]

Even in ardently Confederate associations, doctrinal preferences created tensions. Thomas Summers described the Alabama Conference's horror in 1862 at "examining one of the tracts" of the Confederate ETS. "The Committee on Publication must have a high appreciation of Methodist liberality," Summers mused. Quoting various passages expressing strong Calvinist precepts on the security of salvation and the impossibility of "falling away," Summers continued, "We are tempted to ask if the Committee really think that Methodists are fools, that they should call upon us to pay for the circulation of such miserable twaddle as this." He admitted that the MECS desired "to unite in every undertaking … for the benefit of our brave soldiers in the army, but our fealty to truth will not allow us to say or do anything which will countenance error so deadly as that." Later, in 1863, influential layman Alfred Fielder refused to join "an interdenominational Christian association" being established in his unit, citing that he was only willing to submit to the religious guidelines and authority of the MECS. Nevertheless, his qualms must have been allayed in time; he did ultimately join up a couple months later. And throughout his service, he had no issue attending the services of other denominations, including the Episcopalians.[33]

A series of religious revivals sparked through the Confederate armies during the war, especially the Army of Northern Virginia. Scholars vary in their assessments of precisely how impactful and widespread these revivals were. Steven Woodworth asserts

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[32] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 78; *RCA*, 26 March 1863.

[33] *SCA*, 25 December 1862; Dollar, "Alfred T. Fielder," in Dollar, Whiteaker, and Dickinson, eds., *Sister States, Enemy States*, 278-79.

that the revivals "continued to grow in breadth and intensity" in the later stages of the conflict, while in contrast George Rable cautions that "some of these [revival] claims were no doubt overblown," and that "how powerful this great work of the Holy Spirit had been remained a matter of dispute." Kenneth Noe goes significantly further in qualifying the revivals' impact. In his study of later-enlisting Confederate soldiers, Noe asserts that his subjects' "experiences vary so dramatically from the familiar revival trope that one must call the entire canon into question." However universal the impact, the MECS leaders in this study generally rejoiced in the revivals, from the perspective of both southern civil religion and Wesleyan holiness tradition. As the *SCA* noted representatively in August 1862, Confederate Christians saw the revivals as "evidence that God is with us."[34]

Pragmatically and theologically, however, the revivals could also prove problematic. Historians Kent Dollar and Gardiner Shattuck, for example, point out that the revivals typically began in response to Confederate military defeats. The fall 1862 revivals came in the wake of a string of losses and stalemates in Kentucky and middle Tennessee, and the wave of revivals in late 1863 and into 1864 followed the absolute debacle at Missionary Ridge and Chattanooga. Southerners also had to contend with the contesting religiosity of Union forces. Historian Reid Mitchell claims that the Confederate revival narratives privilege an Eastern Theater interpretation of the Civil War, and asserts that Confederate armies were no more religiously zealous than Union armies. Gardiner Shattuck goes further, explicitly arguing that "Southern churches were

[34] Woodworth, *While God Is Marching On*, 204-26 (quote on 226); Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 343; Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 125-51 (quote on 127); *SCA*, 28 August 1862.

less successful" than northern denominations in supporting and evangelizing their respective militaries.[35]

Still, southern Methodists wanted to believe their efforts successfully produced conversion and holy living. Army Missionary John McFerrin stated in the winter and spring revivals of 1863-64 that he had "never witnessed more displays of God's power in the awakening and conversion of sinners than in these protracted meetings." But revivals needed to be both sustained and sincere to satisfy some Methodists. Back-to-back correspondent articles in the *SCA* in August 1862 worried about the revivals. The first, akin to the concerns raised by chaplain Morgan Callaway, warned against the tendency to focus on shallow success in religious revivals. "We have seen so much evil originate in an over-zeal to get members *into* the Church," wrote the author, "that we never feel particularly gratified when we receive reports of revivals, where it is said so many were converted, and perhaps twice or three times the number were added to the Church." The second article, on the other hand, lamented the relative *lack* of news about revivals, which traditionally occurred during the summer season. In the midst of war, the correspondent worried whether "this season of religious apathy and unfruitfulness [was] to continue," attributing the dearth to "a want of faith in God" and "a lethargic condition" among the MECS.[36]

In the midst of all these concerns, a few MECS members also considered whether temporal issues consumed too much of Methodists' energy and time. An *SCA* article in

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[35] Dollar, "Alfred T. Fielder," in Dollar, Whiteaker, and Dickinson, eds., *Sister States, Enemy States*, 277-78; Shattuck, *A Shield and Hiding Place*, 9, 101-04; Reid Mitchell, "Christian Soldiers?: Perfecting the Confederacy," in Miller, Stout, and Wilson, *Religion and the American Civil War*, 297-309.

[36] Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 72; *SCA*, 14 August 1862.

1862, ostensibly by Myers, alleged that "the war absorbs too much of the thought of Christians," and that "natural as it may be, it is not right." He noted that "the pulpit too—may it not be made the theatre more of patriotic declamation than of Christian teaching?" Myers hoped that the churches could provide "one place, where … [readers] may forget so far as possible, that we are in the midst of a dreadful war. In the sanctuary let faith and love, religion and duty, death and eternity employ our thoughts." For editor James Duncan of the *RCA*, balance was key, or at least merging religion into discussion of the war. He wrote in mid-1862 that "one subscriber … *only* one, out of six thousand, says he discontinues the *Advocate* because it has '*too much about he war in it. It is not religious enough.'*" Duncan sardonically responded, "If he will show us any lack of religion in our articles about the war, he will do more to demonstrate his piety than by refusing to support a paper that belongs to the church."[37]

"God bless the Church and State," Bishop Robert Paine closed a letter to the *SCA* at the end of 1863.[38] The closing likely merited no distinction to readers in the midst of the war, notwithstanding that Paine had been one of the most politically-indisposed bishops leading up to 1861. But his benediction represented an accurate reflection of the dynamics between the MECS and the Confederate war effort. A great many Methodist leaders and influential clergymen devoted their wartime energies to supporting, encouraging, and in some cases conducting, the Confederate cause. But they devoted themselves equally to the Methodist cause, as they understood it. Usually they viewed the Methodist cause and the Confederate cause as compatible, if not analogous. But not

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[37] *SCA*, 7 August 1862; *RCA*, 17 April 1862.
[38] *SCA*, 10 December 1863.

always. In either case, they continued to carry a dual identity, as southerners and as Methodists.

Chapter 6
"The powers that be": Patriotism, Allegiance, and Ecclesiastical Nationalism in the Wartime MECS

> XXIII. *Of the Rulers of the United States of America.*
>
> The president, the congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the constitution of the United States, and by the constitution of their respective States. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.*
>
> *As far as it respects civil affairs, we believe it to be the duty of Christians, and especially all Christian ministers, to be subject to the supreme authority of the country where they may reside, and to use all laudable means to enjoin obedience to the powers that be; and, therefore, it is expected that all our preachers and people, who may be under any foreign government, will behave themselves as peaceable and orderly subjects.[1]

The MECS leadership did not consider obedience to civil government simply a worthwhile notion. They included it as an article of religion, as part of a list that also included such foundational theological precepts as Trinitarian divinity, Jesus Christ's atonement and resurrection, prevenient grace and free will, and the sacramental practices of baptism and the "Lord's Supper." This remained true during the life of the Confederacy. The 1858 edition of the MECS *Discipline* continued to govern southern Methodist's practices and doctrines during the war, as no General Conference met in 1862. The "United States" language was sometimes problematic, and indeed John

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[1] *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: M. E. Church, South, 1858), 31-32. Notably, the asterisked addendum to the Twenty-Third Article had been a part of the MECS *Discipline* since its first edition after the 1846 General Conference, and was virtually identical to the original Twenty-Third Article in the MEC's *Discipline* (in keeping with the MECS's assertions of maintaining the original constitutionalism and theology of American Methodism. The only alteration was changing "under the British" in the clarification to "under any foreign government." See *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Methodist Episcopal Church, 1844), 19.

McFerrin, publisher of the 1858 *Discipline*, proposed that a special wartime general convention change the terminology of the Twenty-Third Article to reflect the autonomy of the Confederacy. No convention met, however, and the issue was moot by the 1866 General Conference. For many Methodist leaders, however, the appended clarification of the article, especially the biblical Pauline language of the "powers that be" in the "country where they may reside," provided more than sufficient leeway to apply the article's injunction to the Confederacy rather than the Union. Thus, MECS leadership and ministry engaged Confederate nationalism and the war effort not only physically and externally, but ideologically and internally as well.[2]

Prominent MECS members and groups frequently issued official expressions of patriotism toward the Confederacy as well. In 1860, Bishop Andrew of the Georgia Conference had forbidden resolutions in favor of secession. Two years later, the same conference, still presided over by Bishop Andrew, passed resolutions that "re-affirm our unqualified loyalty to the Confederate States of America" and which deplored the "modes of warfare" used by the Union. The Georgia Conference further declared that "the duty of the Christian nations of the earth to pronounce them enemies of the human race." Similarly, the Missionary Society of the Alabama Conference declared its faith in 1862 that, "baptized with so much blood, our Confederacy of sovereign and independent states" would attain "a higher destiny, civil and spiritual, than was ever before attained." The Virginia Conference, as it initiated a plan to provide for war orphans' education in late 1864, reflected that "we should be unworthy of our independence, and derelict on the score of *duty to our country*, to say nothing of the obligations of Christian benevolence,

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[2] *SCA*, 7 July 1864.

to permit the children of our deceased and penniless soldiery … to grow up in ignorance of letters."[3]

Individual Methodists praised such statements. Mississippi Conference member John Jones commented in 1864 that his "Conference did not make the war, but it was encouraging to see how wide awake it was" in nationalist sentiment. Late in the war, the conference passed two new resolutions. The first re-affirmed "our former declaration of undiminished confidence in the justice of our cause and the ultimate triumph of our government, under the blessing of God." The second declared "full confidence in the integrity of our government and in the ability of our arms, under the blessing of God, to achieve our independence." Jones, both patriotic and pessimistic regarding the war, later recorded in third person that if he "had been there, he could have voted for all that was contained in these resolutions, except that which expressed confidence in the 'ultimate triumph of our government.' While he acknowledged it to be a Christian duty to 'be subject to the powers that be,' and while he was loyal to the behests of the Confederacy, he never had a comfortable assurance of its ultimate success.[4]

MECS spokesmen sometimes connected their patriotism for the Confederacy with concern for the plight of their faith community. Clergyman William Watkins, preaching at Natchez, Mississippi shortly after the fall of Vicksburg in the summer of 1863, offended attending Union soldiers when he prayed, "God bless our country; and may peace again breathe her raptures over the land! … God bless our enemies, and give them the spirit of justice, humanity, and the fear of God! Pour the light of love upon thy

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[3] *SCA*, 11 December 1862, 25 December 1862; *RCA*, 8 December 1864.

[4] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XIV, 11, Millsaps.

Church … in this the day of her trial." Federal soldiers immediately arrested Watkins and subjected him to "rough treatment," but did not imprison him. Nevertheless, when warned by the commanding officer that he could be charged with death penalty under the "laws of war," Watkins contemptuously responded that "I have never studied the laws of war, but the gospel of peace." The Georgia Conference of 1863, meanwhile, affirming its belief "that our people are contending only for just rights" and "the very existence of our churches," resolved to "renew our pledges of fidelity to our chosen Government, [and] re-assert our full confidence in the present Administration."[5]

In the end, Confederate clergymen connected piety to patriotism so closely in some instances that it could be difficult to tell the two apart. Peter Carmichael asserts that in wartime Virginia, "Confederate nationalism did not subsume religious beliefs," but rather "each body of thought sustained the other until they merged." Kurt Berends similarly contends that "Confederate clergy proclaimed their message of death and redemption in a manner … that professing faith in the country became tantamount to professing faith in God." Berends' claim does not hold entirely true for most of the Methodist clergymen examined in this study, but the line between religious belief and nationalism could be rather fine, especially to the ears of lay Confederates. Soldier-chaplain Morgan Callaway, for example, delivered a staunchly nationalist fast day sermon before his company in April 1864. His oration concluded, "Liberty in its last analysis is the blood of the brave. … As heretofore the test will vindicate your patriotism and valor. … Heroically, if needs be, you will permit the red tide to gush forth upon the field of strife, as a sacrifice for your country's deliverance. It will be glorious to die for

[5] Mellon, *William Hamilton Watkins*, 48, Millsaps; *SCA*, 17 December 1863.

your country." Callaway did not equate sacrifice with salvation, however, reminding his audience that "could I feel assured that your patriotism was perfected with the element of piety, … could I be assured that your courage rested in the right ultimate of a Saviour's blood, … then might I have no apprehension in exposing you to the deadliest fire of the enemy, for from a field of glory you would be removed to a Father's bosom."[6]

Callaway's distinction is important, although it is likely that the difference might have become muddled in the intertwined streams of patriotic duty and substitutionary atonement theory that his theologically-untrained congregants received. Even Berends' own evidence tempers his argument in reference to Methodist clergymen. He cites "Methodist minister George Butler" as saying, "I dare not preach as some talk, that their sufferings in their country's behalf, will atone for their sins … I know of but one atonement, one sacrifice for sin; and that our blessed Saviour made." Berends adds that the Methodist *Soldier's Friend,* an army periodical, "counseled against the belief that proclaimed, 'If a soldier falls fighting bravely for his country, he will go direct to Heaven!'" Berends finds such statements incongruous with clergy writings that "sanctioned the Confederate cause as holy, righteous, and honorable," but in truth most Methodist leaders did not have difficulty separating a zealous support of the Confederacy from an equally zealous concern for piety and spiritual regeneration. As Kenneth Noe argues, "while Confederate victory may have been God's plan, most agreed that serving in His army did not erase the need for personal conversion and salvation." And

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[6] Peter S. Carmichael, *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 185; Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," in Schweiger and Mathews, *Religion in the American South*, 109; Callaway to wife, 8 April 1864, Morgan Callaway Papers, Box 1 Folder 2, Emory.

Christopher Owen avers that corporate Confederate "covenant theology never struck deep roots among Georgia Methodists, who valued individual conversion above all." MECS Wesleyans saw service to country as part of their service to God, but only *part* of that service, and certainly not salvific.[7]

Historians also differ on the universality and conditionality of religious support for the Confederacy. According to Drew Faust in her study of Confederate nationalism, "Christianity was not simply the servant of the Confederate state … the prominence of Christianity in Confederate culture and identity ultimately worked in unforeseen and contradictory ways." Harrison Daniel, conversely, states that southern clergy gave "almost unanimous and uncritical acclaim" to "the Confederate government and its conduct of the war." For MECS leadership, a distinction between morality and mission provided the reconciling difference between these two historiographical assertions. Morally and spiritually, southern Methodist spokesmen sometimes willingly challenged Confederate policy and culture. They also remained protective of Wesleyan personnel, and hoped to ensure that individuals gave support voluntarily rather than by municipal coercion. Yet most largely and unwaveringly supported the fundamental mission of the government and military, and correspondingly sought to bolster public morale and backing in relation to the state.[8]

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[7] Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," in Schweiger and Mathews, *Religion in the American South*, 110-11; Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 129; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 103. Union Christianity also struggled with these issues. See, for example, Rolfs, *No Peace for the Wicked*, 99-102, and Scott, *A Visitation of God*, 227-28.

[8] Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 23; Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 36-38.

One special challenge to Richmond involved the draft. As theological Arminianists, southern Methodists deeply prized free will, and they equally reviled political compulsion. In consequence of this combination, MECS members, like other Confederates, issued periodic denunciations of the government's conscription policies. John Brinsfield explains that "the Conscription Act of 1862 exempted only clergy who were serving churches," which for the MECS "meant some 5,353 lay preachers on the rolls of the annual conferences were subject to the draft." One preacher protested the policy on the basis of religious liberty and ministerial distinctiveness. "C. W. M." wrote in the *SCA*, "That ministers should be patriotic and zealous defenders of the rights and liberties of the country, no one will doubt. But that any legislative body has the right to invade the sacred institutions of the Church and compel Heaven's ambassadors … to quit the pulpit for the field of blood, and exchange the Bible for a musket, is more than we can believe or concede." The Montgomery Annual Conference, meanwhile, in its first session as an MECS conference in 1864, issued a scathing critique of Confederate "enrolling officers." Noting the lack of exemptions for "local and travelling preachers, who are not ordained, and preachers who serve colored missions," the conference passed two resolutions in response. The first remarked that the "structure" and "constitution of the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, justifies no such distinction" between ministers, and the second resolution charged "that such discrimination against any class of our ministry is *sectarian*, unjust, illegal, and oppressive" [emphasis added]. The conference published these resolutions in the *SCA* and the *Montgomery Advertiser*, and sent them additionally to Alabama's Confederate congressmen. The language of sectarianism may have implied an indictment against more respectable or upper-class

traditions, especially Episcopalians, but the language in any event clearly displayed a righteous vitriol. Holland McTyeire meanwhile criticized conscription for a more humanitarian reason, noting the absence of any sense of compassion for the physically frail. Writing in late 1862 from his temporary home in Butler County, Alabama, he remarked caustically, "The conscript officer enrolls halt, lame, and sick, and sends them on to the Notasulga Camp."[9]

Other policies occasionally came under criticism, or at least pointed analysis. John Jones bitterly recorded that Confederate officers "sometimes came with orders to burn all the cotton in certain districts to prevent it from being captured and taken by the Federal officers and their agents." In one particularly painful episode, "two Confederate scouts came … and burned about eighty bales of as good cotton as we ever raised." A theocratically-minded writer to the *SCA*, in an article entitled "The Sins of the South," repeated the antebellum evangelical complaint against Sabbath-breaking. "To entitle us to the slightest claim on [God's] mercy we are bound to reverence the Decalogue," the anonymous writer argued, but "public law compels mail-carriers, postal officials and their assistants to violate its fourth article, as often as it recurs." Stonewall Jackson had famously hoped to change government Sabbath operations, of course, "but neither respect for divine law, nor regard to [Jackson's] memory, have induced our Congress to repeal so disgraceful a statute."[10]

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[9] Brinsfield, *The Spirit Divided: The Confederacy*, 97; *SCA*, 21 January 1864; *Minutes of the Montgomery Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Montgomery: Montgomery Advertiser Book and Job Office, 1864), 14-15; *SCA*, 2 October 1862.

[10] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XIV, 21, Millsaps; *SCA*, 11 August 1864. For an excellent recent

In mid-1863, meanwhile, the *NCCA* and the *SCA* corresponded about the recently passed Tax Act. Answering a query by the *SCA* as to whether the tax applied to Methodist preachers, the *NCCA* asserted that preachers did not receive a "salary" according to the *Discipline*. The author rationalized that the *Discipline* fixed an "allowance," but that preachers were compelled to administer their service regardless of pay, and that the ministry was not a contractual exchange. If a preacher received less than his allowance, or nothing at all, "he has no recourse at law to compel them." For good measure, the *NCCA* even included Webster's dictionary definition of a salary. The *NCCA* concluded that while "there is no escaping the tax on income," MECS preachers "might make a strong case against paying the salary tax." MECS leaders were happy to render unto Caesar, but they could be rather constitutionally technical about doing so.[11]

Unfortunately for the financially legalistic among the pastorate, the government ultimately proved less than amenable to the *NCCA*'s reasoning. In a follow-up correspondence to the *SCA* several months later, Confederate Tax Commissioner Thompson Allen revealed that the Secretary of the Treasury had altered his earlier opinion that "allowance" was exempted from the act, and that he had "decided that the whole compensation was salary, and this is the present ruling of the Department." Ultimately, for most MECS clergymen, the conversation was an exercise in legal abstraction. As the *NCCA* recognized at the outset, "this law does not tax salaries less

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analysis of the prewar Sabbath controversy, see Kyle G. Volk, *Moral Minorities and the Making of American Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 37-68.

[11] *SCA*, 16 July 1863. The salary tax assessed one percent on salaries from $1,000 to $1,500, and two percent on anything over $2,000. See "Tax and Assessment Acts, and Amendments. The Tax Act of 24th April 1863, As Amended: Electronic Edition," accessed 27 July 2015, http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/taxasses/taxasses.html.

than $1,000. Therefore, Methodist preachers need not feel much concern." In this case, at least, preachers could comfortably rejoice in their relative poverty.[12]

MECS criticism of Confederate political and social culture tended to focus on moral issues, however, rather than attacking the foundations or legitimacy of public or governmental structures. For example, Bishop Andrew in February 1862 lamented, "We are a proud and rebellious race. We are very boastful, glorying in our gallant soldiers and our distinguished Generals, and our great statesmen." Beyond the sin of pride, he criticized also the rumored rampancy of swearing, drinking, and Sabbath-breaking in the military and the government. A few months later, Andrew again criticized the drunkenness of army officers, which Margaret Kidd connects to the ineffective actions of Confederate general John Magruder in the Seven Days Battles. An early 1863 article in the *SCA* blasted the recreation of dancing. "On the eve of the battle of Murfreesboro, and within the sound of the cannon of the advancing foe," the writer revealed, "a ball was given, at which, perhaps, some danced, who the next day were called to judgment." And a September article later in the year petitioned prayer for the entire city of Charleston. "No doubt Charleston is a wicked city and needs the chastisement of Heaven," acknowledged editor Myers, "but there is as little doubt that some, yea, many good people have their homes there." Myers continued by comparing Charleston to the biblical Nineveh, and hoped God would spare the city if she humbled herself accordingly.[13]

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[12] *SCA*, 25 February 1864, 16 July 1863.

[13] *RCA*, 27 February 1862, 14 August 1862; Margaret Diane Turman Kidd, "Putting On the Armor of the Lord: The Role of Virginia Methodists During the Civil War" (master's thesis, University of Richmond, 2007), 53; *SCA*, 19 February, 17 September 1863. For further context on Magruder in the Seven Days Battles, see Peter C. Carmichael, "The Great Paragon of Virtue and Sobriety: John Bankhead Magruder and the Seven Days," in Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *The Richmond Campaign of 1862: The*

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Slavery brought about a different kind of challenge, one that involved Confederate society. The denominational leaders examined in this study made surprisingly little commentary on the institution during the war, although the experience of emancipation, examined in a later chapter, elicited renewed attention by MECS leadership to their church's relation to southern blacks. Nevertheless, MECS leaders' limited expressions toward slavery during the war reveal another tension-filled ecclesiastical subject.

Slavery provided an arena in which southern Methodist leaders continued to strive for wartime "normalcy." That is, they sought to exert a paternalistically "moral" effect on the institution, but also provided a continuing social and religious legitimacy to its existence and propagation. Christopher Owen deftly notes that although influential southern Methodists "saw independence as an opportunity to make slavery conform to Christian precepts" and indeed "openly criticized aspects of slavery" during the war, they nevertheless "hoped to preserve the peculiar institution" and sought to "perfect slavery[,] not to abolish it." Thus, Bishop Andrew could un-ironically opine in relation to European assistance that "any other people in our condition would have been recognized long since, and so would we if we had not been slaveholders." He also challenged the conscience of slaveholders, asking at one point, "How stands the record in reference to our slaves? We

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Peninsula and the Seven Days (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 96-120. The biblical account of Nineveh's judgment and repentance is found in the book of Jonah.

have been very prompt to avail ourselves of the Scriptural argument in favor of the instruction itself; have we been equally ready to inquire what are the duties which the relation of master necessarily involves?" But Andrew, along with the vast majority of MECS leaders, was neither an abolitionist nor a gradualist emancipationist. As historian Drew Gilpin Faust has recognized, slavery was woven into the very thread of Confederate nationalist identity.[14]

Clergyman Joseph Cottrell, described in one history of the MECS as a "prominent leader" of the Louisville Conference, spoke decisively on the connection between slavery and Confederacy. He stated in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation's implementation in early 1863, "The slaveholding portion of this country must either give up the institution, or it must have a Government distinct for its conservation. To do the former would be to contravene the law of nature and of God." The Mission Society of the Alabama Conference acknowledged in late 1863 that God justly had "a controversy with us in regard to the evils connected with [slavery], the abuses of it, [and] the neglect of the moral responsibilities growing out of it." But the Society steadfastly affirmed that God was "not, as our enemies affect to believe, demonstrating to us the evil of our peculiar institution, and hastening its abolition." *SCA* editor Myers hoped to utilize slavery militarily on behalf of the Confederacy. "The Negro will be the future soldier of the war," he argued in early 1865, as that debate heated up in Richmond, "if not on our side, then against us. Whether he out to be a soldier, is not the question. A soldier he is, despite of

[14] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 101-03; *RCA*, 14 August 1862; *SCA*, 26 March 1863; *Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. R. M. Palmer, D.D., Delivered before the General Assembly at Milledgeville, GA, on Fast Day, March 27, 1862* (Milledgeville: Boughton, Nisbet, and Barnes, 1863), 3-17; Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 58-62. Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 132-41, also deals well with the relationship between Confederate Christianity and slavery.

us." The interests of Confederate independence, then, demanded for Myers a simple solution. "*We must employ slavery if we expect to perpetuate slavery*."[15] William Sasnett, first president of the Methodist East Alabama Male College (later Auburn University), issued a forceful declaration that God not only tolerated southern slavery, but indeed used slavery as an instrument of cosmic providence. At the conclusion of a serious of articles titled "The Relations of the Divine Providence to our Present National Struggle," Sasnett baldly contended the following:

> God intends that slavery and negro slavery should become prevalent in the world. … African slavery is destined ultimately to be a part of the social system of every free and enlightened national community upon earth. … I have no doubt that God intends to use the triumph and the independence of the South, as the means to start the world in … the realization of this unexpected result.[16]

Other Methodists during the conflict joined Sasnett in seeking to piously align the paternalism of slavery with divine favor and will. James Duncan of the *RCA* drafted an ecumenical statement, signed by various Confederate religious leaders, entitled *Address to Christians Throughout the World*. The proclamation defended southern independence and slavery and proclaimed the futility of Union military efforts. In her analysis of the document, historian Margaret Kidd accurately portrays the address as "the 'Christian response' to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation." In addition, Mississippi clergyman

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[15] Horace M. Du Bose, *A History of Methodism: Being a Volume Supplemental to "A History of Methodism" by Holland N. McTyeire, Late One of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South: Bringing the Story of Methodism, with Special Reference to the History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Down to the Year 1916* (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1916), 425; *SCA*, 19 February, 17 December 1863, 2 February 1865. This of course was well after black soldiers entered the war effort for the Union. See Bruce Levine*, Confederate Emancipation: Southern Plans to Free and Arm Slaves during the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[16] *SCA*, 23 April 1863. On Sasnett's Auburn college presidency, see "William Sasnett," Encyclopedia of Alabama, accessed 23 July 2015, http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/ article/m-6061.

John Jones framed an appeal for wartime slaves to remain submissive to their masters in righteously deflective moral terms. Claiming that he "still endeavored to preach a pure gospel … to [my] vast colored congregations," Jones "often took occasion to advise them to remain at home with their families and take good care of all the stock and other supplies … as all would be needed for their sustenance when the war was over, no matter how it terminated." After all, Jones rationalized to his black congregants, "if freedom came to some it would come alike to all, and they would be just as free by staying at home as by running away into the Federal lines, with the great advantage of being well housed with plenty around them to live on." Finally, Jones rhetorically questioned who God would "hold accountable for all these who were slain by disease and hunger." "Not their former owners," he answered himself, "for they were more than willing to keep them at home well housed, fed and clothed, and attended to in sickness, until their freedom should be established and then let them go in peace." Jones seems to have never grasped the tragic irony of his words, written in the midst of four grueling years of war in defense of a chattel slave society.[17]

As the war progressed, however, at least one prominent MECS spokesman uttered a potential challenge to the very existence of the peculiar institution. Bishop George Pierce of Georgia issued a stern critique of what he deemed moral abuses wrought by Confederate slavery. Pierce delivered his oration as a fast day sermon before Georgia's General Assembly in early 1863. Hoping to rectify the "many discrepancies and some downright conflicts" between "our legislation with the word of the Lord," Pierce specifically invoked two aspects of slavery's immorality. First, he challenged the

[17] Kidd, "Putting On the Armor of the Lord," 87-90; Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XII, 19-20, Millsaps.

prohibition against slave literacy. This ban, according to the bishop, "invades the rights of the master and the privileges of the slave." While arguing that the ill effect flowed from the cause of northern abolitionism, Pierce contended nevertheless that "to make the negro suffer for the sins of the Yankee, is the grossest injustice and yet … the practical effect of our law." Pierce then attacked Confederate marriage policies, or more accurately the lack of such policies, regarding slave marriage. Invoking Jesus's words of "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder," Pierce called for the rescission of "all laws and parts of laws which authorize or allow arbitrary interference with the connubial relations of slaves." He criticized the rampancy of divorce generally, and suggested stricter laws on divorce application, but complained that "in relation to slaves we have no law at all." "Husbands and wives are subject to all the contingencies of time and circumstances—of gain and avarice—of passion and caprice," Pierce harangued, and consequently the desecration of slave marriage was "a stigma upon our civilization and an offense to our christianity." Pierce dramatically warned, "If the institution of slavery cannot be maintained except at the expense of the black man's immortal interests, in the name of Heaven I say—*let it perish*."[18]

Historian Drew Faust points out that "the Georgia assembly had never before listened to anything so close to an abolition proclamation" as Pierce's statement. Pierce did employ bold rhetoric to make his point, and the potency of his call for slavery reform deserves attention. Nevertheless, the radicalism of his declaration should not be carried too far. Baptist clergyman Isaac Taylor Tichenor, for example, delivered a similar speech to Alabama's state legislature in August 1863. Perhaps these men's testimonies reflected

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[18] *Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B. M. Palmer*, 14-15.

an increasing concern about the scope of God's "controversy" with the Confederacy as interpreted by battlefield results. Either way, radicals they were not.[19]

Pierce himself owned slaves, as did multiple other MECS bishops, and he despised abolitionism. He considered his attacks against slavery abuses mutually exclusive from his support of Confederate arms and independence; indeed, he prefaced his slavery remarks with the assertion that "there is … no object proposed by our Government, no end aimed at on which we may not consistently, piously, scripturally invoke the Divine blessing. … God reigneth, and God is for us and with us." He utterly sanctified the Confederate war effort, stating that "whether … we pray for our country or against our enemies, we are praying in harmony with the plans of Providence and the moral interests of mankind." George Pierce, James Andrew, and select other MECS leaders had criticized dimensions of slavery well before the sectional crisis and the Civil War. But the slaveholding South tolerated such men precisely because they were unquestionably southern in sentiment, and neither posed nor intended any threat to the continuation or expansion of the peculiar institution. Critics who lacked such credentials, southern Methodist or otherwise, could well find themselves persecuted or exiled.[20]

As alluded to, some criticism of the Confederacy simply reflected a general concern for divine abandonment over moral failings. In his jeremiad, Bishop Pierce included extortion, speculation, and profiteering in a litany of judgment-worthy

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[19] Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 77-81 (quote on 81); Brinsfield, *The Spirit Divided*, 209-21; Kenneth W. Noe, "'The Fighting Chaplain of Shiloh': Isaac Tichenor's Civil War and the Roles of Confederate Ministers," in Daniel McDonough and Kenneth W. Noe, eds., *Politics and Culture in the Civil War Era: Essays in Honor of Robert W. Johannsen* (Selinsgrove, Pa.: Susquehana University Press, 2006), 257-59.

[20] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 61-62, 101; *Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B. M. Palmer*, 3-4, 6. See also Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 35.

Confederate sins. He was not alone; criticism of financial opportunists was generally widespread. Chaplain Morgan Callaway advised his wife in summer 1863 that, "in selling what you have to sell, avoid if possible placing it in the hands of speculators, who will be inclined to grind their fellow men." Rather than support such avarice, Callaway instructed, "Let the honest poor have at lower rates than others." An *RCA* article of 1863 complained of "cold, selfish, money-loving vampires who know no sentiment of patriotism, no principle of public good, no generous impulse, and worship no God but mammon." Invoking another biblical allusion, the author concluded that speculators' "shibboleth cannot be pronounced by a tongue less depraved than their own."[21]

In general, southern Methodist leaders participated in crafting and disseminating what various historians have called the "Confederate jeremiad." Angry laments about immorality "scrutinized southern society with a critical severity rarely seen before the war," according to one analyst, and encouraged a shift toward critiquing southern morality through a corporate lens rather than the more traditional individualist lens of the antebellum era. Thus it is true, as Christopher Owen argues, that the southern "spirituality of the church" doctrine never entirely disappeared during the war. Churches celebrated the Confederacy's Christian verbiage yet still considered themselves "outsiders" and continued to focus on individual conversion. But Harrison Daniel is also correct, at least in reference to southern Methodists, that most criticism of the government focused on

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[21] *Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B. M. Palmer*, 16; Callaway to wife, 31 August 1863, Morgan Callaway Papers, Box 1 Folder 2, Emory; *RCA*, 9 April 1863. The usage of the term "shibboleth" stems from the biblical book of Judges, chapter 12, wherein captors identified prisoners of war by their inability to fully pronounce the Hebrew term.

moral matters, not policy, and that southern Christians tended to express policy complaints privately rather than publicly.[22]

An *RCA* article in the closing stage of the war displayed exasperation at the effects of public criticism. "A great many persons in the South have unintentionally aided the foe," the writer opined, because they had "written in bitter terms of denunciation against various chief men—especially against the President." Such critics "damaged the confidence of the people in the wisdom of the Executive, they cherished despondency, weakened the moral strength of the cause, diminished faith, [and] gratified the enemy." As with the example of slavery, southern Methodist leaders felt free to call out and criticize aspects of Confederate society and leadership, but they generally did so with the clear understanding that they were part and parcel of that society and supportively subject to that leadership. And the internal dimensions of such socio-cultural "belonging" created a complex denominational response to the exceptions and anomalies of nationalism within MECS jurisdiction.[23]

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As noted at the chapter's outset, MECS leadership even before the war held the recognition of and submission to the government as a constitutional requirement and an article of faith. The passions of war then created intense nationalism across much of the

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[22] On the Confederate jeremiad, see Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 29-32; Rable, *The Confederate Republic*, 184-86; and Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*, 90-93. Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 99-103; Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 37-38;

[23] *RCA*, 23 March 1865.

denomination. Consequently, some individuals and conferences began to take enforcement of political loyalty into their own hands. In various locales, but particularly border regions, political and military dissidents faced not only secular punishment but the disapprobation of their faith community and exclusion from it. The North Carolina Conference in 1861, for example, ejected clergyman Marble Taylor Nash for his unionism. After the conference "learned, with surprise and regret" that Taylor had "after the late capture of Fort Hatteras, take[n] the oath of allegiance to the Government of Abraham Lincoln and … identified himself with that unmitigated despotism, and thus become a traitor to this Conference, his state, and the Southern Confederacy," the conference struck Taylor's name from the roll of preachers, effectively excommunicating him. A similar case took place the next year in the Virginia Conference. A conference resolution stated, "*Whereas*, From the best information we can get, it appears that the Rev. Charles A. Davis has been and is now a chaplain in the United States Navy; therefore, *Resolved*, That he be and he is hereby expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South." An MECS church in Atlanta expelled its own lay preacher, David Young, during the war for Union support and perceived abolitionism.[24]

The MECS, of course, did not monopolize such nationalist purging. As historian Timothy Wesley has demonstrated, similar exclusions occurred frequently in the MEC and other denominations, north and south. The *RCA* noted with derision that Presbyterian clergyman Amasa Converse, editor of the *Richmond Christian Observer*, had been

[24] "Minutes of the December 1861 Methodist Conference expelling Reverend Marble Nash Taylor," North Carolina Digital Collections, State Library of North Carolina, accessed 30 July 2015, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p15012coll8/id/10467; *RCA*, 27 November 1862; Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 47.

ejected from the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia for "active sympathy with the rebels in arms." Historians David Kimbrough and Harry Stout also record numerous instances of northern Methodist discipline, and Kimbrough points out that "any preacher who criticized the war effort in any way found himself in hot water." Sylvanus Townsend, an MEC member in Philadelphia, found himself censured simply for *abstention* on a vote concerning a resolution of national loyalty. The conference refused his abstention from the vote, and withheld his eldership orders for the following year. In sardonic response, according to Townsend, he "offered a resolution, it was that we obey John XIII 34."[25]

The *RCA* also reported on dueling Baltimore Conference sessions in 1863, each claiming to be the legitimate assembly. One of the sessions debated a resolution asking President Lincoln to declare a day of fasting and prayer for God to end the war and return union and peace. One commentator argued in favor of the resolution, appealing to the Twenty-Third Article, still identical to the southern version. Others raised vehement opposition. According to the report, "Rev. John W. Bull said he used to be a Methodist Episcopalian in religion, and a United States man in politics. He was opposed to fasting and praying by compulsion; he would not do so even at the dictation of the President of the United States. … He hated Abolitionism as he hated hell. … He should vote against the resolution." Another member of the opposition, John Bear, stated that "he had been opposed to secession in the Church, and was opposed to secession in the nation, so far as

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[25] Wesley, *Politics of Faith During the Civil War*, 60-92, 141-67; *RCA*, 28 January 1864; David L. Kimbrough, *Reverend Joseph Tarkington, Methodist Circuit Rider: From Frontier Evangelism to Refined Religion* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 133-35; Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*, 284-85; Sylvanus Townsend, diary entry for 24 March 1863, Sylvanus Townsend Diary, Duke. The verse quotes Jesus, saying, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

it could be prevented. He did not pray for the success of either the Federal or Confederate arms—he did not know which was in the right." The resolution ultimately passed by a margin of thirty-one to fifteen, but the episode demonstrates the volatility of nationalism in border regions, even in the MEC.[26]

Yet the border states contained many Methodists of both jurisdictional stripes, who considered themselves no less "Methodist" than fellow Wesleyans entrenched in starkly Union or Confederate states. The MECS spanned both deeply Confederate and deeply divided regions. The complexity and diversity in its ecclesiastical treatment of Unionist members may best be understood by examining two case studies involving the Kentucky and Louisville Conferences and the Holston Conference. In some ways, these case studies reveal a tale of two bishops, Hubbard Kavanaugh and John Early, as much as a tale of two regions. Together, however, the analyses show the passion, politics, theology, and improvisation that accompanied—or spurred—MECS leadership's wartime policies and decisions.

Wartime Kentucky, like East Tennessee, exhibited significant division between Confederate and Union support, especially early in the war. In the MECS, this drama took ecclesiastical form beginning with the 1861 Annual Conference sessions. The Louisville Conference was to meet at its namesake city in early November, but travel conditions and the respective armies of Albert Sidney Johnston and Don Carlos Buell hindered many preachers. As a result, the conference had few attendees, and included primarily Unionists. Presided over by the longtime Kentuckian Bishop Kavanaugh, it conducted business nonetheless, which included granting three requests for

[26] *RCA*, 9 April 1863.

chaplaincies—into the Union army. Meanwhile, a group of preachers unable to reach Louisville had requested the session to conduct business only for the jurisdiction within Union army lines, while a second session would be held at Bethlehem, Kentucky to execute the business of the conference portion in Confederate army territory. For unknown reasons, whether political or logistical, the Louisville members in session denied the request. Consequently, a splinter group met at Bethlehem, presided by Bishop Soule, whom they called up from Nashville. The Bethlehem assembly promptly elected its own delegates to the doomed 1862 General Conference. Moreover, the members passed resolutions declaring their "*deepest* regret [to] learn that Bishop Kavanaugh has appointed three of our members chaplains in the Federal army," pronouncing those members "recreant to the principles and interests of the M. E. Church, South, and unworthy of our confidence."[27]

It is unclear whether Bishop Soule approved or disapproved of the Bethlehem session's actions. He seems to have made no attempt to rule the resolutions out of order, but later correspondence suggests that he also maintained a consistently cordial relationship with Kavanaugh. Soule's health remained poor throughout the war, and his age was advanced, so it is possible he had little awareness of everything occurring in the matter. Nevertheless, word of the incident disseminated, as the *NCA* published an account of the Bethlehem session. Adding to the controversy, rumors surfaced that federal sympathizers had forced attendees of the Louisville session to take the oath of allegiance to the United States Constitution before leaving. At least a few zealously Confederate

[27] R.W. Browder, ed., *Addresses Delivered at the Jubilee of the Louisville Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Held in Hopkinsville, KY, Sept. 24-28, 1896* (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1897), 25-27; *NCA*, 7 November 1861.

southern Methodists found the combination of these stories to be grievous offenses. Georgian A. G. Bledsoe wrote to her parents that although Kavanaugh was scheduled to preside over the Georgia Conference's 1861 session, the conference had "notified him not to come," because "he has taken the Oath of allegiance to the Lincoln government." Similarly, a member of the Mississippi Conference, also assigned to Kavanaugh, wrote to the *NCA* that "if Bishop K. did take the oath [as] reported, we hope he will not attempt to meet the Mississippi Conference," as "his presence, under such circumstances, would greatly embarrass the Conference." Instead, the writer pointedly closed, "if the venerable Bishop Soule can attend … we shall be very much gratified."[28]

In the end, the controversy dissipated with time. Bishop Kavanaugh maintained that a misunderstanding had taken place, that he did not take the loyalty oath, and that he would have attended the meeting in Bethlehem had he not been blocked by military lines. Holland McTyeire, an unquestionably Confederate MECS representative, believed him. He defended Kavanaugh in the *NCA*, citing his record as "one of our best bishops, and a sound Southern man." Kavanaugh, unable to reach the Deep South states, had already arranged for Bishops Paine and Pierce to stand in for him in Georgia and Mississippi. Meanwhile, the Bethlehem contingent did not meet again, and finally rejoined their northern Kentucky comrades in 1864. At that session of the Louisville Conference, the members agreed to expunge all record of the Bethlehem session from the conference journal. According to a later Louisville Conference member, "ever since, whenever this

[28] *NCA*, 7 November, 21 November 1861; Bledsoe to parents, 24 November 1861, William Clark Doub Papers, Box 1, Duke.

record has been inquired after, the answer has been: '*Non est inventus*'" (literally, "He is not found").[29]

Excitement over oaths and military participation persisted nonetheless, for both Kavanaugh and the conferences in Kentucky. Kavanaugh, an expressed moderate who persistently claimed apolitical neutrality and appealed to the prewar "spirituality of the church" doctrine throughout the war, continued to preside over the Kentucky and Louisville Conferences when able to travel. And at each session, whether Kavanaugh or a conference member presided, the conferences appointed or renewed Union chaplaincies. In contrast, the MECS *Minutes* for these conferences reveal no Confederate army appointments.[30]

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[29] *NCA*, 21 November 1861; Browder, *Jubilee of the Louisville Conference*, 30-31.

[30] The otherwise excellent compendium of Confederate chaplains in Brinsfield, Davis, Maryniak, and Robertson's *Faith in the Fight* seems to have misidentified a Union chaplain as Confederate. The compendium lists "J. S. Bayless," chaplain to Humphrey Marshall's Kentucky Infantry, with the Confederate chaplains. The appointment appears in the Kentucky Conference minutes, but the appointment occurred while the Kentucky Infantry remained independent, a full month prior to Marshall's enlistment as a Confederate general on 30 October. The assumption in Brinsfield et al, presumably, is that Bayless remained with Marshall and served in a Confederate role. "J. S. Bayless" does not appear again in the wartime conference minutes, however; instead, the 1862 session shows "J. S. *Boyles*," from the same district as the prior "Bayless," as a *Union* chaplain. Finally, the 1864 and 1865 minutes reveal a "John S. *Bayles*" as a Union chaplain. It is logical, then, to assume that Bayless/Boyles/Bayles are all spellings of the same name, referring to an independent Kentucky chaplain who served the Union army following Marshall's defection. The misattribution seems to derive from the various typographical changes. In fairness to the authors of *Faith in the Fight*, they do include "John S. Bayless" in the Union chaplain roster as well, and the mistake is certainly an understandable one. Nevertheless, it is notable that the MECS officially appointed *only* Union army chaplains in the state of Kentucky during the war. See Brinsfield et al, *Faith in the Fight*, 132, 213; Bryan S. Bush, "Confederate Brigadier General Humphrey Marshall," accessed 31 July 2015, http://www.bryansbush.com/hub.php?page=articles&layer=a0701; and the *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, for the Kentucky and Louisville Conferences, 1861-65.

Many other southern Methodist leaders in Kentucky supported the Union, but they did not abandon their southern church, nor did they seek an ecclesiastical merger with the Union cause. In 1862, a Union officer at Owensboro demanded that the Louisville Conference pass a resolution of loyalty to the United States. The conference responded by reaffirming "our belief in the whole twenty-five Articles [of the *Discipline*], including the twenty-third, that required loyalty to the powers that be." The officer similarly demanded the expulsion of two Confederate chaplains for "taking up arms against the government." Ultimately, the conference deferred the disloyalty cases until the men could receive a constitutional trial. After the war, the conference did apparently try and acquit the two, although the official conference minutes make no mention of either the charges or the trial, and the men are not listed in the roster of appointed preachers until 1865, after the war's conclusion.[31]

Another telling incident occurred during the fall 1863 conferences in the state. In the middle of the Louisville Conference session, Federal soldiers entered the meeting and demanded that all members each salute the American flag in turn. A later description of the event alleged that a Kentuckian Union chaplain, who accused several conference members of disloyalty, had incited the soldiers' arrival. According to a recounting of the episode, Charles Parson, "a strong Union man and a member of the Loyal League," first took the flag and issued a patriotic speech with enthusiasm. The flag then made the circuit through the members, "many of whom received it with less enthusiasm." The

[31] Browder, *Jubilee of the Louisville Conference*, 27-28; *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, for the Kentucky Conference, 1861-65. At least one of the men, Joseph S. Scobee, had indeed taken up arms, joining with the Tenth Kentucky Cavalry (CSA) under John Hunt Morgan, in which he served as both a major and chaplain. See *History of Daviess County, Kentucky* (Chicago: Inter-State Publishing, 1883), 489.

presiding member, John Linn, took the flag and gave a short address praising, with apparently intentional irony, the religious freedom represented by the stars and stripes. After Linn returned the flag, Union chaplain J. H. Bristow proposed resolutions of Federal loyalty, noting that he did so as "*a duty imposed on him by the military authorities*." The resolutions, like the ones passed by the prior year's conference, appealed to the Twenty-Third Article of the MECS *Discipline* and the injunction for "obedience to 'the powers that be'" as the basis of Unionist loyalty. Notably, once the soldiers began to leave, conference member G. W. Brush, "an earnest friend of the Union," asked them to stay. He sharply reprimanded the commanding officer "for annoying a religious body that was engaged in the transaction of legitimate business, and had not in any way meddled with other matters." The *SCA* later reprinted an article from the MEC's central organ, the New York *Christian Advocate Journal*, praising the events of the Louisville Conference. The *SCA* editors themselves, while neither praising nor rebuking the actions of the conference members, claimed that the episode "shows what our Church may expect wherever the Yankees overrun the country."[32]

Meanwhile, Bishop Kavanaugh found himself under fire again for his alleged loyalties, but this time ironically it was his perceived Confederate associations that created the drama. Shortly after the death of his wife in 1863, Kavanaugh traveled to California to spend some time overseeing the MECS's Pacific Conference. In July 1864, while the bishop awaited a scheduled preaching appointment at a camp meeting near Stockton, a Union officer arrested him and took him to Brigadier General John Mason's headquarters. According to Mason, anonymous individuals had accused Kavanaugh of

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[32] Browder, *Jubilee of the Louisville Conference*, 28-30; *SCA*, 17 December 1863, 14 January 1864.

being a Georgia citizen who had crossed military lines and was serving as a Confederate agent in California. Kavanaugh protested that he was a Kentuckian, and had "never crossed the military lines, nor entered any State in rebellion, except on a visit to Nashville, Tenn., then in position of the Federal troops." Invoking the "spirituality of the church" argument, he further avowed that he had "never participated actively in political affairs," nor "preached politics, either before or since the war. On the contrary, I have invariably discouraged it in the ministry of the Church over which I had … supervision." He added, "Residing, as I do, in Kentucky, where great diversity of opinion prevails in regard to the war, I have deemed it my duty as a minister of the Gospel not only to abstain from participating in political affairs, but, on the contrary, to mitigate as far as practicable the asperity of feeling which prevails so widely in that State." Kavanaugh appealed to Major General Irvin McDowell, commanding the Department of the Pacific after his military failures in Virginia. McDowell received him amicably and dismissed all charges. The general expressed concern, however, about the sectional implications of the title "Methodist Episcopal Church, South," and expressed his belief that "in the present condition of the country the term 'South,' as applied to a Church organization on this coast, was not only of questionable propriety, but was liable to misconstruction." Following his release, Kavanaugh noted that he did not "blame any of the military functionaries of the Pacific Coast for calling me to an account for the items alleged," and that "I shall not soon forget the courtesy for which I am indebted to [McDowell] and his associate officers concerned in my arrest." He was happy to know, however, that "the

unscrupulous witness … has rendered himself powerless for evil with the officers of this post."[33]

The *SCA* found out about the arrest via a report in the *New York Methodist*, nearly three months after the episode. In addition to reprinting the *Methodist*'s article, *SCA* editor Edward Myers prophesied that the incident "exhibits an intolerance that presages the utter overthrow of our Church, if the Yankees ever again get an ascendency in the South," especially because the arrest happened "in California, where by no possibility could [Kavanaugh] have damaged the U. S. Government, and done merely because of his connection with the Southern M. E. Church." Myers took particular exception with a portion of the report dealing with the loyalty oath. McDowell's aide-de-camp, Franklin Haven, wrote that McDowell had released Kavanaugh "in consideration of … the readiness manifested by him to take an oath of allegiance to the United States of America, disclaiming and renouncing allegiance to any other Government." Myers challenged this assertion, contending that even if "Bishop Kavanaugh expressed his willingness to take the oath of allegiance to the U.S. Government, it does not say that the Bishop did so; and from what we have learned of his previous assertions, we take the liberty of doubting the statement."[34]

In the end, Kavanaugh is difficult to categorize. His own account of the California incident, recorded in his biography, does not include either Haven's report or a stated willingness to take a loyalty oath. Rather, it emphasizes a stance of neutrality and spiritual removal from political and military partisanship. It is clear that emotionally he supported the Confederacy, but he also was willing to appoint and bless Union army

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[33] Redford, *H. H. Kavanaugh*, 413-20.
[34] *SCA*, 13 October 1864.

chaplains under his episcopal charge. The bishop well may have acted authentically in each of these situations, executing a delicate balance between passionate forces and coming as close to "neutrality" as anyone in the chaos of civil war could be expected to do. Southern Methodism across Kentucky, as in other border regions, was undeniably divided in sectional sentiment. The conferences officially aligned themselves with the Union, no doubt for pragmatic motivations as well as other reasons, but chose also to take a somewhat passive stance toward dissidents rather than aggressively weed them out, and even some Unionist members resisted—or at least resented—coercion of Federal nationalism. This way of understanding Kavanaugh makes him what historian Preston Graham terms a "border-state martyr." Indeed, Graham's biographical subject, Presbyterian clergyman Stuart Robinson, experienced many of the same wartime conditions, pressures, and expectations as Kavanaugh, and both spent significant time in Louisville. Graham describes border-state martyrs as "those who did not succumb to the forces of either the North or the south, at least not in their public actions," and those "who remained steadfastly committed to the ethic of neutrality during the war, albeit through great sufferings even." Such individuals, Graham contends, "would have been respected as seeking to mediate between two seemingly irreconcilable positions, even as these positions threaten[ed] to fracture every home, church, and city."

Conversely, Kavanaugh could represent a savvy practitioner of what historian Michael Fellman calls "survival lying," making pragmatic if ethically questionable decisions and actions to avoid detention or persecution. Fellman's concept of survival lying is an important qualifier to Graham's border-state martyr model, and it is not abundantly clear from the sources available which model better captures Bishop

Kavanaugh's wartime identity. Nevertheless, however one chooses to view Kavanaugh, his actions and experiences stand in stark contrast with John Early, his fellow MECS bishop. Early's actions and the Appalachian context in which they occurred provide a case study at least as interesting, complex, and revealing as Kavanaugh and Kentucky.[35]

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East of Kentucky, the Holston Conference of the MECS, spanning eastern Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and western North Carolina, experienced some of the most volatile division of sentiment and loyalty in the nation during the Civil War. Beyond the fractious political climate, frequent conventional campaigns, raids, and guerrilla violence characterized the region's ideological strife. Although similar in several aspects to Kentucky, military control of the Holston region took longer to settle, and chaos reigned even after that. In such an environment, even a politically savvy and non-confrontational moderate such as Hubbard Kavanaugh would have had difficulty navigating the emotional tempests in such a way as to maintain ecclesiastical peace and cohesion. But the Holston Conference instead found itself under the virtual exclusive dominance of the most fire-eating and intransigent bishop of southern Methodism in its independent history: John Early, a brother of Confederate general and future Lost Cause zealot Jubal Early. Far from seeking to quell the political tensions and divisions within Holston Methodism, Early instead entered the fray as an unapologetically partisan

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[35] Redford, *H. H. Kavanaugh*, 414-20; Graham, *A Kingdom Not of This World*, 41-63, especially 61-63; Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 48-52.

participant, and shaped a wartime experience that exacerbated and prolonged the region's denominational friction long after Appomattox.[36]

Bishop Early had gained a reputation for unpopularity and arbitrariness well before the war began. As noted in an earlier chapter, he received an unofficial reprimand from the General Conference in 1858 and a consequent reduction in episcopal duty. Time and the exigencies of wartime returned him to a full-time schedule throughout the Civil War. Still, his penchant for using his position and prerogatives to punish or dominate those under his charge continued, and indeed reached an apex in the particularly autonomous climate of the war years. For one thing, he punitively attempted to deny preachers to one church, which had "chosen to unite with the Union Society." That church resorted to persuading local preachers to defy "the Bishop's injunction," apparently with some success. North Carolina circuit preacher Washington Sandford Chaffin particularly resented Early's oversight of his stationing. Writing a year-end summary in his journal at the close of 1862, Chaffin stated that "through the malignity of Rev. John Early, D.D., one of the Bishops of the M.E.C., South, I was removed from Granville to Cape Fear. … I cannot speak of Early without doing myself a harm," Chaffin

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[36] On the nature of the region during the Civil War, see Martin Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001); W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates, 1860-1870* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000); Noel C. Fisher, *War At Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Robert Tracy McKenzie, *Lincolnites and Rebels: A Divided Town in the American Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and for briefer surveys, see the essays by the above and Kenneth Noe in Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson, eds., *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997). On Jubal Early, see Gary W. Gallagher, "Jubal A. Early, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History: A Persistent Legacy," in Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan, eds., *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 35-59.

continued, “for if I speak well of him I must lie; and if I speak the truth of him I must speak evil, and the Bible forbids that. Therefore I will say nothing of him.” Chaffin’s disdain for Early extended even to the bishop’s preaching and religious expression. A few weeks earlier, Chaffin had recorded hearing “the Rev. Bp. Early preach in Raleigh, NC.” He described the sermon as “a conglomerate of ignorance, heterodoxy, vulgar anecdotes, sweeping declarations, and dogmaticism.” Chaffin was biased, but even in charitable biographical sketches, Early’s truculence manifests itself in the opinion of others. Two such sketches note that the bishop’s private nicknames among fellow preachers included “Brother Negative” and, playing off his age and Virginia residence, “the old Dominion.”[37]

Bishop Early’s most conspicuous and capricious wartime actions, however, occurred during the 1862 and 1863 Holston Conference sessions. At these meetings, Early essentially forced a purging of openly Unionist MECS members, as well as those actively engaged in ministry or service to the Union army. In 1862, the bishop oversaw a committee appointed to investigate any suspected Unionist conference members. Several underwent hearings and were temporarily suspended, or else had their cases referred to presiding elders. The committee fully expelled one member, John Spears, who took “a position in the army of the enemy of his country” as a Union chaplain. Following the conference, the *SCA* reported that although the only information on Holston they had

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[37] T.O. Perman to R.O. Burton, 15 Jan. 1863, Robert Oswald Burton Papers, Duke; Washington Sandford Chaffin, journal entries, 6, 87-88, Washington Sandford Chaffin Papers, Box 1, Journal: 1858, Jan. 1 – March 1; 1863-64 & Notebook, 1851-1863, Duke; J. Rives Childs, “Bishop John Early,” in *The John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College*, vol. 4 no. 1 (June 1913), 64; Jones, *Complete History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XI, 14, Millsaps.

came from "Tennessee papers," their correspondence convinced them "that the Holston Conference … is sound to the core, and … has been thoroughly purged of disaffection by lopping off the unsound branches."[38]

The following year's session proved much more draconic. The 1863 conference meeting, again dominated by Early, expelled an additional six preachers for "disloyalty," and referred additional cases for further investigation. Most of these expulsions came through resolution only, lacking a formal hearing or trial. The climate of suspicion in the conference reached such an intensity that the committee inspecting preachers' character failed to pass a conference missionary to China, temporarily stateside but stuck behind Union lines in Kentucky, and referred his case to a presiding elder until his loyalties could be ascertained. In response to these actions, itinerant member and later conference historian Richard Price, himself an ardent Confederate, openly challenged Early's arbitrary expulsions. Price recorded of the episode that it was the bishop's "duty to draw the line between the secular and the spiritual, which he did not do, and to see that the proceedings against the accused brethren were strictly according to the law of the church; for it was a marked inconsistency in the Conference that in prosecuting the supposed violators of law it violated the law itself in its method of procedure." Early overruled Price's objections, and few other attendees were willing to express open opposition to the bishop.[39]

Historian Durwood Dunn, in his excellent microhistory of wartime Appalachian southern Methodism, suggests that Bishop Early represents an intentional attempt by

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[38] Dunn, *Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*, 88-101; *SCA*, 6 November 1862.

[39] Price, *Holston Methodism*, 304-05, 342-46.

MECS leadership to "ensure strict compliance with Confederate nationalism in an otherwise moderate conference spanning two Upper South border states." To be sure, Dunn's assessment seems valid when applied to Early himself. He used every available tactic to coerce conformity or punish aberrance to Confederate allegiance. From a broad denominational perspective, however, the evidence largely refutes a conspiratorial view of Early's actions. Rather, the case appears to be a further reflection of the chaos and disorganization of the MECS in wartime, and of the improvisational autonomy used by southern Methodist leaders under such abnormal circumstances.[40]

For example, at least two other bishops displayed no prerogative or inclination for such nationalistic action, Bishop Kavanaugh and Bishop James Andrew. Despite his strongly Confederate leanings and public statements in support of the southern war effort, Andrew like Kavanaugh generally attempted to alleviate the worst passions of ecclesiastical jingoism. Dunn himself recognizes and praises Andrew accordingly, noting that Andrew was "keenly averse to mixing religion and politics" when he presided over the 1861 Holston session. The episcopal actions of Andrew and Kavanaugh during the war certainly demonstrate no broader desire to use ecclesiastical discipline in the arbitrary service of Confederate patriotism, especially at the cost of church division.

On a more basic level, Early's wartime placement in and dominance of the Holston Conference may be reasonably attributed to the conditions and exigencies of war. Throughout the war, most of the bishops greatly constricted their usual broad traveling circuits. Bishop Early lived in Virginia, and was almost always accessible. Conversely, Kavanaugh spent the majority of the war behind Federal lines, and aside

[40] Dunn, *Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*, 89.

from his sojourn in California, presided exclusively over the Louisville and Kentucky Conferences. Soule spent most of the war in Nashville, where he experienced severe illness. Bishop Robert Paine remained in or near his Mississippi home throughout the war, presiding only at Mississippi and Memphis Conference sessions. Andrew and George Pierce both traveled fairly extensively during the war, but both resided in the deep South and struggled enough with covering their already extensive loads. In 1863, for example, when the greatest Holston purge occurred, Bishop Pierce presided over the eastward conferences of Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, while Bishop Andrew took the southern conferences of Alabama and Florida. Early himself presided over the Georgia Conference in addition to Holston.[41]

A final reason to question the representative breadth of Early's actions is the reaction given to his leadership by other MECS leaders. The bishop already possessed a longstanding reputation for curmudgeonly behavior and abuse of power. Few conference members dared to oppose him to his face. Richard Price did, but he also understood the lack of popular support his challenge garnered. He later mused about the session that "it does not take a philosopher to estimate the amount of influence which a bishop exerts over a Conference of preachers when the fact is considered that he has the authority to assign every man to his field of labor for the year." Early also enjoyed the presence and spirited support of Ephraim Wiley, a conference leader and longtime disciple of the fire-eating bishop. Ultimately, however, the conference rejected Early's course. In 1865, with Early presiding, the Holston session renounced his policies of the previous three years and appealed to the 1866 General Conference to formally reverse the procedural

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[41] Ibid., 88; *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, 1862-64.

violations and resultant expulsions. That General Conference, moreover, "informally censured and prematurely retired [Early] to the superannuate relation, and all the preachers who had been expelled from the Church on political charges under the rulings of Bishop Early were restored to the Church and ministry," according to Richard Price.[42]

The episode also impacted Early's legacy and memory within the MECS. Alpheus Waters Wilson, a member of the independent Baltimore Conference during the war, joined the MECS at the 1866 General Conference, and eventually became a bishop. As late as 1883, the newly-elected bishop could write to his wife about the struggles of Holston southern Methodism and specifically single out Early for much of the blame:

> This East Tennessee region had suffered ecclesiastically more than that I know from the divisions made by the war. ***It might have been otherwise had any other Bishop than old Bp. Early have had it in charge at that time*** [emphasis added]. The old man required every member of the Conf. to pledge himself to pray for the success of the Confederacy. Many of them were union men who did not want that question brought into their church relations and were unwilling to leave the Southern Methodist church. The old Bp. was perverse and inexorable and drove out a large number of the best men in the Conf. who naturally took refuge in the northern church. This section of Tennessee was, by a large majority, in favor of the union; and such treatment of union men in the ministry naturally incensed the people and sent them with their preachers into the other church. This conference has never recovered from the effect of this folly. The old antagonism is more widely cherished and more bitter here than anywhere else.[43]

When the *SCA* heralded the "lopping off" of "unsound branches" by Early and the Holston session, but the celebration was certainly not universal. The pro-Confederate *RCA* published a sober article on the purges by Holston Conference member C. W. Charlton, a committed secessionist and Confederate partisan. In the November 1863 article, titled "East Tennessee—Her Religious Future," Charlton worried about the effect

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[42] Price, *Holston Methodism*, 299, 305-06.

[43] Wilson to wife, 28 April 1883, Alpheus Waters Wilson Papers, Box 1 Folder 4, Emory.

the purges would have on the largely Unionist laity and broader populace. “To the profound and sincere lover of his church, and a well-wisher of her triumph and success, this state of things presents some serious considerations,” Charlton wrote. “We have … in a few instances, whether wisely or unwisely, we leave others to determine, expelled some ministers for their disloyalty. The result will be, we fear, a deep rooted hatred and an utter dislike of our ministry and our usages.” Until the expulsions, Charlton contended, “most of them, were a truly religious people and were strongly wedded to Methodism. They loved our ministry, they revered the Church and were zealously devoted to her success.” But as a result of the purges, Charlton rather accurately portended, “a most terrible day awaits us in that unfortunate region.” Charlton, who himself was no unblemished saint and had employed less than ethical measures on behalf of the Confederacy, recognized that Early’s actions represented a Rubicon of sorts for the MECS’s reputation in Appalachia. For better or worse, Early was no Kavanaugh, and the leadership course pursued in Holston diverged greatly from that practiced in Kentucky.[44]

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In these affairs and a variety of other conflicts over expressed or unexpressed nationalism, the matter of loyalty oaths loomed large. Many different entities and agencies, both secular and ecclesiastical, made use of oaths to impose conformity of thought or action during the Civil War. One southern Methodist polemicist recorded that “military commanders, State conventions, legislatures, civil courts, military courts-

[44] *SCA*, 6 November 1862; *RCA*, 19 November 1863. On Charlton’s pro-Confederate scheming, see McKenzie, *Lincolnites and Rebels*, 79, 87-88.

martial, provost-marshals, post commanders, scout captains, squad lieutenants, orderly sergeants, civil magistrates, notaries public and common soldiers" all imposed "test oaths" at points in the war. The same author described these oaths as crucial to the execution of religious persecution, tracing the development of such oaths all the way from the Old Testament examples of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, to Roman emperors and the Catholic Inquisition, to the reviled "Rosecrans oath" created by "General Orders No. 61" in the Civil War. The "Rosecrans oath," specifically targeting border-state clergymen, required takers to "discourage, discountenance and forever oppose secession, rebellion, and the disintegration of the Federal Union," and to "disclaim and denounce all faith and fellowship with the so-called Confederate armies," in addition to swearing fealty to the United States government. Ministers unwilling to take these oaths were subject to removal from their pulpits or even arrest as traitors. This occurred in 1863 with Samuel Baldwin, the MECS pastor of Nashville's prominent McKendree Church. At the same time, to take such oaths potentially exposed individuals to censure or discipline by pro-Confederate ecclesiastical authorities such as Bishop Early. For clergymen who had so long claimed and appealed to an aloof spirituality as ministers, but were now caught up in a complex web of politics and nationalism both civic and religious, the oaths of allegiance created significant difficulties and responses.[45]

Some entities chose to take a lenient stance on the issue of taking oaths. The Ouachita Conference of the MECS "refused to censure persons who took an oath of

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[45] W. M. Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri: A History of Religious Proscription, the Seizure of Churches, and the Persecution of Ministers of the Gospel, in the State of Missouri during the Late Civil War and under the "Test Oath" of the New Constitution, Volume II* (St. Louis: Southwestern Book and Publishing Company, 1870), 41-56 (quote on 56). The "Rosecrans oath" is reprinted in its entirety in Graham, *A Kingdom Not of This World*, 52. On Baldwin, see Smith, *Cross and Flame*, 145.

loyalty to the Federal government" on the basis that "oath-taking was a political matter, and, therefore, was one over which the conference had no proper jurisdiction," according to Harrison Daniel. But other conferences and individuals took the opposite stance. The Texas Conference, for example, passed a blanket resolution declaring oath-taking to the federal government immoral, and the *SCA* approvingly published a rebuke of oath-taking by Presbyterian clergyman Benjamin Palmer. Even if taking an oath of allegiance did not carry tangible punishment, the act certainly discredited the reputation of ministers among pro-Confederate colleagues, as seen in the example of Bishop Kavanaugh's rumored oath-taking.[46]

For MECS leaders, the potential for intentional duplicity provided a particularly problematic issue in oaths of allegiance. As already noted, Enoch Marvin entered self-exile rather than face the choice of imprisonment or taking the oath, but he emphatically avowed that taking the oath with the intention to violate it would be morally unconscionable. Similarly, Louisville Conference leader Joseph Cottrell asserted in relation to the oath that an individual "who can consent to take an obligation which they intend to break, or who is willing to tell a lie for any advantage—even to save a life—destroys the foundation of all integrity of character." Cottrell believed "that it is the popular belief here that an oath to support the Constitution and the Administration of the Federal Government may be taken and violated at will, without guilt," and he opined that he "wouldn't have a child grow up in such an atmosphere for the wealth of Tennessee." "Such people," he concluded, "are a wretchedly demoralized set, and hurt us more than the Abolitionists who come to fight us." After a northern paper published a report that

[46] Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy*, 42-43; *SCA*, 2 April 1863.

members of the MECS's St. Louis Conference had taken a loyalty oath, the *RCA* minced few words. According to editor James Duncan, "If those St. Louis preachers are honestly supporting Abraham Lincoln, they are forever separated from the Southern Church, unless they are accepted on a very satisfactory repentance; and if they are claiming to still be Southern men, yet deceiving Lincoln by an oath, they are unworthy of the Southern Church. We may *pity* people who take the oath, but we cannot *honor* them for it."[47]

Several of the documented cases of MECS preachers who took a loyalty oath, or at least were perceived to have taken one, reveal the potential ecclesiastical hazards involved. In March 1863, Joseph Amiss, a preacher in North Carolina, wrote to the *RCA* to defend himself from an account in the *Raleigh Daily Progress* asserting that he and others took an oath of allegiance following a skirmish at the town of Edenton. Amiss averred that a "Captain Flusser" had held local citizens responsible for the skirmish, and consequently sought to impose "the oath of *neutrality*, not allegiance," and to remove these civilians "five miles beyond the town limits." According to Amiss, the involved citizens held a long discussion over their options, before refusing to take the proposed oath. Flusser, however, rescinded his order before it was carried out. Amiss defensively concluded, "I have never taken the oath of allegiance, the oath of neutrality, nor the oath of parole, and *never will*."[48]

Later in 1863, the Memphis Conference refused to pass clergyman James Dycus's character. Conference members believed that Dycus had "without the consent of his Presiding Elder, left his work on the Richland Circuit, entered the enemy's lines with the

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[47] Finney, *Enoch Mather Marvin*, 384-85; *SCA*, 29 January 1863; *RCA*, 14 April 1864.

[48] *RCA*, 19 March 1863.

avowed intention (if required of him in order to get to his parents in Kentucky) of taking the oath of allegiance to the enemy's government, and disregarding it." Fortunately for Dycus, who spent the year behind Federal lines in Kentucky, the investigating committee cleared him at the next year's annual conference session after discovering that Dycus's presiding elder had indeed granted him leave, and that he had not taken an oath flippantly.[49]

A minister in the Virginia Conference narrowly avoided discipline on oath-related matters in 1864. The conference believed that Andrew J. Coffman had "taken the oath of allegiance to the United States Government," but because "the facts before us are not sufficiently definite to justify action on our part," the session reluctantly passed his character. Coincidentally, Bishop Early, the assigned session president, was "prevented by sickness from attending the session," and had designated a substitute member to preside. This circumstance almost certainly aided Coffman's situation. And at the Holston Conference meeting in 1864, among the list of preachers facing ecclesiastical accusations, only five were charged with taking the loyalty oath. A special investigative committee ruled that "their characters pass," because they had "taken the oath … under circumstances peculiarly painful and oppressive to them, and that their hearts are still with us, and that their hands would be if they were not manacled." Conference member Richard Price later contended that it is "a debatable question whether an oath taken under duress is binding either in law or morals," but the conference seems to have felt the question moot, recognizing that however the manner of oath-taking, the involved preachers were "manacled" as a result. Even so, perhaps as a passive-aggressive rejoinder

[49] *Minutes of the Memphis Conference, 1862-67*, 24, 76.

to these preachers, the special committee simultaneously passed a resolution declaring that "we strongly disapprove the taking of any oath … pledging or feigning to pledge allegiance to the United States, seeing the terribly demoralizing effects of the same on the country and the Church."[50]

The usage and acceptability of loyalty oaths also revealed unwanted complications involving the MECS *Discipline*'s Twenty-Third Article. Submission and obedience to the "powers that be" comprised an article of faith for southern Methodists, but as the war progressed the question of which government or entities actually represented the "supreme authority" proved a contentious issue. For a number of MECS leaders, the "powers that be" to which scripture enjoined loyalty shifted during the secession winter. According to Price, "Many held that, when one's State had declared independence of the government of the United States and had become a part of the Confederacy, he was not only guilty of treason but of immorality if he sympathized or cooperated with the invading forces, because in so doing he was not 'subject to the powers that be.'"[51]

Memphis Conference clergyman William T. Harris provides a representative example of the way many MECS members viewed the evolving implications of the Twenty-Third Article through the war era. In 1862, Harris "felt it his duty to go with his noble young countrymen to the army; so he joined with Gen. Forrest and his noble uncle, Isham G. Harris, then Governor of Tennessee. … While in the army he was ready to fight or to preach, as he felt duty called. When the war ended he was as he had ever been, a loyal citizen." And the Mississippi Conference, which in 1861 "did not commit the

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[50] *RCA*, 8 December 1864; Price, *Holston Methodism*, 361-64.
[51] Price, *Holston Methodism*, 298-99.

Church either for or against the war, but urged our people [to] submit 'to the powers that be,'" according to John Jones, passed "a preamble and resolutions declaring our loyalty to the now existing Governments, and our determination to discourage disloyalty among the ministers and members of our Church" upon the war's close.[52]

The basis for both wartime Confederate allegiance and postwar renewed Federal submission and allegiance, according to these southern Methodist leaders, was the Twenty-Third Article and, by extension, the biblical chapter of Romans 13 from whence the church derived it. The appeal to ecclesiastical constitutionalism and apostolic injunction in matters of loyalty also may help explain the potential dissonance between MECS actions and the oft-cited principle of the "spirituality of the church." Just as Holland McTyeire and other prominent Methodists perceived a significant difference between the abstract question of secession and the physical realities of war, so too did certain MECS leaders see "obedience to the powers that be" as allowing greater involvement and participation in governmental affairs during wartime than in peacetime. This distinction became all the more theologically acceptable when considering MECS leaders' reticence toward secession. As historian John Brinsfield notes, "although the Methodist Episcopal Church, South … had separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1845, her bishops were not ready to embrace state secession" in a formal, ecclesiastical manner. Regardless of MECS members' support or opposition, in this view, secession and the establishment of the Confederacy created an important political divide for southern Methodists. And as Christopher Owen remarks, "the MECS *Discipline*

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[52] Obituary for Harris, Deceased Ministers Files – William T. Harris, Memphis Conference Archives, Lambuth; Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XI, 2, and Chapter XIII, 14, Millsaps.

waffled on the issue of state versus federal power; hence, Methodists, in good conscience, rendered obedience to [state] and Confederate authorities." Indeed, southern Presbyterians and southern Baptists both demonstrated similar shifts of loyalty on this basis, as historians Luke Harlow and Paul Harvey respectively describe. The hermeneutic, however, worked both ways. If the Twenty-Third Article and Romans 13 allowed southern Methodists in seceded states to believe they were obligated to support (or at least abide) the Confederacy, the same passages allowed MECS members in Kentucky to view Unionism as compatible with southern Methodism. Thus, Kentuckian Bishop Kavanaugh, during his California arrest, could honestly offer as evidence of Union loyalty that "one of the articles of his Church imposed the obligation on its pastors and members to be obedient to the powers that be." It is also noteworthy in this context, as explicated earlier, that the MECS's Kentucky conferences officially appointed chaplains to only the Union army.[53]

The scriptural and disciplinary context of Romans 13 also figured prominently in the Holston purges during the war. Durwood Dunn notes that the conference's disciplinary committee referenced scriptural teachings "to 'be subject to the supreme authority where they reside' and to 'offer supplications, prayers, and intercession for the rulers' of the Confederacy," but it should be emphasized that the committee explicitly framed Romans 13 as the basis for their justification in disciplining Unionist conference members. Prior to listing the verses and *Discipline* articles relevant to their position, the committee stated, "Your committee, in common with the Methodist Episcopal Church,

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[53] Brinsfield et al, *Faith in the Fight*, 52; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 99; Harlow, *Making of Confederate Kentucky*, 144-46; Paul Harvey, "'Yankee Faith' and Southern Redemption: White Southern Baptist Ministers, 1850-1890," in Miller, Stout, and Wilson, *Religion and the American Civil War*, 171; *SCA*, 13 October 1864.

South, as a whole, hold it to be the religious duty of her ministry and membership within the limits of this Confederacy not only to be subject to the supreme authority of our country where they may reside, but also to use all laudable means to enjoin obedience to its established powers." To violate this duty, the committee continued, "involves … a grave offense against the Word of God and Discipline of the Church." Dunn astutely recognizes the committee's cautious qualifications in its statement. Members recognized that they were breaking with church tradition in disciplining members without formal trial and without physical action of treason. Indeed, it was to such violations of policy that Richard Price futilely objected, and which the 1865 conference session renounced. It was consistent with broader MECS practice during the war, however, for the committee to have believed that its theological and constitutional *rationale* for discipline and expulsion was legitimate. Anticipating accusations of violating the spirituality of the church, moreover, the committee argued that while it disclaimed the authority to judge "abstract political questions of secession and revolution, … these questions have assumed a concrete form … of the most brutal and ruthless warfare known in the history of man, involving every interest, political and religious."[54]

It may be natural instead to view some MECS leaders' wartime actions regarding ecclesiastical nationalism as hypocritical in light of the "spirituality of the church" doctrine. As historian David Rolfs points out, many Union soldiers expressed exactly such sentiment, believing southern churches to be a duplicitous front for a Christianity appropriated by politics and militarization. To disregard the theological and constitutional undergirding of MECS nationalism, however, oversimplifies the complicated relationship

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[54] Dunn, *Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*, 94-97; Fuller, *Appeal to the Records*, 355-58; Price, *Holston Methodism*, 311-12.

that southern Methodists perceived between their obligations to state and to God. Hypocrisy, paradox, and pragmatist ethics existed, certainly. But so too did counterintuitive decisions and actions that reflected an awareness of and devotion to principles that superseded, or at least competed with, pure Confederate nationalism. The case study comparison of Hubbard Kavanaugh and John Early reveals some of these dynamics. Even further, an appreciation of these constitutional and scriptural hermeneutics may help to broaden the historical understanding of the MECS Holston Conference's actions at the close of war. Examining the 1865 conference session, Durwood Dunn describes a surprising "extraordinary change of attitudes" on the part of Holston leaders and especially Bishop Early. As the conference essentially renounced and undid the vast majority of its actions from the prior three years, Dunn notes that "Early had metamorphosed into a 'broad, liberal, and tolerant' leader … who had no objection to the declaration of many of his former rulings as being improper and illegal." Along with rescinding prior disciplinary actions, the session passed resolutions enjoining loyalty to the United States government and calling on MECS ministers to accept and affirm the oath of allegiance. These resolutions explicitly referenced scripture and the *Discipline* as the basis for federal loyalty.[55]

As with wartime ecclesiastical actions, the choices and engagements of MECS leaders following Appomattox and Confederate surrender cannot be simplified to a single factor or motivation. The about-face by Early and the Holston Conference may well have been influenced by combinations of defeat, political pragmatism, fear of Unionist reprisal, genuine changes of heart, or a variety of other dynamics. Dunn attributes the

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[55] Rolfs, *No Peace for the Wicked*, 99-102; Dunn, *Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*, 118-19; Fuller, *Appeal to the Records*, 363-65.

"extraordinary change" to a "disintegration of morale," which without question legitimately pervaded the pro-Confederate portion of the conference. Nevertheless, the theological interpretation of Romans 13 and the commands pertaining to "the powers that be," together with the Twenty-Third Article those scriptures inspired, provided an additional and powerful ecclesiastical basis for the change in posture. MECS leaders who framed their Confederate support in the context of godly and dutiful submission to their particular (regional or sectional) "supreme authority" equally framed their submission to and reintegration into the United States in the same scriptural basis. To southern Methodist leaders, these seemingly paradoxical allegiances were neither mutually exclusive nor fundamentally contradictory. As Bishop George Foster Pierce's biographer explained his subject's theologically nationalist stance at war's end, "He did not, then or afterward, change his views of the justice of the Southern cause, nor believe that the victory of arms is always proof of divine favor. … The decree had gone forth; he would accept it, and make the best of it. He was a Georgian, and Georgia was by the fiat of war held to the Federal Union, and he was now to be loyal to his State and to the General Government."[56]

If MECS leaders reluctantly justified reconciliation—or at least dutiful capitulation—to the United States government, there would be no such attempts made toward their estranged northern Methodist brethren, however. The division and ideological hostility between the MECS and the MEC, consistently manifest since the schism of 1844, brought new bitterness during the course of the war. To clerics who invested deep pride in their southern affiliation as well as their Methodist legitimacy, the

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[56] Dunn, *Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*, 118; Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 488.

actions of the MEC in the Civil War represented an attack on both identities. MECS leaders met that perceived attack with tenacious opposition, reflecting long-unresolved issues of sectionalist honor and ecclesiastical validity. Notwithstanding the vitriolic bitterness over slavery and sectionalism, for many southern Methodist power brokers the Civil War had not begun as a holy war. By the close of the conflict, however, it was one of unholy proportions.

Chapter 7
"The devil came with his 'third temptation'": MECS Leaders and Wartime Conflict with the MEC

Scarcely two years following the close of the Civil War, MEC editor Daniel Curry advised his denomination on its strategy for engaging the MECS. Writing for the central organ of the MEC, the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Curry encouraged his fellow northern Methodists to "disintegrate the rival body, and absorb whatever of it shall be found worth preserving." Such a policy fit into a broader plan to "maintain [the MEC's] place in the South" and reestablish the MEC as the overwhelmingly predominant Wesleyan body across the entire nation. For MECS leaders, however, Curry's "disintegration and absorption" recommendation represented not a novelty in northern Methodist tactics, but a confirmation and admission of a scheme already several years in process. In the southern Methodist imagination, as new sparks of ecclesiastical crusade stoked preexisting flames of tension and resentment, the Civil War transformed from a predominantly secular contest over the autonomy of a sectional slave society into a more comprehensive struggle that threatened both their religious legitimacy and their denominational survival.[1]

Southern Methodist leaders, like their counterparts in other southern denominations, entered the war with an established skepticism toward the purity of northern Christianity. The following four years of battle hardly assuaged their suspicions. James Duncan of the *RCA* commented shortly after the war's commencement that "the Christianity of the North is radically defective," and toward the end of the conflict claimed that "the moral position of the North … is that Christianity authorizes the use of

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[1] *Christian Advocate and Journal* (NY), 25 April 1867.

violent measures, even to the destruction of life and property, to compel sovereign States to relinquish their right of self government… [and] that Christianity authorizes the use of fire and sword to propagate a dogma upon the subject of slavery." In late 1863, the *SCA* quoted a captured letter from "a pious Yankee chaplain," which declared that "as fire and brimstone was the remedy for Sodom and Gomorrah, so is 'Greek fire' the remedy … for that nest and hot bed of rebellion." Editor Edward Myers commented dryly that "the more we see and know of our late 'brethren' and 'friends,' the happier we feel in knowing that we are separated from them forever." Around the same time, as further evidence of the hopeless politicization of northern Christianity, the *SCA* derisively noted the expulsion of numerous northern clergy punished or expelled by their churches because they "could not adopt the politics of Abraham Lincoln." The *SCA*'s disdain did not stop the paper from celebrating the MECS's own purges in Holston Conference that very same month, however, and the *SCA*'s publishers appear to have missed the irony of such commendation.[2]

But southern Methodist representatives also carried into the war era their specific memories and interpretations of the 1844 crisis, and did not hesitate to evoke those connections when assessing the actions of northern Christians in the 1860s. An 1862 column in the *RCA*, for example, comparing political schism to denominational division, asserted that "in both instances the South took the initiative in the *act*, but the North in the *cause* of separation. … Abolitionism, with its fanatical gospel … grew into a *power* that threatened and even began the destruction of constitutional rights." Later, the author

[2] For general treatment of southern denominational cynicism toward northern Christianity, see Crowther, *Southern Evangelicals and the Coming of the Civil War*, and Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*. *RCA*, 11 July 1861, 19 January 1865; *SCA*, 26 November, 19 November 1863.

acknowledged, "the *occasions* were similar. It was a Bishop in 1844, and a President in 1861. … The South, in both instances, was found to be a constitutional minority." In 1864, at a leadership meeting of the Council and Board of Missions of the MECS, a committee report on the "State of the Church" included a scathing evaluation of the root cause of the MECS's wartime travails. "The malignity with which the cruel war that now scourges our land has been prosecuted," the committee charged, "is a just manifestation of the deep seated hostility against [the MECS], which has always pervaded the Northern mind since the division of the Church in 1844." A writer in the *RCA* around the same time similarly vilified northern Christian actions in the war, claiming that "if the devil has not gotten the upper hand of the churches at the North, then it seems somebody very nearly related to him has." In starkly racist rhetoric, the author concluded, "It will be curious to have this matter explained after the war is over. … The past will then peep over their [northern] shoulders like a stolen darkey rolling up the whites of his eyes and saying out of his mouth, full of great shining teeth, 'ha! ha! ha!'"[3]

As evidenced by the lingo of constitutionalism, other prominent MECS voices retained a wartime focus on further establishing their version of the events of 1844. Longtime MECS editor and theologian Thomas Summers, reflecting after the close of the war on the MECS's status in the two schismatic episodes, sought to acquit his denomination of schismatic charges:

> Let it be borne in mind that Southern Methodists, as such, are not seceders. They did not secede in 1844. The M. E. Church, South, was in existence for nearly twenty years before the secession of the South. It was loyal too to the United States Government. … It is now again brought under that Government … and to it will not fail to render the loyalty and obedience due to the powers that be. … Its name has not been changed, as have been the names of some other

[3] *RCA*, 20 February 1862, 23 June 1864.

> denominations: it is today what it was twenty years ago, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. … Other bodies may be secessionists, but secession, ecclesiastical or political cannot be predicated of the General Conference of the M. E. Church, South.[4]

Alongside their distrust of northern Christians' piety, MECS representatives shared with fellow southern Christians the deeper fear that the war threatened southern religion more generally. A reprinted article in the *RCA* entitled "The Yankees and the Southern Church" referenced stories of preachers persecuted or censored for not praying for the Union army and the U.S. government. The author then prophesied a jeremiad about the fate of southern Christianity if independence failed. "The pulpit and the press will be subjected to the vilest despotism, and free thought and free speech wholly interdicted," he predicted. "Northern missionaries will swarm over the land, and the long arm of Northern ecclesiastical power will be stretched out over our people."[5]

In the summer of 1863, after recounting instances of conflict between the independent Methodist churches of Baltimore and the military, Edward Myers similarly forecast that if "the hand of the Federal Government again hold sway over our land, … every Church whose ministers will not bow to it, will be crushed." He concluded grimly, "We are fighting the battles of religion as well as liberty." A writer for the *Central Presbyterian* agreed, writing in early 1864, "There has never been a doubt that religious as well as civil freedom is involved in this war." Historian Kurt Berends, quoting various clergymen's warnings that the war served as a battle for "pure Christianity" and religious

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[4] *RCA*, 9 November 1865.
[5] *RCA*, 15 May 1862.

liberty, asserts that "for many southerners, saving the Confederacy became paramount to saving Christianity."[6]

For southern Methodist leaders, however, the greatest threat to their survival took the form of MEC attempts at expansion into the South. This expansion, and the decisions and actions that accompanied it, provoked fundamental questions of legitimacy and further reignited old passions going back to the earliest days of southern Methodist independence. The original Plan of Separation, agreed upon by an overwhelming majority of the fateful General Conference of 1844, had been quite clear in forbidding "attempt[s] to organize churches or societies" by either branch in the opposite jurisdiction, notwithstanding some anticipated blurry ground in relation to border conferences.[7] The MEC General Conference of 1848 had, of course, fully repudiated and

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[6] *SCA*, 20 August 1863; *Central Presbyterian* article reprinted in *SCA*, 10 March 1864; Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," in Schweiger and Mathews, *Religion in the American South*, 104-06. Christopher Owen extends the analysis of religious preservation to the postwar period, noting that "Reconstruction churches often served as bastions of southern ideological independence," since "religion escaped direct federal or state control," as opposed to various political and social institutions. Ironically, then, these churches served as much the same sanctuary for southern whites that isolated worship assemblies often provided southern blacks in the antebellum era. See Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 114-15.

[7] The most crucial portion of the Plan on this subject is recorded in Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 30:

> WHEREAS, in the event of a separation, a contingency to which the declaration asks attention as not improbable, we esteem it the duty of this General Conference to meet the emergency with Christian kindness and the strictest equity; therefore,
>
> *Resolved*, by the delegates of the several Annual Conferences in General Conference assembled,
>
> 1st. That should the delegates from the conferences in the slaveholding States find it necessary to unite in a distinct ecclesiastical connection, the following rule shall be observed with regard to the Northern boundary of such connection: All the societies, stations, and conferences adhering to the church in the South, by a vote of a majority of the members of said societies, stations, and conferences, shall remain under the unmolested pastoral care of the Southern

renounced that Plan of Separation, as noted in Chapter 2 above. Too, a separate resolution in the same Plan had stipulated that "all the property of the Methodist Episcopal Church … within the limits of the Southern organization, shall be forever free from any claim set up on the part of the Methodist Episcopal Church." The strife relevant to that resolution had not been resolved until the Supreme Court's decision in 1854. Still, the two sides had managed a fairly successful legal truce after that decision, and had generally respected the geographic boundaries in particular since the close of the 1840s.[8]

That is not to say that MECS leaders had never considered the possibility of their own expansion into non-"southern" territory prior to the war. In 1859, for example, Bishop George Foster Pierce advocated "extending our Church over the whole Country. … It would be a blessing to the nation, the Methodism of the South everywhere would be a refuge—a haven to the conservative that agitate and threaten to uproot and tear down the sanctified institutions of our ecclesiastical fathers." Pierce's statements were much more abstract reflection than active strategy, but notably he wrote his assertions while visiting California, which contained a significant representation of evangelists and missionaries from both the northern and southern Wesleyan branches.[9]

Church; and the ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church shall in nowise attempt to organize churches or societies within the limits of the Church, South, nor shall they attempt to exercise any pastoral oversight therein; it being understood that the ministry of the South reciprocally observe the same rule in relation to stations, societies, and conferences adhering, by a vote of the majority, to the Methodist Episcopal Church; provided also that this rule shall apply only to societies, stations, and conferences bordering on the line of division, and not to interior charges, which shall in all cases be left to the care of that church within whose territory they are situated.

[8] Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 31-32.

[9] Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 423-25.

The Bishops' Address at the 1858 MECS General Conference also reconsidered part of the denomination's self-imposed restriction as it pertained to German mission efforts in Missouri. The MEC had maintained that field with the consent of the MECS. The bishops mused that "this was well intended, but several years' observation has led us to the conclusion that it would have been best for … these missions to have continued them in connection with the Southern Church." While not formulating a direct plan of action, the address proposed further consideration as to "whether it will not be best for the Southern Church to take more decided measures for occupying that ground." At the same General Conference session, the MECS leadership made plans to erect a substantial church edifice in Washington, "for the accommodation of the Southern Methodists who are here in crowds all the year, or the months during the session of Congress." MECS leaders therefore expressed some discussion and deliberation on expansion outward, potentially including existing MEC jurisdiction. These formulations, however, never progressed beyond occasional talk or reflection prior to the war, and involved primarily "fringe" areas or borderland regions that could ostensibly be considered blurry ground even by the Plan of Separation's standards.[10]

The crucible of war utterly eliminated the unofficial truce as it did so much else. By the second half of the war, leaders of both branches of Methodism, but particularly within the MEC, considered the other's jurisdiction fair game for expansion of territory and/or membership. And because the religious contest, just as the campaigns of war, took

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[10] *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, May, 1858*, 393, 416-17. According to George Pierce's biographer, the Civil War substantially changed the bishop's views on expansion: "He had seen the evil results of altar against altar … and he came to the conclusion in later years … that wisdom and grace required that each branch of the Church should adhere to the plan of separation."

place overwhelmingly in border and southern terrain, the MECS bore the significant brunt of ecclesiastical attrition. Granted both access and example by the federal military's occupation of southern land and property, northern denominations across the board sought to bolster their borders, rosters, and infrastructure through acquisition of Dixie's human and material resources. One historian of nineteenth-century evangelicalism attributes northern Christian practice in this regard to differing sectional approaches to church-state relations. "The secular-spiritual distinction was less sharp in northern than in southern evangelical circles," Christopher Owen argues, and northerners much more so than southerners "identif[ied] the mission of their government as divine." Consequently, "to many northern evangelicals, the war was a crusade."[11]

Whatever the general underlying philosophy and motivations, one of the earliest wartime clashes over ecclesiastical poaching ironically developed in part because of the MECS's own actions toward its adherents. In the midst of the Holston Conference's purges, the former southern Methodist editor-turned-MEC member (and Unionist firebrand) William Brownlow led a movement of disaffected MECS preachers into the northern body. As early as February 1863, the *SCA* reported that Brownlow planned to call a convention of "loyal ministers" at Knoxville "for the purpose of declaring themselves the Church and claiming the Church property, and maintaining their title before the Courts." In his strident call, Brownlow said that "we will expel the rebels from

[11] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 108. For various examples of broader northern denominational incursions in to the South as a result of the war, see Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 130-45.

the Church, under that chapter in the Wesleyan Discipline which requires obedience to the 'powers that be,' and a ready and cheerful obedience to laws of the land."[12]

The meeting ultimately convened on 7 July 1864. Sure enough, the proceedings included a "report in favor of returning to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and making most respectfully, to be recognized by her and provided for, as the Holston Annual Conference." In a later resolution, true to the *SCA* editor's fears, the breakaway ministers declared themselves "entitled in law, to all property belonging to [the Holston Conference], and with Divine blessing we intend to claim and hold the same, and rebuild the waste places in Zion." Seeking to identify the level of support from East Tennessee ministers, the convention estimated the anticipated MEC conference's market at about sixty Unionist clergy and sixty more lay preachers, with about forty additional wildcard pastors who might swing either direction.[13]

The Knoxville convention elicited strong response in the MECS. Recapping the session, Edward Myers sneered in the *SCA* that the meeting of "traitors to their native South … has its significance. It points out to us unmistakably those traitorous preachers and laymen, who are among us, but not of us." While noting that he hated "to see any of these former brethren hurried away into an act of treachery to our Church," Myers seized the opportunity to point out his interpretation of the convention's implications for the MECS. "If we are overpowered … our own chosen Church will be prostrated," he opined. "We can live only in the event of the triumph of our country." Although MECS member and Holston Conference historian Richard Price acknowledged that Bishop Early's demagoguery incited justifiable MEC censure "for mixing politics and religion in

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[12] *SCA*, 12 February 1863.
[13] 1 September 1864; Price, *Holston Methodism*, 353-58.

his administration during the war," Price nonetheless deemed that "the Knoxville convention out-Heroded Herod along this line." Pursuing vengeance well beyond eye for eye, Price charged that the convention sought not just "the confiscation of the property of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, but … the confiscation of the Church itself. … The proposal [was] to turn over to the Methodist Episcopal Church the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Holston *en masse*." Not surprisingly, the following session of the MECS Holston Conference in 1864 expelled several of the Knoxville convention participants on the basis of "inaugurating steps to enter the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) and carry all the membership with them, also to convey … all the property of the Holston Conference." In the end, the MECS lost a fair number of its prewar clergymen, although perhaps not as many as the Knoxville convention's estimates may have led Confederate Methodists to fear. In a postwar statistical analysis, Richard Price calculated that sixteen of fifty-eight preachers from the 1861 Annual Conference session roster "eventually became identified with the Northern branch of Methodism." Price's data, however, only included the ordained traveling ministry, so the total losses including lay local preachers were likely much higher.[14]

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To have an internal squabble create an exodus from its membership into the MEC was bad enough, but at the same time, beginning in late 1863, the MECS faced a far more serious threat. Over a series of orders granted in late 1863 and early 1864, Lincoln's

[14] *SCA*, 1 September 1864; Price, *Holston Methodism*, 357-58, 361, 265.

Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, authorized the confiscation by MEC representatives of "all houses of Worship … belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in which a loyal minister, who has been appointed by a loyal Bishop of said Church, does not now officiate." MEC bishop Edward Ames, a close friend of Stanton's primarily responsible—or blameworthy—for instigating the confiscation orders, received primary authority over most occupied departments, although other MEC bishops also received oversight of various regions of the South. Commanding officers within the respective departments were "directed to extend to the Ministers, that may be appointed by Bishop Ames … all the aid, countenance and support practicable in the execution of their mission," and the bishops also received full furnishings by the quartermasters and commissaries of the military while overseeing ecclesiastical occupation and seizure.[15]

With such official license granted, MEC operatives wasted no time in securing southern church property for their own use. Northern preachers soon occupied and controlled dozens of MECS buildings across Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Virginia, South Carolina, and Florida. The postwar MECS philippic *Martyrdom in Missouri* recounts confiscations and legal battles over a variety of churches in that state. As its author accurately noted, "the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church and their ministers penetrated the South in every direction." In many of these cases, church properties already lay in the hands of military authorities, either by reason of either

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[15] Special Orders No. 15, 18 January 1864, John Christian Keener Papers, Box 1 Folder 1, Emory; Ralph E. Morrow, *Northern Methodism and Reconstruction* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1956), 33, 58. Morrow's dated work, especially pp. 33-41, remains an excellent treatment of the confiscation controversy, although effective briefer summaries may also be found in Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 22-26; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 28-32; and Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 330-32.

federal usage or alleged treasonous preaching, and simply required the appointment of a "loyal" minister on the part of the northern bishops. Indeed, historian Warren Armstrong suggests that Union Army appropriation of church properties for military purposes early in the war inspired northern religious leaders to seek further confiscation for denominational use. The rationalizations by some MEC representatives "that they were simply occupying vacant pulpits," or that seizures were designed to be a temporary military expediency, struck southern Methodist leaders as specious. This skepticism seemed especially warranted when those offering such justifications, such as MEC minister-missionary (and future bishop) John Newman, refused to return confiscated properties after the war's close, until compelled by law or the threat of legal action. Or, in another instance, when Bishop Simpson framed the MEC's occupation of the most prominent MECS church in Nashville as a temporary solution to the southern denomination's wartime disorganization and chaos, yet displayed stalwart resistance against turning the building over to an assigned MECS preacher with a ready congregation. In some cases, confiscation went deeper than mere buildings. Historian Beth Schweiger describes a Virginia MECS preacher who discovered his church destroyed and the membership register "in the hands of a [northern] preacher." The cleric risked losing not only his meetinghouse, but his congregation as well.[16]

Southern Methodists responded unsurprisingly to these seizures and occupations. The Missionary Chaplain assigned to Stephen D. Lee's army declared the Stanton-Ames order to be "verification and demonstration of the wildest apprehensions of the speakers

[16] Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 30-31; Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri, Vol. I*, 179-250, 257 (quote on 257); Armstrong, *For Courageous Fighting and Confident Dying*, 75; Sweet, *Methodism in American History*, 296; Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 24-25, 36-39; Smith, *Cross and Flame*, 149-50; Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 111.

and writers of the South who have told the people that Church as well as State is at stake in this war." In a scathing condemnation, the chaplain concluded, "Is there any 'lower deep' even for Northern Methodists? I was going to write, 'Yes, hereafter if not here,' but God is the Judge."[17]

Bishop James Andrew likewise had difficulty believing the news of his northern episcopal counterpart's complicity in the confiscation orders. Writing in the *SCA* about the MEC's role in the war, Andrew regretfully noted that "the Northern Methodists stand most prominent … [as] apologists and prime agents of this monstrous despotism." But regarding the *SCA*'s report of the order granted to Ames, Andrew wrote, "Is not this a slander upon Bishop Ames? … I have been wont to regard him as a Christian gentleman, and am loath to believe he could lend himself as an instrument in this accomplishment." Notwithstanding Andrew's benefit of the doubt, the MECS papers had no difficulty assigning blame and censure directly to Ames. An article printed in both the *RCA* and *SCA* deprecated the northern bishop as "promoted to the distinguished honor of installing the hirelings over the stolen sheepfolds" of the MECS. "When he finishes his course on earth," the author mused, in a riff on the apostle Paul's writing in II Timothy 4, "how sweet will be that item of history in his dying retrospect, I have fought the good fight of fanaticism, I have kept all the property of other from them I could; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown as bright as any thief ever obtained, and not for me only, but for all my hirelings who love stealing."[18]

Other MECS leaders similarly found scriptural application for assessing MEC wartime actions. Presiding over the Tennessee Conference session of 1864, Bishop

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[17] *SCA*, 28 January 1864.
[18] 3 March 1864, 7 April 1864.

Joshua Soule remarked, "It seems that the Secretary of War … has become an archbishop and has been appointing preachers to churches in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South." Later, while encouraging ministers facing poverty or joblessness, Soule quoted from Matthew 6:19: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and thieves break through and steal." A northern preacher visiting and reporting on the session noted that "as [Soule] said *thieves break through* … I *thought* he looked North with an expressive glance." And Thomas Summers, writing the introduction for the first installment of *Martyrdom in Missouri*, indicted the MEC for failing to heed the example of Jesus when faced with earthly conquest. Summers wrote, "The devil came with his 'third temptation' to Northern Methodists, including even bishops of the Church, and they did not say, 'Get thee hence, Satan!' They ascended by the devil's ladder to 'thrones of power,' and played such tricks … as made the angels weep!" Even if many MEC members had "not bowed the knee to Baal" by supporting the confiscations, Summers believed the "Northern Methodist Connection" as a whole held culpability, because "these enormities … were perpetrated by its bishops and other agents," and "endorsed … by General and Annual Conferences."[19]

A few northern spokesmen joined the MECS leadership in condemning attempts at confiscation, or at least displayed reluctance in associating themselves with the seizures. The *Chicago Times*, a northern Democratic organ and a frequent critic of Federal wartime policy, published an 1864 article deprecating the Stanton-Ames order. Happily reprinted by the *SCA*, the article pointedly asked, "In what portion of the

[19] Tigert, *Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 131; Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri, Vol. I*, 12. The temptation of Jesus, including the "third temptation" to worship the devil in exchange for "all the kingdoms of the world," is recorded in Matthew 4. Thomas Summers's reference to Baal is drawn from I Kings 19.

Methodist discipline, or by what rule of government in the Church, do clergymen of that denomination derive their appointments from civil officers? Where is it provided that Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church may connect themselves with and supervise Churches beyond the jurisdiction of the General Conference, and yet retain their office and standing in the Church?" Abraham Lincoln himself described the effects of the Stanton order as an "embarrassment," and Attorney General Edward Bates proclaimed that "not a shadow of law" supported the property seizures. According to historian Christopher Owen, owing to his belief in long "traditions of church-state separation" in the U.S., Andrew Johnson "dismissed northern claims to southern Methodist property" upon succeeding Lincoln. And an MEC layman, Brigadier General Clinton Fisk, carried out one of the most surprising instances of conciliatory defiance of MEC policy. Following a drawn-out battle between northern bishop Matthew Simpson and MECS representatives, and by the intervention of Andrew Johnson, the MECS regained control of Nashville's historic McKendree Church. Simpson had resisted to the end, including refusing to turn the building's keys over to the MECS custodians, who instead had to acquire the keys from U.S. general George H. Thomas. Nevertheless, at long last, on the first Sunday that McKendree reopened for worship under MECS auspices, the northern Methodist Fisk compelled his entire staff to attend the service as a show of peacemaking.[20]

Notwithstanding these examples, they very much represent the exception rather than the rule of general MEC and northern assent to confiscation practices. Historian

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[20] *SCA*, 14 April 1864; Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 331-32; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 130-31; Smith, *Cross and Flame*, 150-52. Timothy Wesley elaborates on Lincoln's attitude toward internal denominational battles in Wesley, *Politics of Faith*, 68-71.

Sean Scott argues that the Stanton order created a bit of dissension among northern Protestant denominations, but little at all within the MEC itself. Sometimes, the confiscation allowance even resulted in friction between rival northern denominations competing for valued property, as in the case Warren Armstrong records of northern United Brethren and northern Baptists battling over ownership of an abandoned Vicksburg church. And although several northern denominations received similar license as the MEC for seizure and occupation of southern churches, Daniel Stowell confirms that "the northern Methodists engaged in the most extensive campaign of church occupation in the South." Actually, some northern Methodist spokesmen were quite forthright about their long-term intentions regarding southern property. The MEC *Western Christian Advocate*, in an article reprinted in part by the *SCA*, stated in November 1865, "It is not for us to surrender these trusts put into our hands by the military authorities … and the Southern people never needed a ministry loyal to the core more than now, and it is not yet time, looking only to the nation's good, for them to recall the trust. … The war of arms has ended, but the war of ideas yet rages."[21]

An MEC clergyman, "Rev. Mr. McMullen, of Indiana," took charge of a confiscated MECS church in Memphis shortly after the issuance of the Stanton-Ames order. Although McMullen, "finding [that] the members were disinclined to attend," abandoned trying to maintain the congregation, the former MECS preacher, J. W. Knott, had to appeal to President Lincoln before the church was restored to MECS ownership. And in a similar case, MECS leaders in New Orleans appealed to President Johnson in late 1865 for the restoration of several properties. Acknowledging that most churches had

[21] Scott, *A Visitation of God*, 180-82; Armstrong, *For Courageous Fighting and Confident Dying*, 78-79; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 30; *SCA*, 2 November 1865.

been returned, the leaders noted that MEC preacher John P. Newman retained military possession of three MECS black congregations' churches, and "claims to have converted … the whole 2000 members [of the three churches] to the Methodist Church North." The MECS spokesmen sardonically appealed, "We pray your Excellency to deliver us from this stupendous proselytizing of the War Department. And to again order General Canby to give us our own Churches for the use of our own colored people."[22]

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The practice of confiscation fit in turn into a much broader MEC strategy of "converting" the South to the northern Methodist fold. At the start of 1864, the Mission Committee of the MEC, citing a "deep and widespread interest felt for Missions in Southern territory of the Union beyond the bounds of our Annual Conferences … [and in] regions within our army lines in the so-called Confederate States," appropriated a significant expenditure for evangelizing the South, beginning with the border states. In the sardonic yet astute summarization of the *SCA*, "these devout brethren … intend to bring the gospel to the benighted Southerners." To this point, territorial clashes between the sectional Methodist branches had occurred almost entirely in border regions, and generally, as in the case of Knoxville, involved internal dissatisfaction at least as much as external pressure. The announcement of the MEC Mission Committee, together with simultaneous actions regarding confiscation of southern church property as discussed

[22] "Early Methodist County Information," 20, compiled by Emily Walker, Lambuth; "Rev. James W. Knott," Deceased Ministers Files, Lambuth; John Christian Keener to Andrew Johnson, 20 November 1865, John Christian Keener Papers, Box 1 Folder 1, Emory.

below, signified a new and much more blatant level of disregard for MECS "jurisdiction" as stipulated by the long-repudiated Plan of Separation. Although the territorial truce of the past nearly fifteen years had certainly been unofficial, from this point on the MEC rejected any semblance of MECS jurisdictional sovereignty or exclusivity in the South. The MEC *Western Christian Advocate*, in mid-1864, demonstrated the hardened attitude of many in the MEC toward their estranged southern brethren. "The Methodist Episcopal Church will absorb the loyal Methodism of the South," according to the paper, "and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, will die with the rebellion, which she, more than all others, helped to inaugurate."[23]

The chaos of war limited the organizational effectiveness of the MEC's southern incursions, beyond the periodic meetinghouse takeover. But the close of war opened the door for more sweeping, cohesive action, and northern Methodists seized the opportunity. As early as July 1864, in their joint address to the MEC General Conference, the northern bishops had laid out their intentions for the occupied South:

> The progress of the federal arms has thrown open to the loyal churches of the Union large and inviting fields of Christian enterprise and labor. In the cultivation of these fields it is natural and reasonable to expect that the Methodist Episcopal Church should occupy a prominent position. She occupied these fields once. … For nineteen years they have been in the occupancy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to the wrongful exclusion of the M. E. Church. But her days of exclusive occupancy are ended. … And now the way being open for the return of the Methodist Episcopal Church, it is but natural that she should re-enter those fields and once more realize her unchanged title, as "the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America."[24]

Pursuant to this declaration, MEC preachers and missionaries went southward in droves at war's end, gradually organizing a wave of new conferences across the former

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[23] *SCA*, 26 October 1864; *Western Christian Advocate*, 20 April 1864, cited in Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 55.

[24] Reprinted in *SCA*, 28 July 1864.

Confederate states: Holston in June 1865, Mississippi in December 1865, South Carolina in April 1866, Tennessee in October 1866, Texas in January 1867, and Georgia and Alabama in October 1867. Nor did MEC evangelists limit themselves to the unchurched and unaffiliated souls of the South. Rather, as the MECS bishops complained in a Pastoral Address of 1867, MEC missionaries "are sent … not to neglected places, but where our congregations abound, and where the doctrines of Methodism are fully preached according to the standards once held in common with us by the Church that sends them." As the MECS leadership fully recognized, MEC representatives were practicing ecclesiastical poaching instead of evangelistic collaboration.[25]

The MECS bishops' grievance revealed the crux of southern Methodist concerns toward MEC conduct: the war had become an attack against MECS legitimacy and a threat to the southern church altogether. Ever since the 1848 northern repudiation of the Plan of Separation, the MECS had fought a philosophical battle (and sometimes a legal one) to defend its contention of being a legitimate and coequal branch of American Wesleyan Methodism. In the MEC's wartime actions of confiscation, evangelizing, and conference organizing, however, the MECS perceived their greatest challenge to spiritual and geographical autonomy. Moreover, any southern Methodists uncertain of MEC intentions needed only to consult the pages of the northern church's central publishing organ for clarification. The MEC *Christian Advocate and Journal*, under the editorship of clergyman Daniel Curry, encouraged a complete takeover of southern Methodism. As the war closed, Curry solicited his denomination to "occupy the whole reclaimed territory of the South, and … offer *genuine* loyal Methodist to the people there who will receive it

[25] Fuller, *Appeal to the Records*, 280; Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 155.

[emphasis added].” In early 1866, Curry went further: “As with the state, so with the Church, the removal of slavery necessitates a disintegration and reconstruction. This … applies even more fully to Southern Methodism than to any other Southern ecclesiastical system.” And as noted at the chapter’s start, by mid-1867, this “disintegration and reconstruction” proposal evolved once more, as Curry encouraged the MEC to “disintegrate the rival body, and absorb whatever of it shall be found worth preserving.” Southern Methodists latched on to this phraseology, and in Methodist historian Hunter Farish’s words, “The decade immediately following the War was for the [MECS] Church primarily a period of rehabilitation and readjustment in which it was forced to combat an active policy of ‘disintegration and absorption’ on the part of its sister Church of the North.”[26]

Other voices seemed to implicitly or explicitly challenge southern Methodist legitimacy as well. The *SCA* quoted and commented on the pro-Union *Memphis Bulletin’s* article about Bishop Ames’s arrival to Memphis. “An impromptu reception was given Bishop Ames … by a number of the loyal religious [Mark that!—Ed.] Methodists of Memphis.” For *SCA* editor Edward Myers, the meaning was clear: nonloyal Methodists were apparently also *nonreligious* Methodists. One month later,

[26] On the legal side of the legitimacy battle, consider this quote from the 1858 MECS General Conference, made by the commissioners of the Supreme Court church property suit: “In making this their final report of their long-continued, laborious, and embarrassing duties … [the committee members] congratulate the Church upon the success which … has attended our feeble efforts to secure our pecuniary rights, and at the same time to *vindicate the integrity of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, as a legitimate branch of the great family of Methodists in America* [emphasis added].” *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, May, 1858*, 506. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 1865, cited in Dunham, *Attitude of the Northern Clergy*, 214; *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 22 February 1866, 25 April 1867; Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 362.

after Ames had overseen the confiscation of MECS churches in New Orleans, an *SCA* correspondent from the city reported that "for the first time in my life, I went without freedom to worship God. … In analogy with the purpose of the United States to reduce the Confederate States to the status of territories," the correspondent continued, "the M. E. Church, North, is to reduce the M. E. Church, South, to the status of missions. Bishop Ames has unblushingly begun the work." In May 1866, a collection of New England Methodists declared "even a seeming recognition" of MECS legitimacy to be "contrary to every act of justice and piety" due to the southern church's support of slavery.[27]

In the face of such real and perceived threats and attacks against southern Methodist property, autonomy, and legitimacy, MECS spokesmen responded predictably. William Leftwich, author of the *Martyrdom in Missouri* volumes, was one of the most vehement southern representatives. Amidst invective-laced tales of Yankee atrocities against southern preachers generally and MECS preachers specifically, Leftwich called out the MEC repeatedly for its role in the MECS's "general desolation." Referencing two of the South's most reviled invaders, Leftwich charged the MEC with both "ecclesiastical John Brownism" and sending "ecclesiastical bummers" to plunder and destroy southern Methodist property. Moreover, Leftwich enlisted some of the most prominent MECS voices to endorse his accounts of MEC wrongdoing. In the preface to Volume I, then-bishop Enoch Marvin opined that "the maudlin sentiment that would daub over the great public crimes committed by the highest dignitaries of the Northern Methodist Church …

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[27] *SCA*, 4 February, 3 March 1864; *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 10 May 1866, cited in Moorhead, *American Apocalypse*, 199. These voices were not alone in their sentiment of connecting the outcome of the war to Christianity. In the buildup to the election of 1864, no less than 7 MEC conferences declared any attempts at a negotiated end to war—short of southern surrender—to be "unchristian and sinful." See Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*, 387.

in the South and along the border, is *not* charity. … True charity," Marvin claimed, "will seek to bring them to confession and recantation of their deeds." And although the bishop tactfully noted that he did not endorse all of the views and conclusions in the volume, he affirmed "that the *facts* … have been collected and verified with great care," and were fully accurate and trustworthy.[28]

MECS publisher Thomas Summers, writing in the introduction to Volume I, claimed (sanctimoniously, and rather unconvincingly) that southern Methodists were "strongly tempted to throw the veil of oblivion over these scenes of oppression and outrage, in which so many of our co-religionists of the North bore so conspicuous a part." Nevertheless, "the cause of truth and righteousness demands the publication." Further, the MECS "owe[s] it to the ecclesiastical bodies of the South that posterity shall be told who invaded their rights; who robbed them of their churches, parsonages, cemeteries, and seminaries; who murdered, scourged, and plundered, and banished many of their ministers and lay members, including even women and children, because they would not compromise principles which they held dearer than life." Prominent clergyman James Brookes, hearkening to the theme of submission "to the powers that be," wrote in the introduction to Volume II that it "lies entirely beyond the province of the Church to pronounce in favor of one Caesar rather than the other." Therefore, he pointedly lamented, "if [the Church] had governed her course simply by the word of God during these years of strife … we would not now be mourning over the ashes of her martyred

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[28] Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri, Vol. II*, 306; Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri, Vol. I*, 177, 6-7.

children whom she ruthlessly caused to pass through the fire to the dark Moloch of patriotism."[29]

Leftwich's volumes did not stand alone, of course. The Georgia Conference had asserted as early as its 1863 session that "northern victory threatened 'the very existence of our churches,'" according to historian Christopher Owen. An editorial in the *SCA* in early 1864 made dire predictions of an MEC-dominated future. "Abolitionized border Methodists … upheld by the power of the Yankee administration, will seize our Church property, our colleges, schools and houses of worship, and drive from the pulpit and the professor's chair every man, who will not take the oath proposed in Lincoln's amnesty proclamation," the writer asserted. "Then will Bishops Soule, Andrew, Capers, and Bascom, and all the leaders of the separation of 1844, be held up to their grandchildren as monsters of iniquity. … Our Southern Methodism would be displaced by the Yankee Methodist Church, and the fanatic ministry. Our Bishops would be disrobed." And Holston clergyman/historian Richard Price commented with disdain on a resolution of the organizing session of the Holston Conference (MEC) in 1865. The resolution declared that "those who entered into the late rebellion and imbibed the spirit thereof are guilty of a crime sufficient to exclude them from the kingdom of grace and glory and must not be admitted into this Conference, save upon full confession and thorough repentance." In Price's view, "in other words, [MECS preachers] were put in charge of Churches when they deserved to be in hell." He concluded, "I am sorry for the fanaticism displayed by Holston (North) in 1865, and glad that this fanaticism was not exceeded by the

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[29] Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri, Vol. I*, 9; Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri, Vol. II*, 16. Brookes's allusion to "Moloch" references pagan ritual sacrifice as described in the biblical Leviticus 18:21.

undeniable and ever-to-be-deplored fanaticism of Holston, South, in 1862, 1863, and 1864." Price apparently recognized a distinction between the overt damnation of the northern Holston Conference resolutions and the implicit damnation of the southern session's defrocking and banishment of its Unionist clergy.[30]

Some southern Methodists advocated turnabout as fair play. Shortly after the war's close, the *SCA* published a letter attributed to an MECS member residing in the North. The correspondent asked, "Could the M. E. Church, South, adapt herself to the times so as to extend her influence and communion over the Western States? … You know the M. E. Church, North, has broken her covenant of 1844 with you on this subject, and is rushing to ride you down in the South by force, fraud and cunning," the writer continued. "Throw a door open for the formation of a church organization which can carry with it the people of the West and extend from the lakes to the gulf." At least two MEC spokesmen, Daniel Stevenson and Erasmus Fuller, portrayed the MECS's postwar acceptance of MEC defections in Baltimore, Indiana, and Illinois as evidence of the southern denomination's own betrayal of 1844. Stevenson claimed haughtily that "so far as I know, that [MECS] Church has received every minister and member, and every station and circuit, that has offered to unite with it," and justified MEC proselytizing in the South accordingly. Fuller also countered MECS grievances toward MEC encroachment with appeals to the MECS's postwar Indiana and Illinois acquisitions.[31]

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[30] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 94-95; *SCA*, 4 February 1864; Price, *Holston Methodism*, 392.

[31] *SCA*, 26 October 1865; Daniel Stevenson, *The Methodist Church in the South* (Cincinnati: Cranston and Stowe, 1892), 7-8; Fuller, *Appeal to the Records*, 298-304.

Whatever the rationale, MEC representatives pressed on into the South, and their presence often met with antipathy from their southern competitors. Indeed, one influential North Carolina lawyer, Walter W. Lenoir, expressed a combination of grudging respect and cutting resentment toward the northern Methodist influx in his region after the war. Although he was not a Methodist himself, and had opposed both slavery and secession prior to the war, Lenoir blamed northern Methodists for the continued incitement and tension he witnessed. "We are having very peaceable lives in this section," he wrote to his father Thomas. "There seems however to lurk under this smooth surface a spirit of evil. … Radicalism would, I think be rapidly in the wane here if it were not for two things. One of these is the Methodist Church, North, which is a mere political machine, a powerful radical political organization, thoroughly drilled and disciplined as such, its political tactics thoroughly systematized in everything from the Sunday School up."[32]

Many white southerners reacted in kind. MEC missionary clergyman William George Matton's experience demonstrates the typical welcome northern Methodists received during their postwar expansion southward. Assigned to North Carolina, Matton began his journey to the mission field on a positive note. En route to his assignment, he had a cordial experience with an MECS preacher in Virginia. But upon arriving to North Carolina, he met a man at the post office who "asked if I was the new Methodist preacher. In my simplicity," Matton recorded in his memoirs, "I said 'yes.'" His acquaintance expressed confusion, believing a former MECS minister was supposed to

[32] Walter Waightstill Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, 16 July 1866, Thomas Lenoir Papers, Duke; for biographical information, see Frank P. Cauble, "Lenoir, Walter Waightstill," *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, ed. William S. Powell, located at <http://ncpedia.org/biography/lenoir-walter-waightstill>, accessed 6 January 2016.

have been reassigned to the area. "Seeing my mistake," Matton wrote, "I told him that I was a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, without the suffix. At this, he angrily replied, 'we don't recognize you here.' … Before many hours, it was generally known, that an insolent Yankee Methodist preacher had arrived." Matton found it difficult to find a location to preach; most venues refused him access. He was also overcharged by his boarding house, whose landlord declared that he "must be paid for his popularity, which was endangered by keeping a Yankee." While finding limited preaching opportunities where he could, Matton also managed to hold a public debate with a local MECS preacher, concerning whether the 1844 schism was caused by slavery or by constitutional issues. By the close of the decade, Matton had reached a sort of truce with the local MECS, and even claimed a couple close friends among the MECS clergy. Increasingly, however, Matton faced increasing new antagonism from local members of the Ku Klux Klan, perhaps indicating the broader threat that southerners perceived from northern Christian incursions. Matton left North Carolina in the early 1870s. His experience aligns with Christopher Owen's conclusion about MEC preachers in postwar Georgia, where "social ostracism could be more effective than violence." Even so, the potential of violence was always present. MEC minister James Fowler "normally preached with a brace of pistols on his pulpit," according to Owen, in case local antagonists decided to pursue more dire measures than ostracism.[33]

Although bitterness and conflict marked MEC expansion throughout the MECS's traditional territory, tensions and clashes remained most acute in the border states where

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[33] William George Matton, *Memoirs*, transcript of original, unpublished manuscript, William George Matton Papers, 1859-87, Duke; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 119.

they began, and where interaction still occurred most frequently and intensely. There, clergy in both branches of Methodism grappled with the long-term and short-term consequences and issues raised by Wesleyan and political schism. The Holston region stands out as particularly chaotic. In Knoxville, according to Hunter Farish, "every one of the Methodist churches was either destroyed or damaged" during the course of the war. Moreover, the ecclesiastical progression largely mirrored the political and military back-and-forth that characterized the war years. Following the Knoxville convention of Unionist Methodist clergy, the MEC took over most MECS properties in the city, aided by the Union military. The close of the 1860s saw a decline of MEC control in East Tennessee, and most properties returned to MECS hands by early into the next decade. Nevertheless, bitterness did periodically explode into violence. In February of 1868, a mob in Blount County, East Tennessee attacked and viciously beat Henry Neal, a young MECS preacher, ostensibly only because "he did not heed the 'warnings' given to him under the authority of the leagues that he would not be permitted to preach the gospel in that country," according to Unionist newspaper editor John Fleming. According to the *RCA*, another MECS Holston preacher, "Rev. Jacob Brillhart," was "*mobbed and ridden on a rail*" for "attempting to exercise the functions of his high and holy office," "because, like hosts of other good men, he adhered to the Southern cause during the war." The cases of northerners and Unionists such as William Matton and the expelled MECS preachers from 1862-63 demonstrate that the road of persecution traveled both directions. Historian Durwood Dunn in particular deftly points out the ways in which ecclesiastical

battles reflected local concerns and issues as well as broader issues of theology and denominational longevity.[34]

For numerous clergy, postwar border-state rivalry thus involved intricate maneuvers and shifting "allegiances." Thomas Ralston's experience illustrates the complex dynamics of ecclesiastical affiliation on the border. A longtime MECS preacher in Kentucky, Ralston had withdrawn from the MECS in 1858 to join the Protestant Episcopal Church for two years. Throughout the war period, however, Ralston affiliated with the MEC, and then retired from active ministry at the close of war citing poor health. After the war, Bishop Kavanaugh persuaded Ralston, his longtime friend, to accept an appointment as Presiding Elder in the MECS. At the 1866 Kentucky Conference session, Ralston formally rejoined the MECS, where he remained until his death.[35]

Similar situations occurred in Holston. According to Richard Price, MECS clergyman Jacob Broyles lived in an area where "at the close of the Civil War … preachers of the Church, South, were not permitted to occupy the section." So Broyles "attached himself to the Methodist Episcopal Church temporarily," then rejoined MECS when it was permissible again. Another MECS member, Andrew Hunter, believed the MEC would absorb the MECS, and transferred his membership to the northern branch at the close of war. A few years later, the MEC stationed another preacher to Hunter's town,

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[34] Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 29-30; Fisher, *War At Every Door*, 86-87; on Henry Neal, see Price, *Holston Methodism*, 496, and Dunn, *Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*, 128; *RCA*, 9 November 1865; on the depth and duration of postwar antipathy between MEC and MECS in Holston, see Dunn, *Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*, 111-38.

[35] Redford, *H. H. Kavanaugh*, 323-24. Kavanaugh's relationship with Ralston provides another marker of his penchant for moderation and avoidance of partisanship. Unsurprisingly, Kavanaugh also presided over the Missouri Annual Conference session of 1865, which was the first session to meet in that bitterly divided state since 1860. See Redford, *H. H. Kavanaugh*, 421-22.

"who advocated and practiced social equality with the negroes," Price records, "whereupon Mr. Hunter returned to the Southern Church, which really was the Church of his choice."[36]

Recognizing these shifts of affiliation between the MECS and the MEC during and after the war, Richard Price argued to his fellow MECS adherents that "men who changed under the circumstances in which some of our preachers found themselves at the close of the war should not be judged harshly." In his history, he describes the 1866 MECS Holston Conference reversal of its wartime disciplinary measures, stating that "all the preachers who had been expelled … under the rulings of Bishop Early were restored to the Church and ministry, with the exception of [a] Mr. Blackburn, who at the time was in a state of expulsion from the Methodist Episcopal Church." Nonetheless, Price acknowledges that "this restoration was only virtual, and never became actual. The mischief had been done, and could only be confessed, but could not be repaired." But the MECS's Holston members maintained their own grievances toward the MEC as well. At their 1867 session, the southern members resolved that "the hand of the Holston Conference, South, cannot take the hand of the Holston Conference (North) until that hand shall release from its grasp and surrender to us all the property of ours which it now holds." Historian Durwood Dunn succinctly captures the postwar crisis of Holston. "With the ultimate military triumph of the Union over the Confederacy," he muses, "there emerged a far lengthier battle for possession of the hearts and minds of the people called

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[36] Price, *Holston Methodism*, 198, 271.

Methodists in Holston. … In many respects, this new civil war in Southern Appalachian Methodism would overshadow all previous battles within Holston."[37]

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Dunn's conclusion about the Holston region touches on a historiographical question on which numerous scholars have debated: To what extent may the American Civil War be considered a "holy war?" James McPherson shies away from such language, contending that "the Civil War was not a war of religion; it did not pit one faith against another." David Rolfs, examining the war from the particular perspective of northern Protestants, argues conversely that the conflict was a holy war indeed, and as evidence points to "a corresponding demonization process that partially stripped away Southerners' special status as human beings made in the image of God." In Rolfs's analysis of religious northern soldiers' attitudes, "The South was a modern-day Canaan awaiting divine judgment, and now … the North would serve as the instrument of God's judgment and forcibly restore a wayward section to the kingdom of God." Similarly, Kurt Berends, examining the Confederate counterparts to Rolfs's northern Protestants, proclaims baldly, "The Civil War was a holy war."[38]

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[37] Price, *Holston Methodism*, 415, 305, 445. Price's mention of Blackburn is noteworthy, for it indicates an important point in inter-Methodist relations. The MECS may have zealously opposed the MEC, but seemingly recognized and maintained MEC judgments and discipline in areas of morality and ecclesiology. Dunn, *Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*, 110.

[38] McPherson's quote is found in his preface to Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God*, ix; Rolfs, *No Peace for the Wicked*, 102; Berends, "Confederate Sacrifice and the 'Redemption' of the South," in Schweiger and Mathews, *Religion in the American South*, 106.

Perhaps the disagreement of Berends and Rolfs with McPherson is based in their assessments of the personal motivations of each side as opposed to McPherson's generalization of the broader aims of war. Richard Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William Still make a soft assertion of holy war, claiming that amidst numerous ideological aims, "in some sense the war was one between the churches of the North and those of the South."[39]

But George Rable provides the most nuanced and powerful argument for viewing the war as one contended as a holy struggle by religious partisans. Exploring the intra-denominational conflicts in Missouri that mirrored those explored by Durwood Dunn in East Tennessee or Christopher Owen in Georgia, Rable makes a crucial point about ecclesiastical division. "Although many [southern Christians] opposed emancipation, *it was the war itself* that most deeply divided denominations, neighborhoods, and congregations [emphasis added]." For southern Methodist leaders, Rable's argument applied to the deepest foundations of their ecclesiological identity. The actions of the MEC, particularly regarding property confiscation and threats against southern Methodist autonomy and legitimacy, evolved the scope of the war. Southern Methodists had entered a war for political independence and the preservation of slavery, but they failed at both. Now they were left to battle for denominational survival and theological validity. That struggle, more than any other, shaped the actions of MECS leaders as they grappled with military defeat and prepared for the most important and defining General Conference since 1844.[40]

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[39] Beringer, Hattaway, Jones, and Still, *Elements of Confederate Defeat*, 33.
[40] Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 200.

Chapter 8
"Without embarrassment or compromise": Ecclesiastical Rebuilding and the Preservation of MECS Autonomy

Shortly following the end of the Civil War, Methodist laywoman Eudora Neblett's diary subtly connected the broad reality of Confederate defeat with her personal experience of Methodist life. "Our Sabbath School is not doing well in consequence of a want of teachers," the Mississippian wrote, "…. Our armies have all surrendered and we must quietly submit to an overpowering foe. … I feel as tho' I had no country, but seek one to come, a city whose builder and maker is God. … May the Lord revive us and forbid that our people should now sink into almost a state of anarchy."[1]

At the close of the Civil War, as Neblett's diary indicates, southern Methodism was in utter disarray. MECS leaders and adherents grappled with the reality and implications of Confederate military failure and political dissolution, and they experienced defeat in ecclesiastical terms no less vividly.

Another Mississippian, clergyman and Methodist historian John Jones, declared that "the whole machinery of the church" was "crippled at many points," and that "many of our preachers, as well as most of our members … have been reduced to great poverty" in consequence of the conflict. MECS leaders had not controlled the central publishing house in Nashville since 1862, and even when president Andrew Johnson ordered its return to southern Methodist auspices at the start of 1866, resumption of full capability progressed slowly. Virtually all of the various *Christian Advocates* in the South had suspended temporarily or indefinitely during the war. Educational institutions were

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[1] Journal Entry, 14 May 1865, *The Journals of Eudora Adelaide Barbee Neblett, Written Between 1865-1915, Compiled and Transcribed by Dorothy Neblett Perkins* (Rancho Santa Fe: Neblett Press, 1996), 10, Cain Archives, Millsaps.

overwhelmingly shut down or else barely clinging to life. As detailed in the previous chapter, MEC representatives held numerous MECS properties as the spoils of evangelical and military conquest. Some outlying conferences had seen no bishop since the war's start, and several conferences at their fall 1865 sessions reported low turnout, widespread disorder, and poor finances. According to historian Hunter Farish, "the whole system of the itinerancy was disrupted" in many locales.[2]

In terms of population, the denomination further faced a crisis of attrition. At the first General Conference of the MECS, in 1846, the church counted approximately 455,000 members. By 1860, that number had swelled to over 749,000. The war's effects were devastating, however. After the war, the MECS showed a loss of approximately 113,000 white members, and a loss of just over 129,000 black members. In total, then, the church lost in five years nearly 20 percent of its white membership and over 60 percent of its black adherents. In the face of such staggering numbers, and beset as well by the MEC's attempts to "disintegrate and absorb" the southern body, some MECS leaders wondered if their beloved church could feasibly survive, let alone thrive as an independent and autonomous faith community.[3]

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[2] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XIV, 23, Millsaps; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 110; *SCA*, 2 November, 23 November 1865; Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 28. Farish provides a broad summary of the disorganization and obstacles faced by the MECS on pp. 27-34.

[3] Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 132.

Meanwhile, other denominational suitors stood ready to benefit from the MECS's vulnerability. As detailed in the previous chapter, the MEC launched fervent efforts to consolidate southern Wesleyanism under the banner of the northern church. Consequently it posed the greatest threat to MECS survival and independence. While expressions of the "disintegration and absorption" policy continued unabated, some MEC spokesmen embraced a more diplomatic but equally threatening approach of pursuing "reunion" with the MECS. Similar to Abraham Lincoln's early war beliefs about the prevalence of southern unionism, some MEC leaders assumed that persuasive elites had deceived MECS adherents into embracing religious schism and political secession, and that southern Methodists would readily rejoin "the old mother church" if only extended a benevolent invitation. Notwithstanding the practical dissolution of the peculiar institution, MEC leadership nonetheless sought to ensure that any overtures of amicable reunion also carried a clear obligation to renounce the southern branch's past sins in relation to proslavery ideology. The varying approaches to MEC consolidation, if sharing a functionally similar end, sometimes presented a perplexing dichotomy of tone to southern Methodists. Within weeks of the *Western Christian Advocate*'s gleeful and confident assertion that "the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, will die with the rebellion," the MEC General Conference of 1864 and the northern bishops issued an invitation for individual southerners to rejoin the northern church "on the basis of our loyal and antislavery Discipline."[4]

[4] Wendy Hamand Venet, *Neither Ballots Nor Bullets: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 32; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 54-57, *Western Christian Advocate*, 20 April 1864.

In fact, the notion of reunion between the sectional Methodist branches was not entirely implausible. At the close of the war, MEC leaders believed that MECS bishops Joshua Soule and Hubbard Kavanaugh both supported reunion, and that bishops George Pierce and Robert Paine were probable allies for reunification. Tennessean MECS leader John McFerrin even met with MEC representatives bishop Davis Clark and *Pacific Christian Advocate* editor Thomas Pearne to discuss "terms" of a potential reunion, including McFerrin's demand that the MECS maintain all standing bishops and ecclesiastical officers as appointed upon its merger. Ultimately, Bishop Clark rejected the proposed terms, and shortly thereafter organized the Holston Conference of the MEC in East Tennessee, ending any further discussion of the matter.[5]

For the most part, however, MECS spokesmen's formal responses to the prospect of reunion displayed strident hostility. As historian Christopher Owen notes, the *SCA* as early as 1850 dismissed talk of Methodist reunion on the basis of increasing "extrabiblical notions" on the part of the northern branch. In June 1863, just before Gettysburg and during the Vicksburg siege, Edward Myers of the *SCA* had addressed the abstract question of reunion and fraternity. "Think of Southern Methodists," he thundered, "holding fraternal relations with those who have set upon us vandal hordes to devastate our country, drive us from our homes, insult our women, burn our houses, rob helpless infancy and age, and take from us every sacred birthright! This last insult of supposing us capable of alliance with the abettors of such plunderers and assassins, is

[5] Smith, *Cross and Flame*, 158-59.

proof of the ignorance and madness that pervade the Northern mind." The conflicts during war hardly assuaged such sentiments.[6]

The earliest formal "corporate" response to overtures of ecclesiastical union following the war, however, came from an unlikely quarter of the MECS. Just after the war's conclusion, Missourian Andrew Monroe issued an open-invitation call for a conference to discuss the future of southern Methodism. Although an influential clergyman (a later historian of Methodism called Monroe "a patriarch of the denomination in Missouri"), Monroe's call drew few attendees. On 22 June 1865, a small gathering of 24 clergymen and about a dozen laymen met at the small town of Palmyra, Missouri. Only one bishop, Kavanaugh, joined the meeting. After conferencing briefly, the convention representatives drew up a statement that would become known as the Palmyra Manifesto.[7]

The Manifesto reflected not just the bitterness and frustration of southern Methodists in the wake of the Civil War, but also exasperation toward the MEC's inability—or refusal—to acknowledge or grant the ecclesiological grievances of MECS

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[6] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 65-66; *SCA*, 4 June 1863. Notwithstanding the MECS leadership's firm and generally unanimous rejection of reunion, explored further in this chapter, as late as 1876, an MEC anti-southern polemicist included both McFerrin and Kavanaugh in a list of MECS spokespersons deemed to be friends and allies of the MEC. See Daniel Whedon's intro in Fuller, *Appeal to the Records*, 14.

[7] Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 134; Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri, Vol. II*, 308-20. Leftwich's account is the fullest version of the Palmyra meeting. Despite the importance placed on the meeting by contemporaries, it has received relatively little fanfare in modern Methodist historiography. For two examples of modern scholars who have noted Palmyra's significance in ecclesiastical Methodist development, see Joe L. Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 89-91, and Luke E. Harlow, "The Long Life of Proslavery Religion," in Gregory P. Downs and Kate Masur, eds., *The World the Civil War Made* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 142-43.

spokesmen stemming from 1844. The Manifesto began forthrightly, resolving, "That we consider the maintenance of our separate and distinct ecclesiastical organization as of paramount importance and our imperative duty."[8] The statement then shifted to a discussion and recounting of the constitutional issues and assertions of co-legitimacy that southern Methodists had harped on for the past two decades:

> While we have maintained a separate and distinct ecclesiastical organization for twenty years, yet we claim original paternity and co-existence as a Methodist Church with the other branches of the great Methodist family in the country. … In contravention of the Plan of Separation agreed upon by the General Conference of 1844—the legitimacy and binding force of which were recognized by the Supreme Court of the United States—the Northern wing of the Church has acted in bad faith toward us in many ways. … The question upon which the Church divided was not whether the institution of slavery was right or wrong *per se*, but whether it was a legitimate subject for ecclesiastical legislation. … It is now abolished by Federal and state legislation, which we accept as a political measure with which we have nothing to do as a Church. … Now, if we go into the Methodist Episcopal Church, we will, by that act, yield the position we have so often taken, admit the charges we have so often refuted, and, by accepting political tests of Church fellowship, stultify ourselves and compromise the essential principles of the Gospel. If we seek an alliance with, or permit our Church to be swallowed up by any other ecclesiastical body, so as to destroy our separate existence as a distinct organization, we admit the charge, that with the institution of slavery we stand or fall.[9]

The Manifesto's writers clearly welcomed the occasion to denounce the MEC's actions during the late war. They continued, "It cannot be disguised that what they failed to accomplish during the war by military order … they now seek to effect by ecclesiastical strategy and diplomacy—i.e., to get possession of our Church property … and, by misrepresentations, [to] disaffect our people [and] disintegrate our Church." The Manifesto concluded, "It is due every principle of self-respect and ecclesiastical propriety

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[8] Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri, Vol. II*, 316.
[9] Ibid, 316-17.

that we maintain, with firm reliance upon the help of the Great Head of the Church, our organization without embarrassment or compromise."[10]

The Manifesto's themes were familiar to MECS leaders, but at this juncture it rejuvenated southern Methodist resolve and reinforced the denomination's focal points in relation to 1844. To calls proffering the embrace of the "mother church," the Palmyra writers rejoined that the MECS *was* the mother church, at least as much as the MEC. To the insistence that the war had removed the *raison d'être* of schism, the authors reasserted their stance that ecclesiastical policy rather than political ideology lay at the heart of Methodist division. Moreover, as the *RCA* reiterated a few months later, over twenty years had passed since the schism, and "those twenty-one years have a history in the ecclesiastical action of both branches." In contrast to the Episcopalians and some Presbyterians who had only been separated since the start of the decade, southern Methodists, like their Baptist neighbors, had a well-established ecclesiastical identity developed distinctly apart from their northern counterparts.[11]

In some ways, the declaration at Palmyra and the attitudes of southern Methodists leading up to it reflect an arc similar to that of the South's broad reaction to Confederate defeat. As historian David Blight points out, one of the primary concerns at the outset of Reconstruction "was to determine just how defeated the South really was," and he contends that "in the immediate aftermath of the war … it appeared to many that white Southerners would accept virtually any conditions or terms placed upon them." On one hand, president Andrew Johnson provided a lenient and conciliatory approach, not unlike some northern Methodist appeals to lay old differences aside and amicably reunite in the

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[10] Ibid., 318-20.
[11] *RCA*, 7 September 1865.

wake of slavery's abolition. In contrast, Radical Republicans such as Thaddeus Stevens embraced an approach much closer to that of the "disintegration and absorption" policy. In historian Dan Carter's words, Stevens "insisted that [southerners] deserved humiliation and degradation" for their schismatic sins. Similarly, Ohioan James Garfield proclaimed in Congress that the South had to prove through its repentance that it was "fit again to enter the Federal circle in full communion of privilege."[12]

The Palmyra Manifesto drafters, like southern leaders more generally, responded insolently to both approaches. But where the Radical Republicans had the power of legislative prerogative and ongoing, if sporadic, military occupation to temper the excesses and hostility of the political South, the MEC lacked those resources after Appomattox. Reconstruction witnessed a religious clash no less than a political one, but the footing on the religious side, especially following Johnson's rollback of wartime seizures and occupations, proved to be much more level.[13]

Ultimately, the importance of the Palmyra Manifesto is difficult to overstate. The convention ordered the report of the proceedings published in pamphlet form and distributed throughout MECS jurisdiction. At least one newspaper, the *RCA*, also printed the Manifesto in its entirety. Bishop Kavanaugh, who participated in the drafting and editing of the report, later credited the Manifesto with helping "to shape the policy of the Bishops and leading men of the Church." Native Missourian and MECS wartime hero

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[12] David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2001), 44; Dan T. Carter, *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 88-89. A standard narrative of Johnson's southern-friendly approach to Reconstruction is Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 176-277.

[13] On the broad southern response to Johnsonian Reconstruction, see Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 46-47, and Foner, *Reconstruction*, 224-27.

Enoch Marvin meanwhile described the Manifesto as "the clarion notes of a mighty chieftain calling the scattered knights to duty and to danger." Richmond's *Episcopal Methodist* newspaper, a startup independent publication owned by soon-to-be bishop David Doggett, declared the meeting "life from the dead" for the MECS. Writing from the vantage point of the 1930s, a prominent historian of Methodism similarly assessed the Manifesto as "a breath of life to the Southern Church."[14]

In August, barely a month following the Palmyra conference, most of the southern bishops met at Columbus, Georgia. From there they issued their own affirmation of the course proposed by Palmyra. In many aspects, the themes and language of the "Pastoral Address," as it was entitled, overlapped heavily with the Manifesto. Flowing from recognition of the discussion of reunion to a recounting of the MECS's ecclesiastical-constitutional stances to invective against the MEC's wartime "disintegration and absorption" policy, the bishops made their denomination's positioning abundantly clear:

> Reconstruction or reunion with the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, has, within the last few months, been brought before the public by their denominational papers and by their preachers and members in their published addresses and resolutions. … Under these circumstances allusion to it may be proper from us. … They [northern Methodists] have endeavored, by misrepresentations, to fix on us the invidious character of secessionists and schismatics without authority or cause, from the parent body; whereas, we are, in all aspects, co-equal, coeval with them. The abolition, for military and political considerations, of the institution of domestic slavery in the United States, does not affect the question that was prominent in our separation of 1844. Nor is this the only difference, or the principal one between us and them. … The conduct of certain Northern Methodist bishops and preachers, in taking advantage of the confusion incident to a state of war to intrude themselves into several of our houses of worship, and their continuing to hold these places against the wishes and protests of the congregations and rightful owners, causes us sorrow and pain, not only as working an injury to us, but as presenting to the world a spectacle ill calculated to make an impression favorable to Christianity. … While some talk of

[14] Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri, Vol. II*, 313-15; *RCA*, 7 September 1865; Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 54.

> re-union of the two churches, we forewarn you of a systemic attempt already inaugurated, and of which the foregone is only an instance, to disturb, and, if possible, disintegrate and then absorb our membership individually. In the meeting of their bishops and missionary secretaries, alluded to, it was resolved to send preachers and plant societies in our midst wherever there is an opening. Their policy is evidently our division, and ecclesiastical devastation.[15]

Importantly, the address virtually closed with a fervent admonition "to adjust yourselves as citizens of the United States promptly, cheerfully, and in good faith to all your duties and responsibilities." The Pastoral Address, issued in the midst of Andrew Johnson's limited reconstructive policies, seems to reflect an expectation for religious as well as political "self-reconstruction." The address certainly recognized that MECS members were not happy about the nature of the Civil War's end, but ultimately the statement revealed significantly more animosity toward the MEC than toward the United States government, perhaps because Paul's injunctions in Romans 13 failed to include the "mother church." Bishops James Andrew, Robert Paine, and George Pierce all signed the Address. Bishops Soule, Early, and Kavanaugh did not attend the meeting, but Kavanaugh had already blessed the Palmyra Manifesto, and Early's views toward the northern church already were expressly clear in his wartime governance of the Holston Conference. Soule, for all intents and purposes, was retired and inactive as a bishop. The principal leadership of the MECS, then, exhibited a cohesive view in rejecting reunion.[16]

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[15] "Pastoral Address of the Southern Methodist Bishops," published in *Minutes of the Fiftieth Session of the Mississippi Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Jackson: 1866), 25-29, Millsaps.

[16] "Pastoral Address," Millsaps. Interestingly, Holland McTyeire actually drafted the Address, having been invited to the meeting by the bishops. Within a year, McTyeire would join them on the episcopal bench. See Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 134. On southern expectations for "self-Reconstruction" in response to Johnson's leniency, see Carter, *When the War Was Over*, 24-60, especially the assessment on p. 54.

Leading up to the General Conference of April 1866, southern Methodist voices and actions largely reinforced the message and themes of Palmyra and the Pastoral Address. Thomas Summers, for example, proclaimed in the pages of the *RCA* in November 1865 that he was "much pleased with the Pastoral Address of the Bishops. They take the true ground in regard to union with the Northern Church. Whenever that Church shall cease to intrude upon our rights, and shall make an offer of fellowship in the spirit and temper in which we made them the offer in 1848, God forbid that we should refuse to fraternize with them." Summers's view of fraternity, as he elaborated further in his letter, retained full autonomy for the MECS; he ultimately envisioned an annual council between two separate "Benches of Bishops" that would meet to represent the distinct General Conferences and "settle any questions that may be of common interest to both sections."[17]

After returning home from Columbus, meanwhile, Bishop Paine gave a speech in his hometown of Aberdeen, Mississippi, publicly condemning continuing violence and encouraging submission to federal and state authorities, but also pointedly also denouncing "using the pulpit to discuss political questions."[18]

Various conferences in their fall sessions reaffirmed their devotion to the MECS and generally endorsed the Pastoral Address of the bishops. In Kentucky, however, some tension arose over the issue. Although the Louisville Conference expressed unified approval of the Address, the Kentucky Conference experienced discord in forming a response. One proposed resolution actually endorsed reunion with the MEC, but the resolution lost to a counter-proposal that declared willingness to consider reunion only

[17] *RCA*, 9 November 1865.
[18] Rivers, *Life of Robert Paine*, 150-51.

through the formal channels of General Conference action. After the counter-resolution passed, seventeen "Union members … resigned their ministerial functions" altogether, while a few others favoring reunion simply but symbolically "resigned their seats" at the conference session.[19]

Historian Daniel Stowell astutely notes the fundamental impediment to any successful moves toward sectional Methodist reunion. Essentially, each side thought the other had committed serious errors of which to repent —errors with theological and hermeneutical roots— before unification or fraternity could occur. While slavery stood at the heart of the conflict, it also manifested itself in ecclesiastical policy and perceptions of legitimacy, just as it had in 1844. In December 1865, for example, James Duncan of the *RCA* commented on a northern bishops' address contemplating reunion of the churches. He noted that their desire for reunion was premised on a "platform of *agreement in doctrine, loyalty to the government and opposition to slavery*." Duncan railed that although slavery was "dead, … it shall live in their records and be preserved as a means of testing the fitness of men for membership in the Methodist Church." This notion of a litmus test, according to Duncan, flew in the face of the MECS's constitutional stance, which did "not admit the right of any ecclesiastical body to make political opinion a test of church membership." Using the legitimacy question as a means of exposing the "unhandsome conduct" of the MEC toward the MECS, Duncan again pointed out the attempt by the northern branch to "break down and disintegrate the

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[19] *SCA*, 26 October 1865; *RCA*, 21 September 1865. Harlow, *Making of Confederate Kentucky*, 193-95, briefly discusses the context of reunion discussions in Kentucky, and alludes to references hearkening to the issues of 1844. Broader context on the matter, however, is provided in Luke's dissertation; see Harlow, "From Border South to Solid South," 206-13.

Southern church." Editor Edward Myers of the *SCA* agreed with Duncan, and implored northern Methodist clergy to focus their political activity inward. Copying a *New York Herald* clip on the squalor of tenement residences in New York City, Myers proposed snarkily that "here certainly is work for the filibustering preachers." He suggested further that if the "dearly beloved brethren of the North … wish to help Southern christians," they should "send us such gifts as you can make … but keep your missionaries for domestic use."[20]

Not all MEC voices called for reunion either. Daniel Curry of the *Christian Advocate & Journal*, a spokesman of the "disintegration and absorption" policy, apparently thought that restoring cordial reunion was much too lenient an approach. In November 1865, the *Christian Advocate & Journal* endorsed resolutions by the West Wisconsin Conference of the MEC opposing reunification. The basis of the opposition was that "the leading ministers and members [of the MECS], after instigating treason and rebellion, have not shown evidence of penitence and reformation." Curry's words created a ripple effect. The same fall, the *RCA* copied the commentary of the MEC *Pittsburg Christian Advocate* on the Pastoral Address of the southern bishops. The *Pittsburg Advocate* editor, positing an absurdly optimistic view of the Pastoral Address, considered the statement "all things considered … milder than we expected, and [it] augurs rather in

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[20] Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 168-69; *RCA*, 7 December 1865; *SCA*, 26 January 1866. Christopher Owen, in *Sacred Flame of Love*, 147, contends that "by shattering slavery, the Civil War destroyed the raison d'être of southern Methodist separatism." This argument, while the basis of northern Methodist appeals to reunification, fails to adequately capture the complicated manner in which MECS leaders understood ecclesiastical policy and their Methodist autonomy. Southerners were consistent in tying religious separation not just to policies related to slavery, but also to the constitutional legitimacy of their independence. Regardless of slavery's central role in the constitutional policy clashes that led to schism, those policy clashes became themselves independently wrapped up in MECS notions of identity and separatism.

favor of a reunion of the Church at an early day. It is seemingly against such an event, but less so than we feared it might be." Overlooking the questionable interpretation of the Address, *RCA* editor Duncan observed that the *Pittsburg Advocate* thereby broke with the *Christian Advocate & Journal* in not believing it "a sin to contemplate reunion with the Southern Church." Interestingly, the MECS leadership found itself angry about reunion prospects on two fronts: church leaders expressed hostility toward MEC overtures of reunion, but also showed animosity against northern *opposition* to reunion premised on the MECS's proslavery ideology and Confederate nationalism.[21]

If the MECS almost unilaterally spurned reunification with the northern church in the wake of the war, it gave other prospective alliances and mergers more consideration. Expansion, not just autonomy, spurred some MECS leaders to action. Bishop George Pierce's biographer revealed that after Confederate defeat, "some of the Church, losing faith in her future, were coquetting with an Episcopal Bishop for a union" with the southern branch of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Additionally, MECS leaders engaged in detailed talks about merger with the Methodist Protestant Church, the Methodist offshoot that had broken with the MEC over episcopal views and lay representation in 1828. By 1867, MECS bishops and other leaders had exchanged letters with appointed commissioners of the MPC to address reconciling points of difference between the two bodies. These issues were almost entirely organizational rather than theological; the letters tackled the quantity and nature of authority of MECS bishops, the permanence of the Presiding Eldership in the MECS, and the inclusion of lay representation in the MECS, among other items. Ultimately, the two groups would not

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[21] Reprinted in *SCA*, 16 November 1865; *RCA*, 21 September 1865.

unite until the twentieth century. Several individual conferences of the MPC also discussed merging with the MECS, but the MECS commissioners stated they were uninterested in "dissolving" the MPC by piecemeal acquisition. Nevertheless, when the broad union failed to transpire, the MECS accepted at least one individual seceding MPC conference, the Virginia Conference.[22]

In the meantime, prominent Virginian MECS member David Doggett met with ministers of the independent Methodist Baltimore Conference in September 1865 to discuss the feasibility of that conference joining the MECS. The Baltimore Conference, having had split with the MEC over the same themes of slavery and constitutionality that spurred the 1844 schism, made a natural border-state acquisition for a denomination looking both to reinforce its independence and expand its borders. Doggett's meeting exhibited overwhelmingly positive results, and the Baltimore Conference joined the MECS at the General Conference of 1866.[23]

Still, while the MECS leadership entertained a variety of expansionist efforts, it nonetheless displayed limitations as well, even toward fellow sectional partisan denominations. Despite having had cooperated with competing sects during the war, the MECS revived several of its theological and ecclesiastical frictions after the war. The dalliance with the Protestant Episcopal Church went nowhere. Indeed, George Pierce in 1867 warned his fellow southern Methodists against both "the schismatic plans of

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[22] Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 492; George F. Pierce, Holland N. McTyeire, Leroy M. Lee, and J. E. Evans, "To the Commissioners of the Methodist Protestant Church," 11 May 1867, Methodist Leaders Papers, Box 1 Folder 6, Emory; Ancel H. Bassett, *A Concise History of the Methodist Protestant Church, from its Origin: with Biographical Sketches of Several Leading Ministers of the Denomination, and also a Sketch of the Author's Life* (Pittsburgh: William McCracken, 1887), third edition, 213-19.

[23] *RCA*, 21 September 1865.

Northern Methodists and the subtle proselytism of the Episcopalians." Antagonism likewise apparently emerged between the MECS and the Disciples of Christ. Around the same time as his warning about Episcopalian "proselytism," Pierce wrote that "the great contest in Kentucky is not with Northern Methodism, but with Campbellism." And he complained further that "there are so many Union [ecumenical] churches. … Good-will, fraternal fellowship, this is right; but let each one have his own house of worship."[24]

Intriguingly, another unlikely and ultimately failed alliance partially developed between the MECS and the northern African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, which since the end of the war had sought to bolster its numbers and national influence by bringing southern blacks into its fold. Many of those black southerners, enjoying for the first time a choice between white- or black-led denominations, flocked to the AME and the similar African Methodist Episcopal, Zion (AMEZ) church. In his classic exploration of the experience of emancipation, historian Eric Foner maintains that in spite of the fiscal and political failures of Reconstruction for southern blacks, "freedom was, after all, more than nothing." Religiously, black people of faith after the Civil War embraced this freedom of choice dearly.[25]

Early on, the AME enjoyed sponsorship from the MEC in its evangelistic mission to the freedmen; the MEC Board of Missions in the summer of 1864 committed to "help the schools of the African M. E. Church, especially now, as this Church is likely to have much to do among the people of color in the South." By the close of the war, however, the MEC had determined to pursue southern blacks for its own membership rolls. MEC

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[24] Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 505, 508.

[25] Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 6.

preacher William Matton, assigned to North Carolina after the war, recounted organizing an entire AME congregation of 104 members into the MEC. By his own admission, the former AME members "greatly desired educational help," and the enticing resources offered by the MEC heavily spurred the acquisition of the congregation. As the MEC-AME rivalry heated up, and facing already-staggering attrition of its black membership, the MECS chose to make the enemy of its enemy its ally. MECS leaders offered AME churches access to its black congregations, and sometimes even granted carte blanche use of MECS buildings to AME clergy.[26]

Assessing the bourgeoning alliance in the context of Georgia Methodism, historian Christopher Owen describes the rationale for cooperation between the MECS and the AME. "The AME did not question MECS legitimacy," he notes, "and because the MEC saw the AME as schismatic, the African American denomination shared common ground with southern Wesleyans." Ultimately, the AME requested a full transfer of property and the MECS's black membership leading up to the 1866 General Conference. The proposal was an audacious one, and the MECS leadership rejected the request, effectively ending what was already a fragile alliance. As statements presented later in this chapter will show, MECS leaders were partially motivated by desires to undermine MEC criticisms of their religious oversight and care of southern blacks'

[26] *RCA*, 7 July 1864; William George Matton, *Memoirs*, 34, transcript of original, unpublished manuscript, William George Matton Papers, 1859-87, Duke; Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, 89-99. In addition to Walker's study, general treatments of black northern church missions in the postwar South, and the rivalries and alliances forged during that period, may be found in Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, 45-96; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 94-99, Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 120-29, and Dvorak, *An African-American Exodus*, 138-40. Dvorak's discussion, although brief, also adeptly notes the debates and posturing over legitimacy that spilled across both sectional and racial lines in Methodist denominationalism.

spiritual well-being. Moreover, as Owen points out, alliances between the AME and carpetbagging Republicans "dismayed MECS leaders." But MECS policymakers were also already developing more self-interested plans for its residual black membership.[27]

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With MECS leaders overwhelmingly determining to continue as an autonomous ecclesiastical body by the end of 1865, the impending General Conference of 1866 took on pivotal importance. As noted in previous chapters, southern Methodists had debated ecclesiastical issues and proposed changes in organization and polity throughout the war period. As the crucial post-war, post-Confederacy conference approached, questions concerning how much change, modernity, "innovation," or preservation the delegates should pursue rose to the fore, especially as they involved organization and leadership. In its session of fall 1865, the Tennessee Conference debated numerous changes for the General Conference to consider. The topics included increasing the number of bishops (potentially as high as one bishop per conference), the extension of the pastorate term, lay representation in governance, salary limits for ministers, and making class meeting attendance optional. The Georgia Conference at its session also discussed a variety of potential changes, before passing a resolution advising "that all questions of [ecclesiastical] change be referred to the wisdom of the General Conference." Perhaps

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[27] Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 121; Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, 89-99.

sensing the trend of the denomination's attitudes, however, the Georgia Conference did suggest caution "in making any radical changes in the economy of Methodism."[28]

In the pages of the *RCA*, competing appeals to both progressive and conservative partisans sometimes became strident. In one anonymous exchange, a correspondent calling himself "Judah" passionately warned against "innovations" in Methodism. "Methodism is in danger of more from its boastful friends than its avowed enemies," Judah averred. "Methodism suited holy men and women exactly, but is very poorly adapted to worldly and fashionable beauxs and belles … who stray off into other churches, such as the Catholic and the *high church* Episcopal congregations, to hear what they call good music and scholarly preaching." The author specifically feared that an increase in bishops would destroy the general superintendency, that an extension of the pastorate term would eliminate the itinerancy, and that lay representation would "secularize" the church. Judah concluded, "the very life of Methodism is at stake" in the upcoming General Conference. Meanwhile, another correspondent, "Old Stick," advocated on behalf of lay representation. Given the financial and organizational straits of southern Methodism, Old Stick argued, the MECS would "lose a great opportunity of advancing Methodism" if it continued to ignore the greater business and mercantile acumen of the laity. In the same issue of the *RCA*, an influential congregation in Petersburg requested that the Virginia Conference and the General Conference abolish the Presiding Eldership, believing it to be "an unwise outlay both of money and of ministerial talent." Editor Duncan invited discussion on the issue from both supportive and opposed parties. Then, writing broadly in regard to the General Conference, Duncan

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[28] *RCA*, 9 November, 7 December 1865.

urged moderation and careful consideration of all "ecclesiastical amendments," warning against stubborn traditionalism, shallow innovationism, and condescending apathy alike.[29]

Meeting in the Carondelet Street Church in New Orleans, which had until shortly before the convening remained under Federal occupation, the delegates to the General Conference came together on 4 April, 1866 to shape the course of southern Methodism going forward. One historian of Methodism, citing the influential late-nineteenth century bishop Atticus Haygood, called the 1866 General Conference "the most radical, one may say revolutionary in the history of our church." According to another future bishop, John Keener, many delegates believed "that our Church could only be maintained by being taken down and reconstructed." Nevertheless, transformative as it may have been, the session was not as "radical" as some prominent MECS leaders hoped it would be. In Keener's words,

> Dr. [A. L. P.] Green, of Tennessee, Dr. [Edward] Myers, of Georgia, and Dr. [Holland] McTyeire, of Alabama, came to the Conference with much harmony of view on this subject, which contemplated the election of twelve or more bishops, the introduction of the laity into the Annual and General Conferences, the veto power of the episcopacy on constitutional questions, the doing away all limits to the pastorate and all probation to membership, all disciplinary obligation to attend class, the turning over all property held for our colored members to the A.M.E. Church, the introduction of District and Church Conferences. The name itself of the Church was to be changed, the Discipline was to be revised, and a Wesleyan liturgy to be prepared for church service. It would seem as if only the Articles of Religion were to remain intact.[30]

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[29] *RCA*, 9 November 1865.

[30] T. O. Summers, ed., *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, held in New Orleans, 1866* (Nashville: A. H. Redford, 1866), 9; Moorman, "Holland N. McTyeire," Vanderbilt, 46; John C. Keener, "Bishop McTyeire – In Memorium," Memorial Address given at Vanderbilt Chapel, 5 May 1889, John J. Tigert IV Papers, Box 4 Folder 4, Vanderbilt.

That Haygood, a former Confederate chaplain, assessed the 1866 General Conference as "radical" creates an intriguing juxtaposition. Even as the assembly prepared to convene, the Thirty-Ninth Congress, exasperated by the limitations of Johnson's policies and the intransigence of white southern hostility, began implementing the programs of Radical Reconstruction. These two legislative sessions would dramatically shape both the sociopolitical and the ecclesiastical worlds of white Methodists in the South.[31]

The General Conference met from early April to 3 May. Early in the convention, James Duncan read a prewritten Bishops' Address to the assembly. Setting the stage for the remainder of the conference, the bishops reaffirmed the previous fall's Pastoral Address and its call for continuing autonomy; recounted the denomination's hardships experienced during the war, especially in regards to the infrastructure of missions, educational institutions, and publishing interests; acknowledged that some necessary ecclesiastical departures "from the strict letter of the law" had taken place during the war; expressed hope that these departures would not be seen as "establishing precedents for future guidance"; congratulated the MECS on its longstanding "pastoral care" of southern blacks while acknowledging that many freedmen had and would likely join with the AME or MEC; reaffirmed their intention that the MECS remain autonomous and independent from the MEC (here the bishops once more declared the MECS a "true type of Methodism" coequal to the MEC, and referenced MEC attempts to "disintegrate our Church"); celebrated the joining of the independent Baltimore Conference; and finally encouraged moderate but necessary "changes in our economy," particularly emphasizing

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[31] On Haygood, see Brinsfield, *The Spirit Divided*, 228-31. On the development of Radical Reconstruction, see Foner, *Reconstruction*, 228-80.

a desire for an increased number of bishops to ease the workload and burden on the current bench. With the Bishops' Address given as both a charge and a framework for the session, the delegates organized into various committees and began the task of creating and executing a strategic map for the MECS.[32]

Regarding relations with other faith communities, the General Conference not surprisingly established a stance of cordial but determined autonomy. As noted above, the Conference admitted the independent Baltimore Conference into the denomination. Delegates also heard a proposal from the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church for union between the two broad churches, and appointed fraternal delegates to the next convening of the MPC. In a surprising occurrence, the New York East Conference of the MEC sent a telegram to the General Conference, expressing earnest fraternity and inviting the delegates to join the northern conference in a day of prayer for "full restoration of Christian sympathy and love between the … different branches of Methodists between this nation." Likely because the telegraphic olive branch spoke specifically to fraternal relations rather than full-blown union, the MECS delegates warmly received the message, and responded enthusiastically in affirmation of a joint day of prayer. The AME sent fraternal delegates, and issued its request for a transferal of MECS properties and congregations. One proposed resolution would have allowed "use of the houses of worship" by the AME "wherever entire churches and congregations shall have voluntarily left [the MECS], and united with the African M. E. Church." In the end, however, the MECS "reciprocate[d] the kind regards" of the AME but rejected the request for a transfer or merger of its remaining black membership. Finally, the assembly

[32] Summers, *General Conference of 1866*, 9, 15-21

passed resolutions declaring the willingness to consider accepting any outside groups who would affirm the MECS *Discipline* and its Articles of Religion, and pointedly expressing openness to formal fraternity with any other Christian bodies on a coequal basis.[33]

Electing new bishops occupied a significant portion of the General Conference's attention. No new bishops had been elected since 1854, twelve years prior and well before the recent war. Half of the current bench was in poor health as well; Joshua Soule could not attend the conference because he was bedridden, while bishops Andrew and Early both received release from mandatory duty as bishops on account of their age and feeble health. The General Conference formally considered adding as many as ten new bishops, but ultimately opted for the much more conservative addition of four. On the first ballot, William Wightman and Enoch Marvin received appointment to the episcopacy. Wightman had served as a longtime editor of the *SCA* prior to Edward Myers before serving in various educational administration roles. Marvin, the hero chaplain celebrated for his self-exile and military mission work during the Civil War, was a self-taught revivalist preacher.[34]

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[33] Summers, *General Conference of 1866*, 14-15, 25-26, 49-51, 65-66, 73. In Clarence Walker's view, the AME delegates, considering the expectations they had led to hold leading up to the conference, "were treated rather shabbily" by the MECS. See Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, 97.

[34] Redford, *H. H. Kavanaugh*, 422-23; Summers, *General Conference of 1866*, 60, 129, 72-75; Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 82-84. Coincidentally, Marvin became "the first man in his church … elected to the Episcopacy with a full suit of beard," according to his biographer. This dynamic apparently caused a bit of controversy. Upon arriving for his ordination, numerous delegates requested that Marvin shave. The plainspoken new bishop replied, "They'll have to stand it. … They elected me in my beard and they must endure me in my beard. See Finney, *Enoch Mather Marvin*, 432.

David Doggett and Holland McTyeire won election on the third ballot. Doggett was an urbane and aristocratic Virginia pastor, educator and editor. McTyeire had long served as a denominational spokesman in his editorial role, but represented further the ascension of the progressive movement in southern Methodism. As *NCA* editor, and together with *SCA* editor Myers, McTyeire galvanized a drive toward respectability and modernity in his denomination. His election presaged a number of changes in the church economy that proceeded to take place at the General Conference. Over the remaining session, several important organizational alterations passed. A resolution for the introduction of lay representation at both Annual and General Conferences passed with a nearly two-to-one ratio. The plan allowed for only four lay delegates at Annual Conferences, but equal representation at the quadrennial General Conferences. In addition, the long-disputed pastorate term increased from two years to four years. The Conference in fact considered removing limits on the pastorate term altogether, but conservative leader George Pierce defeated the measure by threatening to resign the episcopacy if the proposal passed. Attendance at class meetings became optional, although the conference issued a token statement reiterating the importance and benefits of attendance.[35]

[35] Summers, *General Conference of 1866*, 74-75, 62-63, 104-05, 77-83; Alexander, "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 82-84; Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 138; Moorman, "Holland Nimmons McTyeire," Vanderbilt, 46; Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 493-94. Ultimately, McTyeire became the face of the progressive movement in the MECS, while Pierce led the conservative wing of the denomination. For additional context, especially focusing on the later establishment of Vanderbilt University and the resultant feud between the two bishops, see Christopher Michael Bishop, "The Highest Style of Humanity: Religion, the New South Creed, and Holland Nimmons McTyeire" (master's thesis, Western Carolina University, 2010), 62-80.

Smaller, but still important, changes occurred in other arenas. As noted in an earlier chapter, the Committee on Itinerancy officially nullified all wartime Holston Conference suspensions that had been executed "without due forms of trial." Conference delegates renewed cooperative efforts with the American Bible Society, notwithstanding the disapproval expressed toward some of the Society's wartime actions deemed to have "reflect[ed] unjustly upon the people of the South." The General Conference also established church boards and strategic plans to rehabilitate domestic and foreign mission work, publishing interests, and educational institutions. The Committee on Boundaries formally disclaimed obligation to adhere to the geographical boundaries of 1844, its report stating, "As the geographical line … established by the General Conference of 1844, has been officially and practically repudiated and disregarded by the Methodist Episcopal Church, therefore, we are bound neither legally nor morally by it." And in a noteworthy move to be explored more below, the General Conference voted to change the official title of the MECS.[36]

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One other issue garnered significant time and attention at the 1866 General Conference. Although southern Methodist leaders devoted relatively little documentary notice to their black members during the chaotic years of war, the collapse of the Confederacy and the abolition of slavery propelled the question of the freedpeoples'

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[36] Summers, *General Conference of 1866*, 64, 41, 88 [cited in Fuller, *Appeal to the Records*, 317; the General Conference Journal copy accessible to this author was missing this page], 106-07; Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 141-42.

continued affiliation into the limelight. Even before the General Conference, MECS spokesmen had rushed to posture the denomination in as positive a light as possible in relation to its black membership while guarding against either poaching or ill-characterization on the part of white northern Methodists.

The fall 1865 session of the Virginia Conference, for example, emphasized the need to maintain "religious oversight of the colored people of the South," both because of moral obligations to them as former slaves, and because of the "manifest unfitness of Northern preachers" to give them proper religious instruction. Perhaps not coincidentally, the same conference session received notice from a black church in Portsmouth, Virginia, "stating their severance from the M. E. Church, South, and connection with the African Methodist Episcopal Conference." To those ends, the Virginia Conference instituted an elaborate plan for outreach toward and treatment of southern black Methodists, which included revitalizing black missions, establishing black Sabbath Schools, organizing segregated churches and Annual Conferences, licensing black preachers and elders, and establishing black primary schools. Similarly, the Georgia Conference session that met in November 1865 also noted the importance of not forsaking black missions/evangelism, as such abandonment would open the MECS to northern charges "that self-interest rather than Christian principle lay at the [MECS's] efforts for the negro's religious instruction."[37]

Few MECS members seem to have been as bluntly accepting of black religious choice as Holland McTyeire. Writing to Richmond's *Episcopal Methodist* newspaper in October 1865, McTyeire matter-of-factly recognized the likelihood of segregated and

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[37] *RCA*, 7 December 1865, 15 March 1866; *SCA*, 23 November 1865.

autonomous southern Methodism, whether white MECS leaders desired or opposed such segregation. He quipped, "As respects religion, ecclesiastical independence is bound to follow the civil. They will leave us." At the General Conference of 1866, the Committee on the Religious Interest of the Colored People reiterated the importance of not neglecting black southerners post-emancipation, for similar reasons as expressed by the Annual Conferences. Alongside a proposal to establish "dayschools … for the education of colored children," the General Conference outlined a plan to organize separate and segregated church congregations, Annual Conferences, and potentially even a General Conference for black southern Methodists.[38]

John G. Jones's history of Mississippi Methodism provides a telling glimpse into evolving white southern Methodist attitudes toward their largely-absconding black co-religionists, especially as Radical Reconstruction developed more fully in the late 1860s. The 1866 Mississippi Conference session was transparent in its attitudes, if wishful in its historicity. "If [the freedmen] have been alienated from us," the conference report stated, "it has been a manifestation of the greatest ignorance and basest ingratitude of which any people professing Christianity can be capable." Nevertheless, "we cannot afford to sully the fair, and well earned fame of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, by giving up colored Charges, though some of them may temporarily turn away from us." Such a course, the conference affirmed, would be "recreant to all our ministerial vows." Then, in a startling, evidence-free self-assessment of southern Methodist history and attitudes, the conference proclaimed that "we, as a church, had nothing to do with bringing [southern

[38] *Richmond Episcopal Methodist*, 11 October 1865, cited in William B. Gravely, "The Social, Political and Religious Significance of the Formation of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (1870)," *Methodist History* 18 (October 1979), 6; Summers, *General Conference of 1866*, 39, 58-59.

blacks] into a state of slavery; and we never desired their continuance in that state beyond the limits assigned it by an Allwise Providence; and we now accept their freedom as readily as any people in the land."[39]

Ultimately, the Mississippi Conference demonstrated a balance between paternalism and segregation. The 1866 session declared that MECS freedmen should gradually take charge of paying their preachers' salaries and erecting church buildings themselves, but also recommended financial subsidies and the use of existing property ("when not occupied by the white congregations") until financial circumstances allowed for black congregations to become self-sufficient. The conference delegates concluded with one of the starkest evidences of white southern Methodist attitudes toward postwar freedmen, stating, "Under regular and patient instruction, and good government, [the freedmen] may attain a higher grade of civilization and christianity than the black man has ever yet attained to; or under the influence of their characteristic stupidity, indolence and licentiousness, they may gradually waste away into extinction, as they have done in a state of freedom in other localities."[40]

Speaking of segregating black MECS members into a separate Annual Conference, the 1868 Mississippi Conference organizing committee reported that "many of our colored members had been inveigled away from us by the agents of the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, evidently more for political, than religious purposes: for as to religious privileges, and the advantages of a pure gospel ministry, they had them as perfectly in our Church as they could possibly

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[39] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XV, 3, 5, Millsaps.
[40] Ibid., 6-9.

have them elsewhere." Then, in a statement dripping with paternalism and ecclesiastical bitterness, the committee "gave it as their opinion that these misguided and unfortunate dupes of a political party, for the present, were beyond our control, but that we owed more important duties to those who, with such unwavering fidelity, continued their allegiance to the Church, which … had made them all that they were in a religious point of view."[41]

In the end, the postwar MECS responded to its plight of black membership in a manner reminiscent of its own ecclesiological path to existence. Coming full circle, the MECS leadership established a "separate jurisdiction" for black southern Methodists, and in 1870 the MECS General Conference authorized the formation of the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church. In December 1870, the CME formally organized in Jackson, Tennessee, holding eight Annual Conferences, and under the authority of a black episcopal bench.[42]

While numerous scholars have noted the formation of the CME as a key point in the transformational segregating of southern Christianity, few have recognized or emphasized the connection between the CME's organization and the MECS's notions of Methodist constitutionality and ecclesiastical identity. For example, Daniel Stowell

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[41] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XVII, 14, Millsaps.

[42] *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1870* (Nashville, Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1870), 182-83, 217; Moorman, "Holland Nimmons McTyeire," Vanderbilt, 52. For broader context on the MECS's postwar relations with southern blacks, see Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 163-208. The most efficient treatment of the formation of the CME remains Gravely, "Formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church." Hildebrand, *The Times were Strange and Stirring*, 15-21, effectively profiles some of the early leaders of the CME.

attributes the MECS transferal of property to “benevolence and resignation.”[43] The transfer certainly represents both of those sentiments, but it is also tied to southern Methodist notions of honor and ecclesiological obligation. Put simply, MECS leaders could not in good conscience deny to their black membership in the CME what they themselves had demanded of the MEC in 1844: a co-legitimate and coequal autonomy. To this end, John Jones framed the CME’s organization in blatantly legitimizing language. The CME, he wrote,

> is one with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in doctrine and polity. It is not a secession, but a regularly and legitimately organized Church. Her Bishops, Elders and Deacons did not obtain their ordination surreptitiously, but in true apostolical form and authority. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of America is a coordinate branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, separated from us by the voluntary consent of all parties and organized into an independent Church for good and sufficient reasons. We still owe them many paternal duties and will ever fraternally sympathize with, and cooperate with them in all their efforts to ‘spread scriptural holiness’ among their people.[44]

In Jones’s rhetorical paradigm, the CME was in 1870 what the MECS was in 1844, and the MECS in 1870 was what the MEC *should have been* in 1844. According to historian Katherine Dvorak, the CME itself embraced this view, framing its own description of its formation in terms of legitimacy, and reiterating the MECS’s argument that it represented only a distinct jurisdiction of one unbroken line of American episcopal Methodism.[45]

In what historian Clarence Walker terms a “parting gift,” the MECS transferred to CME possession approximately one million dollars worth of property for use by its congregations and conferences. Political Reconstruction, for all its legitimate

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[43] Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 92-93. Dvorak, *An African-American Exodus*, is an excellent example of this connection to legitimacy and autonomy.

[44] Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XVII, 15-16, Millsaps.

[45] Dvorak, *An African-American Exodus*, 164-65.

achievements and promises, did not attempt any serious attempts at financial or property redistribution. For MECS leaders, however, the cost of a clean constitutional and ecclesiastical conscience and consistent rhetoric required just such a redistribution, if only to a limited amount. In so doing, the MECS became functionally a wholly white denomination, and in historian Beth Schweiger's phrasing, "the mission to slaves died with slavery."[46]

As indicated by the postwar statistics, most black members willingly abandoned the MECS. But some remained, and demonstrated intense devotion to the theological tradition to which they had long belonged. This decision on behalf of fraternal autonomy and ecclesiastical affiliation by CME adherents came at a cost, especially to fellow black religionists who perceived black MECS/CME members as exchanging racial validity for religious legitimacy. Stowell recounts a clash between AME and MECS black congregants in Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1865. A congregation, having divided between AME and MECS affiliation, was ordered by military authorities to share its building jointly. During a particular session, one of the AME class leaders lambasted blacks that remained in the MECS as "reb niggers—dey secessioners. … Dey Judases, dey betray dar own color." A black MECS member in the audience indignantly interrupted with his own rejoinder against the AME members: "You de secesh niggers yourself—you secede from de Church of God!" Comparably, CME member and eventual

[46] Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, 99; Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 110. Luke Harlow agrees with Schweiger, noting that "the racial separation of the churches … became a critical component in the making of a distinctly white southern religion after the Civil War." See Harlow, *Making of Confederate Kentucky*, 117. For a nuanced explanation of the limits of Reconstruction, especially under Ulysses Grant, see Brooks D. Simpson, *Let Us Have Peace: Ulysses S. Grant and the Politics of War and Reconstruction, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 252-63.

bishop Lucius Holsey, who had been both married by and ordained as clergy by MECS bishop George Pierce (Holsey's wife's former owner), recalled other blacks denouncing CME members as "'Democrats,' 'bootlicks,' and 'white folks' niggers.'" CME and MECS believers, then, shared a sort of ecclesiastical camaraderie in the attacks on their legitimacy leveled by rival denominational partisans. But both groups clung vociferously to their claims of Methodistic validity and organizational autonomy.[47]

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By the mid-1870s, MECS leaders could recognize clear indications of victory in their long struggle for ecclesiastical legitimacy and uninhibited independence, paralleling the political and social "retreat" from Reconstruction by the federal government and northern society. Assuredly, points of tension or outright conflict continued to periodically emerge. In 1869, an MEC cohort led by Bishop Matthew Simpson again petitioned the MECS bishops for reunion. In the letter the group presented, the MEC leadership urged that "as the division of those Churches of our country which are of like faith and order has been productive of evil, so the reunion of them would be productive of good. As the main cause of the separation has been removed, so has the chief obstacle to the reunion." The MECS leadership steadfastly rejected the premise. Bishop Enoch Marvin wrote a polemical book in 1872, presenting a southern view of the 1844 split, and

[47] Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 72-75; Hildebrand, *The Times were Strange and Stirring*, 15; Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, 121-25. Dissensions between black clergy and co-religionists, even while pursuing similar aims, were not original to the postwar era. For examples of wartime tensions between black people of faith, see Wesley, *Politics of Faith*, 183-93.

explicating reasons for a continued jurisdictional separation. Responding specifically to the proposition and perspective of the 1869 MEC petition and to a subsequent appeal to the MECS General Conference of 1870, Marvin asserted that "the *cause* of the division has not been removed, but aggravated by the war. It has even taken a bolder form, it has cast aside all masks." He focused on two familiar points of objection, the "political" character of the MEC, and the variance of constitutional and disciplinary interpretation between the two bodies.[48]

Marvin further gave reasons as to why, even if those fundamental differences could be resolved, reunion was "altogether impracticable at present." First, he averred, the MECS offered the "right hand of fellowship in 1848, and was refused. … As a condition of fraternal relations, the indignity of 1848 must be thoroughly wiped out." Then, "If this were done, there remains a history to which we refer with reluctance. … This is a history of unnatural crimes. … We speak of the seizure and occupancy of the property of the Church, South, by the officials of the Church, North, during the war, and soon after its close." After recounting some of the wartime actions of the MEC, Marvin declared that "taking all the facts together, we can do no otherwise than hold the Church, North, as a church, responsible for this predatory movement." He tied the entire discussion back to the Plan of Separation and the property disputes of the 1840s and 1850s.[49] Finally, he concluded,

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[48] A dated but nuanced study on the abandonment of Reconstruction is William Gillette, *Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Tigert, *Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 19-20; Enoch M. Marvin, *The M. E. Churches, North and South* (St. Louis: Southwestern Book and Publishing, 1872), 63-72.

[49] Marvin, *The M. E. Churches, North and South*, 73-79.

> There was a rare spectacle, during the session of the General Conference of 1870. A Bishop of the Northern Church stood before the Conference to plead for union. … There he stood and plead for union, and even used the name of Christ. We were amazed! The import of what he said, taken with the *facts*, which he did not say, was this: 'We have been taking your property wherever we could, and keeping it as long as we could. I have myself been appointing men to occupy your houses whenever the opportunity arose. But O, dear brethren, let us love one another, and let us be one in Christ!' The whole scene was a study for the psychologist.[50]

Throughout most of Reconstruction, MECS leaders steadfastly rejected and renounced any notions of reunification. Even fraternity remained elusive until 1874. The MEC General Conference of 1872 authorized representatives to attend the upcoming MECS General Conference, but only to test the prospects of "truly fraternal relations." Two years later, the MECS made clear that reunion was not an option, but that the denomination was open to establishing fraternity on certain conditions. Even then, the difficulties of repairing relations between the sectional bodies were apparent to both sides. During the 1874 General Conference at Louisville, the MEC *New York Methodist* published an editorial listing what it perceived as the four primary points of obstruction to fraternity. Those four issues were the MEC's "rejection of [the MECS's] proffer of fraternal intercourse in 1848"; "our repudiation of the plan of separation, which drew a geographical line between the two Methodisms"; "our occupancy of places of worship of which the title is vested by deed in the Church South"; and the MEC's "habit" of referring to MECS's separation as "a secession." The same year, Methodist educator Landon Garland bitterly wrote to his friend, bishop Holland McTyeire, that he had "not a shadow of confidence in the Northern Methodist Church. They are filled with the lust of dominion and power, and have done and will do everything to 'disintegrate and absorb

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[50] Ibid., 79-80.

us.' … If they are willing to fall back upon and observe the compacts they made with us in 44, then I am willing to fraternize but on no other basis."[51]

Ultimately, the 1874 MECS General Conference and the subsequent 1876 MEC General Conference each appointed commissioners to meet at Cape May, New Jersey, in August 1876 to discuss and negotiate the obstacles to fraternal relations between the denominations. At that convening, the Cape May Commission finally witnessed the MEC representative declare the MECS "a legitimate branch of Episcopal Methodism in the United States, having … common origin" with the northern body. Moreover, the MEC representatives affirmed a statement that both churches' General Conferences were "each rightfully and historically integral parts of the original Methodist Episcopal Church constituted in 1784."[52]

Historians Christopher Owen and Daniel Stowell use almost identical language to describe the impact of the Cape May conference. Stowell states that "the Cape May conference marked the end of religious reconstruction for Methodists," while Owen affirms that "Cape May marked the demise of Methodist Reconstruction." Both scholars link the resumption of fraternal relations and this "retreat" to the broader political decline of Federal occupation and reconstruction efforts in the South. Stowell, in particular, ties the conference to increased segregation and racist accommodation by the MEC in the South. Historian David Rolfs, while not examining Methodists specifically, also links the actions of northern churches to the political activity—and eventual retreat—of the

[51] Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 95-96; *New York Methodist*, 9 May 1874, reprinted in MECS *Daily Christian Advocate*, 16 May 1874, clipping held by Memphis Conference Archives, Lambuth; Landon C. Garland to Holland McTyeire, 11 May 1874, John J. Tigert IV Papers, Box 2 Folder 11, Vanderbilt.

[52] Stevenson, *The Methodist Episcopal Church in the South*, 9-10; Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 96; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 174-75.

Republican Party. Rolfs argues that northern Protestant churches "shamefully supported the Compromise of 1877, abandoning blacks to their fate in the postwar South." He concludes that "the illegitimate church-state alliance may have proven militarily expedient … but its long-term spiritual costs were inestimable."[53]

These assessments are compelling, and demonstrate a very real connection between sociopolitical engagement and ecclesiastical policy. Certainly the timelines of political and religious reconstructions' end closely overlap. Historian David Blight asserts that "if 1874 was a 'referendum on Reconstruction,' then the 1876 presidential election gave the country a referendum on reunion." The 1874 MEC General Conference and the Cape May Conference provide similar reference points to ecclesiastical reconstruction and reunion. Moreover, just as northern political leaders sacrificed racial segregation for sectional reconciliation, Cape May demonstrated a sort of détente in the competition for black members, although the establishment of the CME had largely already settled that question so far as the MECS was concerned. Finally, MEC actions at Cape May corresponded to what historian Vincent DeSantis sees in president Rutherford Hayes's withdrawal of occupying federal troops. Just as Hayes's action largely formalized an abandonment of Reconstruction that had largely already occurred, so too did Cape May solemnize an acceptance of jurisdictional independence that was clearly well-settled.[54]

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[53] Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 142-45, 172-75; Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*, 144; Rolfs, *No Peace for the Wicked*, 212.

[54] Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 122-39 (quote on 135); Foner, *Reconstruction*, 575-87; Vincent P. DeSantis, "Rutherford B. Hayes and the Removal of the Troops and the End of Reconstruction," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds., *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 417-46.

But beyond and in addition to these parallels, Cape May also importantly represents a distinct, climactic moment in the longstanding southern Methodist battle for autonomy and identity. The legitimacy and organizational self-actualization that MECS leaders had proclaimed since 1844, and especially since the MEC's renouncing of the Plan of Separation in 1848, finally gained recognition and public witness by those who were most equipped and motivated to dispute it. Fraternity had been carried, per MECS leaders' demands, on the wings of validated authenticity. Certainly, periodic incidents of tension, debate, and hostility between the two bodies of Methodism continued throughout the remainder of the century. The bitterness of wartime and decades of legal, rhetorical, and physical clashes never abated altogether. On a critical symbolic level, however, southern Methodist leaders had essentially won their ecclesiastical struggle. Manifestly, for the first time since 1844, the MECS was both fully southern and fully Methodist.[55]

[55] On the progress and development of the MECS after Cape May, see Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 66-96.

Epilogue
"There is something in a name": The Methodist Episcopal Church, ~~South~~?

> *Be it declared and ordained, and by a vote of two-thirds of the Delegates from the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, present and voting, in General Conference assembled in the city of New Orleans, on this 27th day of April, A. D. 1866, it is declared and ordained, that the style and title of our Church shall be "The Episcopal Methodist Church."*[1]

At its 1866 session, the MECS General Conference elected overwhelmingly, 111-21, to change the denomination's official name, removing the word "South" from the title. A host of proposed alternative names were considered, including "The Methodist Church," the "Methodist Episcopal Church in America," the "Wesleyan Episcopal Church," a replicated "Methodist Episcopal Church," and the "United Methodist Church." "The Methodist Church" actually received initial approval, but upon later consideration and reopening of the vote, "Episcopal Methodist Church" won out. A faction of the "Christian Union Church" in southern Illinois, merging into the MECS shortly after the General Conference, even submitted its paperwork under the title designation of the Episcopal Methodist Church. The name change was dependent, however, on a three-fourths ratification process by the Annual Conference sessions. And although numerous Annual Conference petitions and resolutions had spurred the General Conference's actions in the first place, the name change failed to gain ratification. The "Episcopal Methodist Church" became merely a fleeting moment of hypothetical alteration in the MECS's history. [2]

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[1] Summers, *General Conference of 1866*, 106.
[2] Ibid., 83-84; Charles J. Thrift, Jr., "Rebuilding the Southern Church," in Bucke, *History of American Methodism, Vol. II*, 275-76.

The nearly-realized name change has received only trivial historiographical attention, even in denominational histories. Hunter Farish's *The Circuit Rider Dismounts* gives the measure's General Conference approval and Annual Conference defeat only a passing mention. Charles Thrift gives a little further detail in Bucke's *History of American Methodism*, noting the vote tally, the southern Illinois Christian Union Church entrance, and the shift from "The Methodist Church" to the "Episcopal Methodist Church." He also explains that "the word 'South' [had been] considered a handicap to most of the border conferences as well as a target for ridicule from many Union sympathizers." John Tigert's biography of Holland McTyeire, similarly, points out that General Conference delegates were motivated by the perception that "outside the Southern region, the qualification 'South' in the name of the Church was a misnomer and distasteful." Daniel Stowell, with Thrift as his source, summarizes the same main points. He concludes that "most annual conferences were less concerned about appealing to border state Methodists than was the General Conference, and in a triumph of sectional identification, the requisite number of conferences failed to approve the change in name."[3]

Admittedly, there is not a wealth of information available on the motivations and processes of the name change episode in the available primary source material. From the material that does exist, however, it is clear that the tension and discomfort among many southern Methodists with the official MECS title preceded the Civil War, was widespread in 1866, and extended to a limited degree even throughout the Reconstruction period.

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[3] Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 64; Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 143; Thrift, "Rebuilding the Southern Church," 275-76; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 106. In fairness to Stowell, he does also mention a later attempt at name change in an endnote; see p. 223 n. 21.

As the historians above have recognized, southern Methodist leaders' uneasiness with the MECS name stemmed largely from a desire to avoid discouraging border state and western believers from joining the denomination. Delegates actually raised a proposal to change the church's name at the 1858 General Conference, but the measure received no traction and was tabled indefinitely. But in 1859, while traveling in California, Bishop George Pierce wrote in a letter back home that "the word 'South' is very much in our way, just because it has a sectional sound. Many who approve our position and policy are hindered from coming to us because of that appendage to our name. It does us no good anywhere, and is turned against us by those who seek occasion to find fault, and is objected to by many who could come to us if it were removed."[4]

The secession winter of 1860-61 witnessed conversations in the pages of the *Christian Advocates* over the issue of the MECS's explicitly-southern title. In early November 1860, the editor of the *St. Louis Christian Advocate* published Pierce's earlier critique of the name from the California letter. Meanwhile, the *NOCA* also reaffirmed that the designation "South" hampered evangelical progress in California as well as "those in the Baltimore Conference, and on the Border generally." In the *NCA*, a South Carolina subscriber, agreeing with the notion that Methodist Episcopal Church, *South*, conveyed a false sense of sectional character in the church, discussed his choice for the proper replacement name for the MECS. He concluded that the MECS, "in accordance

[4] Methodist Episcopal Church, South, *Journal, 1858*, Smith, *George Foster Pierce*, 421-23.

with her principles," should "be called '*The Episcopal Methodist Church*.'" He also stated that the name change idea derived "from high places in our Church."[5]

Border state believers may have been the impetus for southern Methodist leaders' concerns, but conferences further southward shared the desire to change the name. Both the Georgia Conference and the Louisiana Conference passed resolutions at their fall 1860 sessions in favor of an alteration, as "the word *South* . . . is liable to misconstruction, and embarrasses us in many respects." The issue appeared a couple more times in the pages of the *NCA* through the spring, and commentary on the change revealed not just a concern for the MECS's expansion, but also thoughtfulness as to the ecclesiastical implications tied up in any proposed alternate names. In particular, and as the eventual name chosen by the 1866 General Conference reflected, MECS spokesmen wanted to retain a sense of the episcopal emphasis of the southern Methodist tradition. As one proponent of a name change argued in early April 1861, "we should not cut off 'Episcopal' from the name of the Church. *There is something in a name*."[6]

The onset of war mostly drove the issue from public conversation, at least in the *Advocates*, and the little discussion that remained seems to indicate a wartime turn toward an embrace of the designator "South." Only two references appeared between May and the close of 1861, both in the *NCA*. Prominent Virginia clergyman John Boring, expressing his hope that the South would soon gain independence, remarked in July that he was "glad that the name of our Church is M. E. Church, *South*, and that this has been her name for several years, that it has been so printed in our books, and stamped upon

[5] *St. Louis Christian Advocate and New Orleans Christian Advocate* articles referenced in *NCA*, 8 November 1860; *NCA*, 15 November 1860.
[6] *NCA*, 7 February, 21 February, 4 April 1861.

their lids." A lengthier article in November 1861 recorded a debate among the Protestant Episcopal Church, South, as to what their proper title should be following their break with the northern Episcopal church. In his report, editor McTyeire argued that denominational church names should "be adapted to circumstances and made descriptive of localities as well as principles," and asserted that such rules "apply to the name proper for our Church, which, since the setting up of the Confederate States Government, has seemed to be plainly indicated."[7]

Although absent from ecclesiastical dialogue for much of the war, the issue of the MECS's title emerged again after the close of war, in ways that suggested denominational leaders were open to considering a change. Thomas Summers commented to the *RCA* in November 1865 that McTyeire supported renaming the MECS the "Methodist Episcopal Church in America," and that Summers himself "should be satisfied with the 'Methodist Episcopal Church.'" Like the anonymous correspondent of the *NCA* in 1861, Summers too declared that "there is something in a name," even as he admitted that "I would not quarrel much about it." At the Tennessee Conference session of November 1865, influential member A. L. P. Green spearheaded a proposal for the conference to petition the upcoming General Conference to change the name to the "M. E. Church in America."[8]

The General Conference opted for "Episcopal Methodist Church," a name that both dropped the designator "South" and emphasized the distinctive polity of their church's Wesleyan heritage. The failure of the ratification process, however, has led the few scholarly commentators on the subject, such as Stowell, to assess the episode as a

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[7] *NCA*, 25 July, 7 November 1861.
[8] *RCA*, 9 November 1865.

reinforcement of the enduring intensity of southern sectionalism. This appraisal is valid, but only to a limited extent. The Annual Conference votes were by no means a blanket renouncing of the change. An 1867 letter from bishops Pierce and McTyeire and other MECS leaders to MPC representatives revealed the final vote tally for the ratification to 1168 votes for and 409 votes against the measure, "lacking but little of the three-fourths vote upon which the passage of the motion was conditioned." Thus, the failure does technically represent, in Stowell's words, "a triumph of sectional identification," but the final votes exposed a fair majority of the denomination's leadership as favorable to dropping the word "South." If the Mississippi Conference may be considered representative, even the Deep South states demonstrated sizeable support for the change; in that session, according to John Jones "thirty-six voted for the change and fifty-two against it."[9]

Moreover, as much as the measure's defeat shows the enduring support in some sectors of the MECS for an overtly southern title, the General Conference's selection for a substitute displays the denominational leadership's persistent concern over ecclesiastical and constitutional identity. A month following the General Conference session, when the MEC *New York Methodist* complained that the "Episcopal Methodist Church" title smacked of "simulation" of "the parent church," *RCA* editor James Duncan angrily responded with a defensive rant about southern Methodist legitimacy. "We have no opposition to dropping the word "South" from our name," he railed, "but feel we are

[9] George F. Pierce, Holland N. McTyeire, Leroy M. Lee, and J. E. Evans, "To the Commissioners of the Methodist Protestant Church," 11 May 1867, Methodist Leaders Papers, Box 1 Folder 6, Emory; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 106; Jones, *History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference, Vol. IV*, Chapter XVI, 8, Millsaps.

under no more obligation to find a distinctive title than the Northern branch is. We are as much *the* Methodist Episcopal Church as they are. We are *de facto* and *de jure* Methodist Episcopal Church in the *South*, and they in the *North*; we are the Southern portion of it, and they *only* the Northern. For twenty-one years this has been the state of the case." Duncan concluded, "Our own personal wish was that we should simply drop the word 'South,' and let the facts show who best *deserved* the honorable name [of Methodist Episcopal Church]; being satisfied … that the public would find a way to distinguish our genuine Methodism from the politico-ecclesiastical body of the same name which has dishonored it."[10]

The 1866 period, then, indicates the lingering tension of "southern Methodist" identity. Denominational leaders exhibited a discomfort strong enough to very nearly abandon the formal designator "South" in the name of territorial expansion and Wesleyan nomenclatural legitimacy, but not quite prevalent enough to ensure the measure's success. But from that point on, the tension seems to have generally abated.

An 1870 General Conference proposal by Baltimore Conference delegates to again consider changing the MECS's name went nowhere. Notably, however, the next significant request for alteration, at the 1878 General Conference, received a definitive verbal response. When the matter was brought up, a committee was appointed to present a report on the issue. That report provided a stinging rebuke to any who felt the MECS warranted a sanitized name. The committee argued that the "time for such change, if it ever existed, is now past," and declared further that if the name of the MECS "is a bar to fraternal recognition of us on the part of any, the fact furnishes a reason why *they* should

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[10] *RCA*, 14 June 1866.

pray for a better spirit rather than that *we* should write a new name . . . in deference to wicked prejudice or willful ignorance." The report concluded with the statement that as the Annual Conferences in 1866-67 rejected the proposed change, "it now seems to us that this action ought to be, and will be, final."[11]

The timing is revealing. Less than two years earlier, at Cape May, the MECS had gained formal recognition by the MEC of its coequal legitimacy in original American Methodism. Southern Methodist leaders could now wholeheartedly embrace their southernness, with no fear of that identity being used as a weapon against their Wesleyan validity. In their response and their ongoing autonomy as the Methodist Episcopal Church, *South*, that embrace is exactly what they chose. There was something in a name, indeed.

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[11] Thomas O. Summers, ed., *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1878), 84-86. A final petition came before the 1882 General Conference session, and the assembly simply sent the question to the Annual Conferences for a vote, this time hoping and believing, quite accurately, that the measure would be definitively denounced. It failed, 3415 votes against to 91 for approval. "The Methodist Church South," *New York Times*, 26 May 1882; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 223 n. 21.

Appendix
Southern Methodist Polity and Organization in the Mid-19th Century

The following is not a complete list of the components of MECS polity and organization, but includes those segments most relevant to this dissertation. The information is derived and summarized from Hilary T. Hudson, *The Methodist Armor; or, A Popular Exposition of the Doctrines, Peculiar Usages, and Ecclesiastical Machinery of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1884), especially 143-62.

Church Officers

Bishops

The episcopacy is the highest office in the MECS. Bishops are elected by the General Conference, but serve for life. They preside over General and Annual Conferences, form districts, circuits, and stations, appoint preachers for those locales, ordain fellow church officers, adjudicate questions of ecclesiastical law, and travel throughout the MECS jurisdiction as spiritual overseers of the entire denomination.

Presiding Elders

Presiding elders are appointed by bishops, and oversee districts of between twelve to twenty preachers. They preach regularly, adjudicate matters of church discipline and fill ministerial vacancies in the absence of bishops, hold Quarterly Conferences in their jurisdictions, ensure that preachers and congregations are properly observing the *Discipline*, and advise the bishops on ministerial appointments and various other matters.

Pastors

Pastors are appointed by bishops or presiding elders, and have pastoral care of individual stations, circuits, or missions. Pastors may be either ordained or lay, and may be an itinerant (traveling preacher assigned by the bishops) or a local preacher (see below). Pastors preach to congregations, hear congregational-level cases of discipline/immorality, appoint class-leaders, ensure the observance of church sacraments, and report on the state of their work to the Quarterly Conference.

Local Preachers

Local preachers are not financially supported by the church, as are itinerants, but serve as vocational ministers, volunteering their preaching while supporting themselves by secular labor. They are assigned and authorized by their Quarterly Conference upon satisfactory evidence of their calling and ability to preach in their congregations.

Organizational Government

General Conference

The General Conference, a quadrennial delegated assembly, is the primary legislative body of the church. It is made up of clerical and (after 1866) lay delegates

elected by Annual Conferences, and the episcopal bench. The General Conference elects bishops when determined appropriate, sets the boundaries of Annual Conferences, revises laws and policies in the *Discipline*, oversees foreign missions, and elects officers for the Publishing House of the church. The General Conference may *not* alter the Articles of Religion, change ratios of Annual Conference representation, remove the privilege of church trial and hearing, or revoke the episcopacy. As the Annual Conferences are purely administrative, the General Conference comprises the only lawmaking authority in the MECS.

Annual Conferences

Annual Conferences are made up of all itinerant preachers in "full connection" and good standing within a particular region, and (generally after 1866) four lay delegates from each district. Bishops preside over Annual Conferences, unless absent, in which case a president is elected by the conference itself. Annual Conferences appoint preachers to their pastoral locations, hear pastoral reports, admit candidates for pastoral work into either trial or full connection, examine the character of each pastor, hold trial for pastors accused of wrongdoing, promote local missions, Sunday Schools, and education, and distribute charitable funds.

Quarterly Conferences

Quarterly Conferences are held four times a year in a given locale. The conferences include the pastor in charge of the circuit, local preachers, and lay officers and agents of the church. Presiding elders oversee the meetings unless absent, in which case the pastor in charge is president. Quarterly Conferences gauge the spiritual and physical welfare of the constituent congregations, elects lay officers (trustees, stewards, Sunday School superintendents, etc.), licenses preachers, tries local preachers in disciplinary matters, and serves as an appeals court for laymen. All ministers must be licensed by a Quarterly Conference.

Selected Distinctive Aspects

Itinerancy

The itinerancy references the mode of assignment and ministry in Wesleyan Methodism. Congregations give up their right to choose pastors, and preachers likewise revoke their right to choose a geographic location of ministry. Instead, ostensibly impartial and responsible authorities assign preachers to each church for a determined "pastoral term" of no more than two (or after 1866, four) years. The itinerancy is designed to ensure the autonomy of ministers to preach and exhort without fear of reprisal or congregational pressure, and to guarantee that all preachers have a congregation, and vice versa.

Class Meetings

Class meetings are general spiritual gatherings of small groups of believers, ostensibly required (prior to 1866) and to be held regularly, although neither of those qualifications was strictly enforced through much of the period of this dissertation. The meetings incorporate worship, confession, exhortation and edification, and communion.

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