Master's Theses

Graduate College

4-2002

"A Conflict of Truth with Error": Southern Preachers, Their Worldview, and Sectional Tensions, 1830-1865

Timothy A. Ehrhardt

"A CONFLICT OF TRUTH WITH ERROR": SOUTHERN PREACHERS,
THEIR WORLDVIEW, AND SECTIONAL TENSIONS, 1830-1865

by

Timothy A. Ehrhardt

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of History

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 2002

"A CONFLICT OF TRUTH WITH ERROR": SOUTHERN PREACHERS,
THEIR WORLDVIEW, AND SECTIONAL TENSIONS, 1830-1865

Timothy A. Ehrhardt, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2002

White evangelical preachers of the antebellum era presented the American South with a cosmology that was rooted in the Bible as God's revelation to all humans, with God as sovereign over a strict social hierarchy that placed the white male as household head, and women, children, and black slaves (in that order) as subordinates. This cosmology contributed to sectional tensions, as southern pastors were at the forefront of advocating a proslavery worldview, and supported secession from the Union and war as an act of purification from northern infidels who did not endorse the ministers' brand of biblical literalism.

Southern clergymen understood that within the Triune Godhead (Father, Son Jesus, and Holy Spirit) there exists perfect harmony and organization. Therefore, it was logical and biblical for them to discern God's intentions for society to rest on a clear chain of command. The social schema was based in the institution of the family as the cosmological bedrock of the world. Any assault on the plantation household arrangement from abolitionists was interpreted by southern divines as an attack on the very foundation of southern society. It was the scriptural discernment of the family within a proslavery cosmology that was in contradistinction to the North and provided fodder for a secessionist impulse among many of the southern evangelical clergy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Reverend J.W. Tucker, like many of his fellow evangelical southern preachers, minced no words when it came to interpreting the war between North and South. In an 1862 sermon to his Fayetteville, North Carolina congregation, he confidently proclaimed that the great sectional battle:

> is a conflict of truth with error--of the Bible with Northern infidelity--of a pure Christianity with Northern fanaticism--of liberty with despotism--of right with might. In such a cause victory is not with the greatest numbers, nor the heaviest artillery, but with the good, the pure, the true, the noble, the brave. [1]

Tucker and fellow evangelical preachers unabashedly affirmed that God was with the South in the American Civil War because of their particular orientation and conceptions of the world, and how individual life ought to be lived within that world. Antebellum evangelical preachers presented to southern society a cosmology that was rooted in the Bible as God's revelation to all humans, with God as sovereign over a strict social hierarchy that placed the white male as household head, and women, children, and black slaves (in that order) as subordinates. This cosmology contributed to sectional tensions, as southern pastors were at the forefront of advocating a pro-slavery worldview, and supported secession and war as an act of purification from northern infidels who did not endorse the ministers' brand of biblical literalism.

For southern evangelical preachers, war with the North was not simply a

1

physical battle; it was a spiritual struggle. It was a conflict between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, and a fight for a way of life that was biblically sound and free from any corrupting northern influence. The North, with its "fanatical" theology and many religious "isms", was tainted in its understanding of the ideal Christian society, and, thus, hopelessly corrupt in realizing biblical goals for a godly nation.[2] "Fanaticism", as defined by southern preachers, was any hermeneutic that did not interpret the Bible as the literal Word of God, but instead understood scriptural authority as residing in the spirit of the law rather than in the letter of the law. Fanatics were, more specifically, abolitionists who would not accept biblical passages on slavery as literal instructions to live by. For southern evangelicals, to reject slavery not only as an institution, but to advocate emancipation of black slaves as well, meant that the abolitionist was a maniac whose warped ideas threatened southern sovereignty. Such anti-biblical notions led to things such as unconventional gender relations, and women aspiring to roles traditionally reserved for men (e.g., women preaching).[3] Southern ministers wanted nothing to do with these outlandish societal relations because they deviated from their established world and life view.

During the antebellum period, southern clergymen were agitated, perturbed, and disgusted with northern abolitionists. It was with the election of Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States in November of 1860, that southern clergymen felt the most menaced. Preachers such as J.W. Tucker believed that Lincoln was a covert abolitionist, and that the North would impose their anti-slavery views on the South. Lincoln's election, for southern preachers, was an intrusion into southern

society that could not continue. What is more, many ministers and their congregants truly believed that abolitionists threatened a violent end to Christian society as they knew it. Secession became an act of separation from northern decadence in order that southerners might retain a pure Christian social order based upon the precepts of Holy Writ. They wanted to free themselves from the stain of radical theology, to be able to continue the conversion of souls, both black and white within plantation households, and to perpetuate the existing household hierarchy. The North had become, in the eyes of southern clerics, "a subversive threat to American values and institutions."[4]

A most popular term, as used by Reverend Tucker, to describe the plurality of religious, philosophical, and biblical ideas in the North was "infidelity." This was a designation full of meaning for antebellum evangelicals; it was intended to raise a dire warning to all Christian people, both North and South. Preachers were harkening back to a time, when in the early national period after the Revolution, Protestantism faced a great sense of declining morals and a widespread drop in church attendance. The culprit was "infidelity," as evangelicals in the early republic called it. Infidelity was a rejection of orthodox Christianity for prevailing notions of the day; the enemy, more specifically, was Deism. Deism was a child of French Enlightenment principles and seen as the great nemesis of Christianity. Deists such as Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson believed the foundations of knowledge were experience and reason rather than revelation. For the Deist, miracles were not reasonable. Thus the cardinal doctrines of evangelicalism such as the substitutionary atonement and supernatural resurrection of Jesus from the dead were jettisoned in favor of a doctrine that the life

of Jesus was merely a moral example. Although spiritual revivals and a widespread Christian rebuttal, championed by evangelicals like Yale's Timothy Dwight, helped bring Deism to its knees by the antebellum era, much of the North continued on a track of theological experimentation, while the South increasingly prided itself on being the bastion of "true" religion.[5]

The historical baggage that went with the usage of "infidelity" by southern preachers to describe the North was meant to arouse a fighting spirit within southern listeners. Just as their fathers in the early republic saw the very heart of Christianity at stake in their fight against Deism, so southern evangelical ministers interpreted northern abolitionism, with its unorthodox biblical approach, as a terrible threat to the integrity of Protestantism. Because if proslavery Christianity could not continue, since it was based in God's biblical intention for southern society, then American Protestantism could crumble and be lost. Infidelity meant an attack on the veracity of the Bible and God's plan for his people; southern clergymen were not about to allow northern infidels to ruin "pure" Christianity.

Proslavery Christianity became the brand of religion most popular in the antebellum South. Slavery was a reality, and preachers felt the need to reconcile it with their evangelicalism. In coming to terms with slavery, ministers formulated a worldview that fit their theology. They were not able to leave such a problem as slavery unclarified in the daily experience of religion.[6] This worldview was not simply an antebellum fabrication and cannot be dismissed as a propaganda response to the critics of slavery or as mere ideological rationalization.[7] A worldview, or cosmology,

has to do with the origin and structure of the universe, which includes beliefs about God, reality, knowledge, morality, and humankind. In short, a worldview is the sum total of everything that a person believes; it is not simply a creed of convictions and values, but includes the ways in which beliefs relate to each other and translate into practice.[8] There was a reciprocal relationship between the clergy's evangelical convictions on the Bible and the cultural patterns of the plantation system in forging a distinctively Christian proslavery worldview. Preachers were successful providing a religious argument for southern culture which helped shape psychological processes and public behavior.[9]

The genesis of proslavery Christianity in the Old South was born out of two significant events: slave uprisings, especially the Nat Turner rebellion in 1831 which resulted in sixty whites killed; and, in the same year, William Lloyd Garrison began publishing *The Liberator*, which demanded the immediate emancipation of slaves.[10] The concept of immediate emancipation espoused by Garrison caused both North and South to check their Bibles on the subject of slavery. In the North, theological emphases centered on individual conscience and freedom, whereas in the South biblical literalism was emphasized, with slavery a social reality in Scripture. Due to the different hermenetical approaches, even though northern and southern evangelicals had the same cardinal doctrinal beliefs, evangelicalism in the North became closely allied with anti-slavery notions, but in the South became associated with proslavery ideas.[11]

Southern divines' beliefs did not exist in a vacuum; their positions sometimes

collided and at other times acquiesced to secular culture.[12] To put it another way,

although preachers ideally stated that all their beliefs were from the Bible, they were

significantly influenced by contemporary cultural norms. Similarly, southern society

was greatly influenced by the biblical pronouncements from southern pulpits. Clergy

and culture engaged in a reciprocal relationship in which the one had a meaningful

impact upon the other. For example, the ethical pronouncements of many preachers

against alcohol and push for temperance moved many to abstinence and led to the

introduction of temperance legislation in many local governments.[13] On the other

hand, secular culture, led by the planter class who had a vested economic interest in

the perpetuation of slavery, helped establish the status quo concerning black chattel

bondage. Ministers reinforced human bondage through scriptural justification, and

fleshed-out their worldview when the peculiar institution was threatened by forces

outside of white southerners' control. Southern divines were not always consistent in

their biblicism; at times they let the scripture text speak for itself independent of pop-

ular cultural attitudes, and at other times allowed their approach to the Bible to be fil-

tered through cultural lenses. Preaching was not always used for essentially biblical

messages but for the ministers' social, political, or cultural convictions which were

securely in place long before turning to the Bible. Preachers' use of the Bible acted as

both a conservative and a radical force in southern society, helping to shape southern

values and to fuel, albeit sometimes unknowingly, antagonism toward northern

brethren.[14]

The majority of southern Protestant pastors read their Bibles as convinced

evangelicals. Evangelicalism is a Christian movement that emphasizes the classic Protestant doctrines of salvation, the authority of the Bible, and a particular emphasis on a personal experience, described as a new birth or conversion. The Christian life, for evangelicals, is essentially a relationship between an individual and Jesus. When a person "repents" from a life of sin and turns to Christ, this new life is to be characterized by holiness (a separation from ungodly influence), religious devotion, moral discipline, and missionary zeal. Evangelical denominations in the antebellum era included Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, and Low-Church Episcopalians; exceptions to evangelicals in the Protestant realm were Unitarians, Universalists, High-Church Episcopalians, Quakers, and most Lutherans.[15]

The evangelical call for an instantaneous conversion to Christ was expressed most potently in nineteenth-century camp meetings and revivals. The revival meetings of the early 1800's in the South were the turning point of southern religious history. These revivals were responsible for the rise of the Baptists and Methodists from the status of obscure sects to their traditional position as America's two largest Protestant denominational families. Indeed, by the 1820s, evangelical Protestantism was by far the dominant expression of Christianity in the South. Evangelical efforts toward the conversion of sinners led to an enduring religious worldview that not only affected all persons in the South, but became the most powerful social and religious movement in nineteenth century America. Evangelical religion shaped the worldview of antebellum southerners, rich and poor, slaveholder and non-slaveholder.[16]

Southern preachers were foremost in the growth, spread, and predominance of

an evangelical worldview. Ministerial history is not all of religious history, but it is difficult to comprehend American religion without it.[17] Yet, it has only been since the twentieth-century that historians have given serious attention to American religion and the clergy, and only in the past thirty years that southern religion has been the focus of some earnest study.[18] Although Perry Miller's works on religion turned the tide of existing historiography by taking sermons, theology, and preachers as serious inquiry into intellectual history, he focused on Puritan New England and the North, while generally ignoring southern religion, and as a result, the South played, at best, a nominal role in the historiography.[19] Beginning in the 1970s several historians gave important credence and place to southern religion.[20] As a result, the past two decades have seen a considerable rise in southern religion as a focus of historical study, rather than simply relegating antebellum Christianity in the South as a sinful aberration in American history.[21] In addition, several recent studies have liberally used sermons as source material, and have demonstrated the importance of the southern clergy in religious, social, intellectual, and political contexts.[22] In the past decade, several historians have noted the disparity between northern and southern religion, culture, and ideology that led to sectional tensions. Preachers were at the heart of that tension through their unique cosmology and position of influence within the Old South.[23]

It would be misleading to speak of *the* southern clergy since evangelical denominations had anything but a consensus on church dogma. Religious questions of church order, such as congregational versus elder rule, theological questions of Calvinism versus Arminianism, and ministry issues, such as baptismal rites and how

to conduct revivals, all revealed great diversity within evangelicalism. Even within a particular denomination, a wide range of thought and polity existed. Furthermore, black slave religion and theological approaches were quite different from white evangelicals at many points.[24] However, despite the variances, there was a certain body of thought that abided between all white southern evangelical preachers concerning basic beliefs and values, that is, their worldview.[25] The clerical worldview can be discerned from the massive body of published sermons of southern preachers. The vast majority of sermons possess dense theological content and could be ignored by historians in favor of Fast Day sermons, or jeremiads (political sermons). The homiletic staple of preachers that congregants heard most often was the expository sermon, which explained a particular text of scripture and paid close attention to doctrine. These expository sermons are critical to understanding the ministers' thoughts, opinions, and impact within both the sacred and secular milieu of the South. Even a cursory look at southern sermons reveals logical and well-reasoned arguments, and easily dispels any notion of anti-intellectualism among many southern evangelicals. Presbyterians were known for their educated clergy, but even the Baptists and Methodists, who did not put a premium on formal education, insisted on self-education and mentoring of young preachers. Their sermons, when examined as a whole, not only expose their worldview, but uncover the root thinking behind much of the sectional anxiety that many southerners felt toward the North, and why much of the southern clergy would come to embrace secession from the Union.[26]

Evangelical clergymen in the antebellum South furnished and promoted a

proslavery worldview which they believed was both consistent with and essential to biblical veracity. The proliferation of this cosmology contributed to sectional animosities as many preachers advocated secession and encouraged the war effort as necessary to separation from northern sin. The theology of the clergy fueled their worldview and was significant in hardening a southern position in opposition to the North. Southern ministers saw the Confederacy as a holy nation devoted to God and upholding scriptural principles for the administration of all society. The North, in their thinking, had compromised the Bible in favor of a bevy of alternative religious movements. Northern ministerial counterparts had laid aside a literal interpretation of Scripture for an anti-slavery hermeneutic. This was nothing less than blasphemous for southern preachers because slavery was a reality in the Bible. Slavery was important because it was closely tied with ideal notions of a perfect Christian nation. The worldview of southern divines operated with the family as the cornerstone of society. The plantation household structure was a thoroughly biblical economy and should not be tampered with in any manner. The patriarchal and paternalistic hierarchy of roles for every person in the household sought to temper the sinful proclivities of individuals, especially black slaves, and provide for the entire family a haven where daily religious instruction could take place. Abolitionism would disturb and overturn the social order, leaving God's ideals for a holy nation unrealized and trampled by infidels. Moral and religious chaos would be the fruit of an abolitionist spirit. Thus, southern proclaimers of the Bible wanted nothing to do with Yankee interference with their way of life. Ministers in the South came to espouse separation from the North in

order to preserve the ideal Christian society. They wanted to be left alone so that they might continue the evangelization of the South. Secession became the answer to curb the influence of a Lincoln administration that clergymen believed was dedicated to abolitionism and atheism. Only the Confederacy could uphold Christian civilization with the help of sovereign God who desired that His ordered plan be put into practice. Preachers were the mouthpiece of the Almighty in disseminating God's design for the South to implement.

---

[1] J.W. Tucker, "God's Providence in War", in David B. Chesebrough, ed., *"God Ordained This War": Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 236.

[2] Later in the century, the term "fanaticism", due to its association with abolitionism, was dropped and "liberalism" was applied to those who held to a non-literal approach to scripture. "Fundamentalism" defined beliefs of those who continued to hold to the veracity of the scripture text. Religious movements such as Universalism, Millerism, Mormonism, and Spiritualism were viewed as great heresies that should not infiltrate southern evangelicalism. For brief surveys of each of these, see Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985); and, Daniel G. Reid, Robert D. Linder, Bruce L. Shelley, Harry S. Stout, and Craig A. Noll (eds.), *Concise Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995).

[3] Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 220.

[4] J. William Flinn, ed., *The Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, vol. 7 (Columbia, SC: R.L. Bryan, 1910), 724-25; Allen C. Guelzo, *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 250; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds,* 221; Edward R. Crowther, "Holy Honor: Sacred and Secular in the Old South," *Journal of Southern History* 58 (November 1992): 619-36. Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 13.

[5] Kerry S. Walters, *The American Deists: Voices of Reason and Dissent in the Early Republic* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 5-6; Charles R. Keller, *The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 1-2; Adrienne Koch and William Peden, eds., *The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Random House, 1993), 585; Edwin S. Gaustad, *Sworn*

on the Altar of God: A Religious Biography of Thomas Jefferson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996).

[6] Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973): 100.

[7] Leonard Sweet argues that it must be borne in mind that hope in the perfection of society through institutional means influenced southern evangelicals as much or more than social control stemming from fear, in *The Evangelical Tradition in America* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984). Donald Mathews argues that southern religion must be treated less as a function of social manipulation and more as an integral part of nineteenth-century culture, in *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); also, see Mark A. Noll, "Protestant Theology and Social Order in Antebellum America", *Religious Studies Review* 8 (April 1982): 133-42; Eugene Genovese argues that the concept of a proslavery worldview was in place well before the antebellum era and existed in colonial times, in "'Our Family, White and Black': Family and Household in the Southern Slaveholders' World View", in Carol Bleser, ed., *In Joy and in Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[8] Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1988), 21-34.

[9] Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 90-92.

[10] Chesebrough, *God Ordained This War*, 145.

[11] Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972): 648-669.

[12] This essay uses the term "culture" as the total process and result of human activity within a society, including such things as language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, and values. See H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 29-39.

[13] John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 155-302.

[14] David Chesebrough, *Clergy Dissent in the Old South, 1830-1865* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996) argues that clergymen were voices reflecting a substantial number of people. On the use of the Bible for purposes other than scriptural exposition, see Mark A. Noll, "The Image of the U.S. as a Biblical Nation, 1776-1865", in Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll, eds., *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[15] The term "evangelical" derives from the Greek "evangelion" which means "good news", that is, that Christ has paid the penalty for sinners and one can enter into renewed fellowship with God through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. On the differences between Protestant denominations, see Curtis D. Johnson, *Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993), 4-6.

[16] John B. Boles, "Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South: From Religious Dissent to Cultural Dominance", in Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., *Religion in the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 6; Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), xvi, 58; Leonard I. Sweet, "Nineteenth-Century Evangelicalism", in Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 886-75; Reid et al., *Concise Dictionary of Christianity in America,* 123.

[17] Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, "The Professional Ministry", in *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience*, vol. 3, 1965.

[18] Nineteenth-century historians tended to take a negative stance toward organized religion, and focused more on the fragmentation of institutional Christianity. For example, Edward Channing (son of Unitarian preacher William Ellery Channing) viewed revivals and the Great Awakenings in American history as divisive influences to Protestant denominations, leading to religious intolerance. See, especially, Edward Channing, *A History of the United States*, vol. 2 (New York: MacMillan, 1908): 439-45.

[19] Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1939); and, an intellectual biography, *Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949). Significant works stemming from Miller's influence include Sidney Mead, *The Lively Experiment*; *The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper, 1963); Winthrop Hudson, *American Protestantism* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1965) and *Religion in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Harper, 1949). See also, Henry Warner Bowden, "The Historiography of American Religion", in Hambrick-Stowe's *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience* (1965).

[20] Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But.... Racism in Southern Religion, 1780-1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1972); John B. Boles, *The Great Revival, 1787-1805* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1972).

[21] Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*; Robert M. Calhoon, *Evangelicals and Conservatives in the Early South, 1740-1861* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988); Erskine Clarke, *Wrestlin' Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in the Old South* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979); Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*; Christine Leigh Hyerman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997); Randy J. Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994); Janet D. Cornelius, *"When I Can Read My Title Clear": Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

[22] Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1980); E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham, NC:

Duke University Press, 1978); James O. Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986); Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*; Chesebrough, *Clergy Dissent in the Old South*; and, Kenneth Moore Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997).

[23] Eugene Genovese has studied the southern slaveholders' worldview, and has used sermons as important source material. Articles related to the issue of worldview from Genovese include, "The Divine Sanction of Social Order: Religious Foundations of the Southern Slaveholders' World View", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55 (Summer 1987): 211-34; "The Religious Ideals of Southern Slave Society", *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 70 (Spring 1986): 2-16; "'Our Family, White, and Black'", in Bleser, ed., *In Joy and in Sorrow*; "Religion and the Collapse of the American Union", in Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson, eds., *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); "The Social Thought of Antebellum Southern Theologians", in Winfred B. Moore, Jr., and Joseph F. Tripp, eds., *Looking South: Chapters in the Story of an American Region* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989); and, *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998); On the difference between northern and southern evangelicals is Curtis D. Johnson, *Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993).

[24] The major denominational difference was between Methodists, who held to an Arminian theology which emphasized an individual's ability to accept or reject the gospel, and Presbyterians, who stressed the Calvinist position of a person's inability to come to Christ apart from divine intervention. Yet, both insistently agreed that all people were in need of Jesus, and must hear the gospel preached. For brief surveys on Arminianism and Calvinism, see Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 79-81, 186-88; within the Presbyterian church in the 1830s, for example, disputes about theology, relations with other Christian bodies, and reform methods led to a denominational split--into Old School and New School assemblies. For a look at southern Presbyterianism, see Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1963); for a brief introductory essay on the many vari-eties of Baptists, see Bill J. Leonard, *Dictionary of Baptists in America* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994); on slave Christianity, many works exist, which include: Alonzo Johnson, and Paul Jersild, *"Ain't Gonna Lay My 'Ligion Down": African American Religion in the South* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Ante-bellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Dwight N. Hopkins, and George C.L. Cummings, eds., *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narratives* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991); and, Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972).

[25] Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, ix; Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 8; Startup, *The Root of All Evil*, 2; For an excellent study on the role of Protestant denominations in the sectional problem, see C.C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985).

[26] Chesebrough, *Clergy Dissent in the Old South*, 89; Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy*, 5; Clement Eaton, *The Mind of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 162-64.

CHAPTER II

GOD AND THE BIBLE

White southern evangelical preachers were passionate about their vision for a proslavery society. One cannot understand why ministers would so fully advocate slavery, embrace secession as separation from northern infidelity, and support the war effort apart from their cosmology. At the core of the clergy's belief structure was the Bible as God's revelation to humanity, and a firm theology that understood a triune God (Father, Son Jesus, and Holy Spirit) as sovereign over all creation. Although these were classic Protestant doctrines, the need for pastors to clarify and expound on scriptural and theological convictions was due largely to both the sacred and secular environments of antebellum America. Southern ministers saw an increasing erosion of the doctrine of biblical infallibility, and an emerging secular cosmology explaining the world in scientific terms as ideas that threatened a Christian social order. It was here, with basic core theology, that seeds of sectionalism were nurtured and blossomed into a proslavery worldview.

By 1830 biblical authority had firmly taken root in southern soil through the evangelical notion that individual believers should draw life principles from the facts of the Bible, and not from human opinion. On the one hand, the idea that the Bible is authoritative was nothing new; this was a prime doctrine in the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s. On the other hand, antebellum evangelicals placed new

emphasis upon scriptural jurisdiction above all other literature and institutions. The

Protestant pillar of *sola Scriptura* (the Bible alone) came to mean "no authority except

the Bible" instead of the meaning "no authority over the Bible."[1] The Bible became

not only a spiritual authority, but a veritable textbook on all of life. The Scriptures

were the highest moral power on earth because the Old and New Testaments were a

self-disclosure of God and his agenda for humanity. Virginia Methodist Nelson Head

insisted in 1859 that:

> The Bible stands alone amidst the multiform literature of our world, as the
> Book of God. It is a revelation of God's personal existence and perfections. It
> contains an account of God's works. It furnishes a disclosure of God's plans.
> It is a repository of God's thought.... No part of the Bible should be neglected.
> History, prophecy, poetry--its doctrines, its ethical principles and precepts--
> have all a meaning, and all contain a good, and it is ours to enquire into the
> one, and appropriate the other.[2]

It is an understatement to say that southern preachers saw the Bible as God's Word to

all humankind. From Genesis to Revelation the Bible, for southern pastors, was

infallible, inerrant, true, right, and accurate in everything because its author was God

himself. The Reverend H.C. Thweatt of Louisiana proclaimed that the Bible is the

"pure Word of God, the exact transcript of infinite perfection." Methodist stalwart

William Winans of Mississippi firmly asserted to a group of skeptics in 1839 that "the

Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are a Revelation from God--they are the

Word of God," and these scriptures "are the Truth, i.e. they represent truly the Divine

character, and the nature, condition, obligations, duties, and capabilities of man."

Presbyterian Thomas Smyth of South Carolina believed all other sources outside of

the Bible, especially reason, were not reliable because of limitation, imperfection, and

fallibility. Instead:

> the Scriptures are the only rule of our faith and practice, of our hopes and fears, and that to add to, or take from, to modify or exchange any of their truths, is to endanger the only "foundation which God has laid in Zion."[3]

The Bible was the solid foundation for the southern clergy's cosmology. The scriptures provided southern society with a meaningful approach for order in the world, in which their institutions and values could be understood. Antebellum America faced a great number of changes, both on the religious and non-religious landscapes, and the Bible was a secure foothold for a large segment of southern society. Preachers continually harkened back to the Bible to gain perspective and guidance for all of life. Dr. John Holt Rice, a Richmond pastor and founder of the first Presbyterian seminary in the South, believed that it was the great duty of professors to imbue students "as thoroughly as possible, with the knowledge of revealed truth. The Bible ought to be the great text book."[4] In a changing world, God's Word must be studied, proclaimed, and be preeminent as the only sure mooring to rest one's life upon. Preachers, as Dr. Rice insisted, needed to provide their congregations with biblical teaching. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, the great sermon orator of New Orleans, took this advice to heart. He studied the evidences of the Bible as the Word of God and deliberately made up his mind that scripture claims were valid. Palmer gave himself to preaching biblical principles for life. Whatever others, particularly northerners, might preach (e.g. science, politics, literature) he would preach the Gospel, and the Gospel only, from his pulpit. Palmer believed it was thing the world needed worst of all, and he was determined to meet that need.[5]

The religious mileu of antebellum America was in a great state of flux. Other sources of knowledge became equal to, and higher than, the Bible. Although the Bible remained important for all Protestants, many, like the Unitarians, believed reason to be the guiding source of knowledge, and the final authority in the interpretation of the Scriptures. Reverend Thomas Smyth, a native Irishman who emigrated to America, was a learned minister who was familiar with the various theologies and ideas of the day. He wanted nothing to do with prevailing notions of German philosophy, imported to the United States through the North, which left human reason unassisted by the Bible. The influences of European philosophers such as Immanuel Kant sought to replace dependence upon scriptural revelation with what they considered more secure foundations of knowledge, like reason. But being left to one's own reason, Smyth argued, only "creates perversions of true religion." Revelation was above reason, and was never contrary to it.[6]

The changing landscape of antebellum American religion was largely confined to the North. Southern evangelicals were effective in resisting all challenges to their faith from competing views. In the South the Census of 1860 lists only one out of 58 Swedenborgian churches in the United States, only 24 of the 665 Universalist churches, only 3 of the 264 Unitarian churches in America, and no recognized Spiritualist assemblies in the South. Nearly three-fourths of all southern churchgoers were either Methodist or Baptist, attesting to southern evangelical strength.[7]

Any non-evangelical sect, for southern pastors, was an aberration of true religion because of the evangelical view of the Bible. The North was seen by southerners

as a region of religious plurality and instability; in other words it was a place of grow-ing infidelity to true Christianity. Southern preachers prided themselves on not hav-ing a truncated view of scriptural authority like the Unitarians, Transcendentalists, and Romantics. Baptist Thornton Stringfellow wrote: "There are isms at the North whose name is legion. According to the universal standard of orthodoxy, we are com-pelled to exclude the subjects of these isms from the pale of Christianity."[8] Stringfellow thought that anything that deviated from a high view of the Bible was actually demonic and believers must separate themselves from such things. Romanti-cism was unacceptable for southern clergymen because it did not view the Bible as the highest form of authority and a revelation from God; instead, Scripture only offered insights into religious consciousness and was no different than any other reli-gious source. For many Romantics imagination and experience supplanted the Bible's traditional role. Transcendentalism, another northern ism, saw nature itself as revela-tory, providing an alternate epistemic base outside of the Christian Scriptures. New England Transcendentalists, like Ralph Waldo Emerson, substituted the written Word of God for an intuitive approach to religion. Northern theologian Theodore Parker understood that a person is a Christian if the knowledge of God "springs up spontane-ous in the holy heart"; this was an experience that could happen independent of the Bible.[9]

The reason southern theologians so abhorred the northern "isms" was that they redefined Christianity and the role of Jesus by displacing the Bible as the sole source of knowledge about God in the world. Only southern separation from such

destructive heresy could keep evangelicalism untainted. Northern evangelicals, according to southern preachers, were at risk of being seductively influenced by radical ideas about how to interpret Scripture.[10] Although Unitarians provided an easy target for evangelicals as the enemy to be resisted, southern ministers also saw northern evangelicals as a sort of demonizing culprit because of their growing association with abolitionism. It is no wonder, then, that southern evangelicals were, for example, wary of participating with their northern brethren. Denominational schism had occurred with the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists in the 1830s and 1840s along sectional lines, due to differences concerning slavery. At the heart of division was the Bible, whether it could be read as sanctioning or condemning human bondage. James Henley Thornwell, the leading theologian of the South, understood that the difference between northern and southern brethren was how each approached the Bible. "Opposition to slavery has never been the offspring of the Bible. It has sprung from visionary theories of human nature and society; it has sprung from the misguided reason of man." At the Presbyterian General Assembly of 1837, in which the denomination split into Old School and New School, William Plumer of the First Presbyterian Church of Richmond felt constrained to deliver a lengthy defense of slavery on biblical grounds. Plumer's choicest words, however, were for those who did not recognize a proslavery worldview as correct. Quoting the New Testament, he exclaimed:

> If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.

> Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, sup-
> posing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself.

It was, for Plumer, the duty of Bible-believers to withdraw and separate from those who did not take the Bible literally. Separation, in the form of establishing distinctive southern denominations, was an act of holiness and sanctified biblical fidelity in the South.[11]

Northern and southern evangelicals both viewed slavery as a moral dilemma, that is, whether to interpret human bondage as categorically evil, or as a necessary part of the social fabric coming from God himself. Despite the fact that northerners and southerners agreed on basic cardinal doctrine, they deviated on opposite poles concerning the social applications of that doctrine. Thus, it came to prevail that both sides framed their beliefs about slavery in moral and biblical terms. Both considered the other as heretics to the true faith because of one anothers' position on slavery. In the North, to be proslavery was to challenge the purpose of the cross of Christ in bringing freedom to all individuals; in the South, to be anti-slavery was to reject the plain teaching of Scripture that Jesus never condemned physical human bondage. Southern clergymen spiritualized freedom as only a condition of the heart, and not as pertaining to the body, thus bifurcating flesh and spirit. Real slavery, insisted James Henley Thornwell of South Carolina, was not fleshly, but spiritual. The emancipation of the will from the power of sin is the freedom that God desires. Thus, Thornwell made a dichotomy between a slave's personhood and his labor. The duty the slave owed to his master was his labor. Reverend Thornwell stated that "Whatever control the master has over the person of the slave is subsidiary to this right to his labour;

what he sells is not the man, but the property in his services."[12]

Therefore, much of the debate on slavery between northern and southern evangelicals was a hermeneutical issue on how to interpret God's Word. The North's anti-slavery interpretation of Scripture brought about a close and powerful alliance between evangelicalism and abolitionism. A more egalitarian worldview emerged in the North due to an emphasis upon the connection between body and soul in the concept of freedom. In the South, however, a proslavery cosmology emerged with a hierarchical strata that emphasized clear lines of patriarchy and submission to authority. If slavery was a biblical reality, then the North was in terrible error. Abolitionism and northern evangelicalism were viewed by southerners, at best, as closely associated, and at worst, the same thing. Thus, northern evangelicalism was not really biblical, according to southern divines, and was just another "ism" to be repudiated. Besides, groups such as the Unitarians clearly had a abolitionist spirit, so that all religion in the North tended to get congealed in the southern mind. Separation, then, from every northern religion, including evangelicals, became the southern practice.[13] This left southern evangelicals alone to pursue converting the black population and preserve the virtues of a Christian social order. Northern attacks on slavery threatened not just a way of life, but challenged their worldview and specific underpinnings of faith.[14]

Separation from northerners continued to be an issue in the 1850s. Even such a cause as the American Bible Society tended to be hampered in southern states, not because southerners did not believe that it was a worthy cause, but because the New York-based ABS was viewed as a northern association. When James H. McNeill, a

North Carolina minister, labored on behalf of the ABS, he wisely knew there were sectional hurdles to overcome. He made his appeal to southerners out of his common link:

> I am a southern man; born and raised and, until lately, a Pastor in the South; as one of the Secretaries of the ABS, my special field of correspondence is the South.... I wish to see and complete a thorough organization of southern feeling and principle in this great cause and I ask the aid of every friend of the Bible there in effecting this great end. The Society is as much and as truly the property and the servant of Christians in the South as in the North.

McNeill continued to serve the ABS until 1861, when he joined the Confederate army as a chaplain, and was eventually killed in battle in 1865. Southerners were generally suspicious of anything from the North. One exasperated northerner, after attempting to do mission work in the South claimed that white southerners' "inventive imaginations associate Northern influence--a rupture of our civil compact--dissolution of all social order--an armed host of incendiary abolitionists--blood and murder--and a thousand other hydra-headed gorgons dire, with the establishment of a Sabbath school."[15]

The Bible was not only seen by southern divines as the sole text that provided an anchor in a changing religious world, but also saw Scripture as the basis and security for a changing secular world. Political, social, and economic upheavals in the early republic and into antebellum America, particularly in the North, were seen as suspect by southern evangelicals. Change, for southern preachers, was at best a challenge, and at worst a threat to orthodox Christianity. Politically, the grand experiment in American democracy was volatile. Federalists and Democratic Republicans, and later Whigs and Jacksonian Democrats, battled over who was to have control over the nation. In addition, the new republic faced increasing changes with industry and

urbanization. Economic maturity occurred quickly through the development of a burgeoning market system. Financial boom and bust cycles were new to Americans, and was different from a perceived consistency of a subsistence economy. Cities experienced significant growth as more and more immigrants came to America, and as people moved from rural areas to new factories. Industrialization brought massive changes in the social order. In Rochester, New York, for example, as the city and economy changed and grew, journeymen craftsmen lost their dominance of work to entrepreneurs because of new work organization, different relations between work and family life, and the changing spatial situation of the area. The family business faded, and factories were built by manufacturers who mass produced goods. This brought an increase in class tension, economic insecurities, and social anxiety. The North, especially, became much more mobile and urban; it was on the move. A vacuum of social and familial relationships resulted as working-class people moved to new jobs in the city.[16]

The struggle, for southern preachers who lived in a primarily rural region, was in either reconciling contemporary society and ideas with Scripture, or in categorically condemning all competing ideas and social realities as anti-Bible. The only sure foundation in the midst of social and religious alteration was the facts of the Bible, and to build a godly society based upon Holy Writ. "The truth is, the Bible contains the only principles on which true liberty can rest with permanency", said Methodist H.C. Theweatt. America, Theweatt believed, needed to take the Bible seriously, because only God's holy revelation provided the guidance necessary for society.

Studying the Bible:

> will do more to check crime than all the criminal codes ever devised and employed, and will insure liberty in all her justifiable forms, more than constitution and statutes, though these are necessary for a nation's welfare, but would be insecure unless sanctioned by the authority of the Bible.

The last thing America needed was an erosion in biblical veracity, as demonstrated by changing northern theologies. The Bible must be central to all of life, and its authority above all other. Southern preachers envisioned a godly society, built upon the precepts of Scripture, as the only sure footing in a vastly changing world.[17]

The great secular challenge to biblical authority in the nineteenth century was an emerging cosmology based on science, in which only objective facts could verify truth, and the world could be explained outside of God. Southern clergymen were staunch about scriptural revelation as true and authoritative. Anything that challenged this heart of evangelical faith was infidel. Bishop George Foster Pierce, never a preacher to hold back his opinion, did not like any of the ideas that came from the North contra Scripture. Pierce believed that northern "infidelity is distilling its poison under the patronage of science, education, and knowledge, glorifies the nineteenth century, chants paeons to the march of the mind, pities the superstitions of our Bible-believing ancestry."[18] For Pierce, and fellow evangelical preachers, the problem was not science but the fact that it could become an alternate explanation for the universe outside of the Bible and the scientific method was becoming a replacement for Scripture's rightful place as authoritative. In the evangelical schema, the cosmos was a grand battle between the forces of good and evil, God and the devil--a war for the souls of human beings who needed to know, believe, and do what the Bible taught.

Anyone who had a different cosmology was, frankly, an infidel on the evil side of the universe.

For many southern ministers there was never a problem between science and the Bible. The Bible remained the sole source of truth and knowledge, and true science confirmed scriptural testimony. Nature daily displayed the glory of God's creation, with its vast complexity and order. Science, or natural theology, when taught by clergymen professors was designed "to teach young students that nature, like history and scripture, revealed the perfections and sovereignty of God." The Bible was not just one out of many sources of epistemic truth; it was supreme above all other knowledge. If anything contradicted God's revelation, it was false knowledge, and must be jettisoned. If any knowledge was consistent with scriptural truth, then it was right and good. Theweatt stubbornly affirmed that the Bible "contradicts none of the discoveries of modern science but on the contrary, lends its light for a more sure, vigorous, and successful investigation" and was "the only perfect standard of truth known among men, and which nothing else can supersede or substitute; before whose majesty science must bow." Science must never be filtered through man's imperfect reason, but evaluated through a scriptural grid. Benjamin Morgan Palmer astutely observed that the emerging scientific age "is an age of physical science, which, exploring the secrets of nature, and subordinating her powers to the uses of man, renders it utilitarian by system."[19] That is, instead of God using His creation for His own purposes, a flip-flop of worldviews occurred in which man is ruler over nature through the powers of science.

When it came to science and observation, pastors' logic was as follows: scientific facts verify Scripture--scriptural facts are from God--therefore, God exists. The central debate about secular ideas was, for southern clergymen, not so much concerning science as it was about the Bible. All the great Protestant doctrines--the atonement, the Trinity, the sinfulness of man, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus-- were all solid facts just as much as the upheaving of geological masses in the earth's crust. Science actually became a tool for which theologians could "prove" the Bible. By focusing on objective facts, southern evangelical preachers sought to foil the heretical teachings of northern theologies. Limiting the discussion to the facts of Scripture undermined Transcendentalist intuition, and thwarted the summum bonum of reason for the Unitarian. Through discussion of fact, preachers also defended their proslavery worldview. William Winans argued that the New Testament writers "do not give their opinions, but state facts. They profess to tell us, not what they believe, but what they know." The Bible was systematically ransacked for the facts about human servitude, and found that bondage was simply a scriptural reality. Science's penchant for order only buttressed preachers' conceptions of the ideal Christian society with a strict social order and hierarchy, and pointed to the Almighty, the ultimate God of order, not chaos. If any northerner opposed these biblical facts, he was a fanatic and an infidel.[20]

Simply put, southern preachers believed and taught that God wrote the Bible. Thus, the Bible meant exactly what it said, and the best interpretation of God's Word was that which was most literal. The truth and reality of Divine revelation, then,

could be experienced by ordinary human beings directly and accurately through one's senses. Numerous scholars have commented on this philosophy, known as Scottish Common Sense Realism.[21] Common Sense Realism was never an end in itself, or operated independent of written revelation. Scottish Common Sense was merely a tool in which learned preachers could point to what they considered the real issue: biblical authority. At the heart of Common Sense philosophy was the idea that people are endowed with a "moral sense" that enables them to readily know right from wrong. So, when persons read the Bible, or were exposed to biblical preaching, they had the innate capacity to immediately discern the credibility of the words being taught. Therefore, every person clearly had the ability to see that the Bible is both true and authoritative. Anyone, then, who did not agree with southern ministers' scriptural literalism was suppressing the truth, and worse than an infidel. Thomas Smyth was Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina for 38 years. His analysis of northern theology was vituperate; Smyth believed northern theologians purposely warped biblical authority and denied the truth that was plainly in front of their face. In a Fast-Day sermon preached in November 1860 he decried that northerners "have perverted and prostituted the Bible", and have subjected God's Holy Word to:

> the developments of philosophy, falsely so called; to the licentious and atheistic spirit of a liberty which knows no restraint and no authority, human or divine; and, by thus converting the Bible into law, binding, *according to their view of it* upon God and all other men beyond themselves, instead of being an infallible and unalterable standard of right and wrong, truth and error, of what is to be done, and a standard imposed equally and alike upon all men, bond or free, and to add to, or to take from which is alike cursed of God.[22]

What was at stake was nothing less than a clash of worldviews, which, for southern preachers like Smyth, had its foundation and base in the Bible as God's literal Word to all persons. In Smyth's analysis, both Unitarians and northern evangelicals could be lumped together because, although they differed on important doctrine, they both took a biblical hermeneutic that led to abolitionism and not proslavery Christianity. In fact, northern evangelicalism was hopelessly affected and stained by the presence of Unitarian theology in the North.

Since, for southern clerics, Scripture is God's self-disclosure of himself and his desires for humanity, knowledge about who God is came directly and solely from the biblical text. The major component of southern theology was that there is one God who exists as spirit in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is perfect harmony, unity, and order within this Godhead. Humans are the creatures and God is the Creator. At issue, for the biblical text as southern evangelicals understood it, was the correlation between creature and Creator. Because of the Fall of Man (Genesis 3) something is wrong with all of God's creation, namely sin. Sin is the gulf that separates the individual from God. Therefore, a bridge must be built to alleviate the chasm between God and people, Jesus, who serves as the atoning sacrifice for every individual's sin. Southern evangelicalism depicted a cosmic encounter between God and humans, between the self-sacrificial and perfect God, and the defective and self-idolizing individual. One becomes a Christian and enters into proper relationship and fellowship with God by recognizing self-guilt and accepting Christ's death as the payment for sin. Sin, then, for southern preachers was most pronounced when one did

not hold to the position of a Holy Trinity in which the divine Jesus is the only way of salvation. Richard Fuller, a prominent Baptist pastor and the first president of the Southern Baptist Convention, epitomized southern theology by recognizing that only God in Christ was sufficient for eradicating evil, and the base upon which all society must rely.

> If the testimony of the senses, and the decisions of reason, and the systems of philosophy are impotent for the extirpation of our earthly preferences and passions, where can we find that conviction which shall possess the ascendant power? Only in the truth as it is in Jesus.

Christ came, Rev. Stephen Elliott insisted:

> not to teach morals for the benefit of the few paltry years that we spend upon the earth, but to prepare the soul for reunion with that God from whom sin had violently separated it.... I cannot understand--if Jesus of Nazareth is a mere example, or teacher, or philosopher--why He should have shed His blood upon the Cross.[23]

A godly society, then, would not come from social reforms, political lobbying, or fanatical ideas that deviated from true theology; it would come through evangelistic preaching to individuals in need of Christ who accept the message, and then live according to biblical precepts. The biblical message preached by evangelical preachers was that Jesus is God, and that He is sovereign over all creation. Thomas Smyth consistently preached that "shorn of divinity, Jesus is for us no Savior. Without that divinity, we, professing Christians, must perish in our sins." This preaching transcended any denominational affiliation or dogma. "Let us bear in mind that we cannot be saved as Presbyterians, Baptists, or Methodists, or as members of any other tribe of Israel." The glue that held southern evangelicals together was their understanding of Jesus and the Cross.[24]

Unitarianism undercut the cardinal doctrines of evangelicalism and was greatly despised by southern preachers. Unitarians were unique among Protestants in the antebellum era in their belief that man is by nature good, and that the doctrine of the Trinity was unscriptural, which led to the name "Unitarian" as opposed to "Trinitarian". The Unitarians' greatest departure from orthodox Christianity was their view of Jesus and the atonement. Since possessing a rational belief was essential to Unitarians, the notion of the divinity of Jesus, a vicarious atonement from sin, and a supernatural resurrection from the dead was impossible. They granted that the life and death of Christ achieved a reconciliation, but Jesus's acts were foremost an act of love that needed to be emulated by others. Thus, the view of Jesus and the Cross was truncated by Unitarians as simply an exemplary moral example, and not necessarily a salvific act, since reason reigned as supreme over supernaturalism.[25] The relationship between God and His Word was inseparable for Smyth, who rejected Unitarianism because it left no salvation for sins through Jesus and did not recognize the Divine authorship of the Bible. Unitarianism was viewed as a northern contagion which needed to be kept away from the South. At one point Smyth bluntly decried New England Transcendentalist preacher Theodore Parker as one who "glories in the shame of open infidelity." To question or deny the Trinity, or "Tri-Unity of God", as southern preachers described it, "is to destroy all certain assurance that the Scriptures are the Word of God."[26]

The reason the doctrine of the Trinity was so important for southern evangelical preachers was twofold: the Creator God had a right to rule with complete

sovereignty over his human creatures; and, within the Godhead there is perfection,

and therefore, a perfect plan for humanity. The repository of this knowledge about

God, and his immutable plans for humankind was, of course, the Bible. Thus, the

Holy Scriptures were much more than a spiritual text for southern preachers; they

quite literally were God's revealed plan for how society ought to operate. The basis,

then, for the ministers' worldview was firmly placed in the theology of the Trinity.

God is the rightful Sovereign with the consummate agenda for His world. It is the

responsibility of every individual, therefore, to recognize the reality of the triune God

and to submit to Divine authority. The Methodist preacher from Mississippi, William

Winans, clearly set forth the doctrine of the Trinity and its attendant response for all

persons:

> The representations of the character of God are that He is one God, and that
> there is none other--that He is without beginning or cause, and without
> dependence, or change, or end--that He is a Spirit, a Being purely intelligent
> and moral in His nature that all the attributes of His nature are in infinite per-
> fection, His wisdom and power, His holiness and goodness, His justice and
> His truth being wholly incapable of either addition or limitation--that He is the
> Creator of the heavens of the earth, and of all things that are in them, whether
> inanimate, animate, intellectual or spiritual existences; and that, as He is their
> Creator, so the rightful and righteous Sovereign of all the creatures He hath
> made and that are sustained by Him--and that He is, therefore, entitled to such
> homage and service, and will adjudge to all such the reward or the punishment
> they have deserved, by their obedience or disobedience to His requirements.[27]

Southern white evangelicals found in their bibles a distinct representation of a Trinity

as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in not only the relation to the plan of spiritual

salvation, but as the core theology of a worldview that understood a distinct blueprint

of God as King, and humanity as subject to the revealed plans of the Bible.

There was no more pervasive or philosophically more fundamental thought in

the antebellum South than the providential view that God controlled and sustained all things. For the evangelical preacher, the idea of providence or sovereignty meant that the world is not ruled by chance or by fate but by God who, through His Word, lays bare his providential purposes. Providence is the outworking of God's will on earth in his dealings with humans. From the beginning of creation God has ordered the course of events (not necessarily having predestined those events) to work for His own plan-- and that plan is that people would come to know God in Christ. Thus, the human experience is one of God gaining the attention of His creatures to be inclined toward knowing Him and His will. "If the teaching of the Bible, and the revelation of the Christian religion be true," insisted J.W. Tucker, "there is no such thing as fortune, there can be no accidents...everything is of providence and under the control of God."[28]

All the laws of nature and the material world were, for southern preachers, under the direct and immediate control of God and made to work out the accomplish-ment of His plans. In a sermon on the providence of God preached to his Charleston, South Carolina congregation, Thomas Smyth set forth the understanding of God in the world and what it is He is trying to accomplish through human and natural events. Everything in the world was to be viewed through the grid that God is reaching out to his creatures to restore them to a right relationship with Him. When bad things hap-pen, God is attempting to gain attention; when good things happen, God is pouring out blessing on his people. "National calamities it [Providence] declares to be divine judgments, and national prosperity a divine blessing." When it came to any kind of

disaster, be it natural, economic, or political, it had a great providential purpose to serve in awakening people to their true spiritual condition so that they might repent and believe the gospel. Smyth retold a story of a personal experience of enduring an overseas voyage in which a violent storm erupted and threatened the safety of the ship. Reverend Smyth interpreted it to be sent by God to spur people to a considera- tion of their eternal state. In the middle of the storm,

> every heart was melted and every conscience busy, and that then none were willing to assume the character or bold front of hardened infidelity. The voice of blasphemy was halted--the words of ribaldry silenced--the instruments of gambling unopened--and the bowl of intoxication unquaffed. All then were willing to avow their fears, and open up their hearts, and seek counsel and advice [concerning their spiritual souls].[29]

Fellow Presbyterian, James Henley Thornwell, also interpreted world events through the grid of divine providence. In an opportunity to proliferate his cosmology, Thornwell was asked to preach at the South Carolina House of Representatives on December 9, 1854 in order for the politicians to gain a "divine" perspective on the course of human events. Thornwell argued that the cause of all suffering and pain is the presence of sin in the world. Calamities were to be interpreted as judgments designed to awaken people to a general sense of sin, and bring them to repentance. Every hardship is a judgment which is:

> a call, a loud and solemn call, to the inhabitants of the world to learn right- eousness... though the product of natural causes and secondary agents, they ultimately proceed from Him, and proceed from Him distinctly as a moral Ruler, a just and righteous Judge.

Thornwell's main argument was that all things come from the sovereignty of God in order to teach humankind that they must live their lives according to God's divine

plan.

> The pestilence and earthquake, the caterpillar and palmer worm, the heaven as brass and the earth as iron, war, blood and famine -- these are but samples of the scourges which God has employed in former times, which He is employing now, and which He may employ hereafter to teach the nations of the earth; that it is righteousness alone which can exalt them, and that sin is a reproach to any people.[30]

For Thornwell, and fellow southern pastors, God's purposes for calamitous events did not have a malevolent design; instead, they were tools for a much higher program of saving people from their sinful selves. God has a plan, and every event fit within that plan and was for the benefit of producing righteousness. It is impossible for God to have anything but altruistic motives since the Godhead itself (the Trinity) exists within perfect goodness. Only good can result from a good God. Southern clerics' optimism regarding problem situations stemmed from their understanding of the perfect virtue of a God who superintended all things on his earth. Within the Godhead the ministry of the Spirit is to glorify the Son, the work of Jesus was to do the will of the Father, and the Father offers His Son as an atoning sacrifice and defers to Jesus as the center of worship.[31] Thus, a community of humble love exists with God. It was this basic theological understanding that undergirded the interpretation of world events as encounters used for the benevolent design of leading individuals and people groups to an awareness of Divine reality. "The benevolent design may be inferred from the effect already produced. We are beginning, I trust, to learn the righteousness, to practice the repentance which He exacts at our hands," said Thornwell. Smyth taught and relied on this theology, insisting that "the providence of God lays the foundation for love and confidence, and demands our gratitude and

reliance." The course of human affairs is governed by God, so that "nothing can befall me but by thy appointment, or permission...thus, God by his goodness, is constantly calling men to repentance."[32]

An ordered plan proceeds from the basic goodness of the Godhead. "It is, indeed, too evident to admit of question, that the natural, necessary, and ordinary working of the laws of nature, is the preservation of order."[33] This order, in the southern evangelical mind, extended to the course of human events. It was the providence and sovereignty of God that brought the black person from Africa to America, and placed them in an inferior social position. The slave trade may have been tragic, even sinful, for many preachers, but the overarching use of it by God was undeniable. The bringing of blacks to the South had a missological purpose. Southern preachers embraced the Negro, although inferior in status, as a person in need of salvation. God, in His benevolence, brought the African out of a pagan world to a Christian society in which he could hear the gospel. James O. Andrews, a Methodist preacher and slaveholder, reminded his fellow masters that it was God who had entrusted the black slave to their care, and they must hear the gospel. Andrews exhorted them that:

> in the providence of God, they may be placed in a state of inferiority to you, and dependence upon you, yet they are men of like passions and like affections with yourselves... and require the same Almighty influence; they are heirs of the same glorious redemption.[34]

For most southern pastors it was simply recognized that providence had led blacks from Africa to America to hear of Christianity.

Episcopal Bishop Stephen Elliott took the notion seriously that the Negro was

brought to the South as a divine custody for southerners to evangelize. Elliott founded St. Stephen's Church in Savannah for the black population, was active in sending missionaries among the slaves, and devoted himself to preaching to the blacks of his diocese. He believed that the "slaves of the South are not merely so much property, but are a divine trust committed to us, as a people, to be prepared for the work which God may have for them to do in the future." From the perspective of Elliott, the existing social order was, therefore, a plan within the rubric of God's sovereign benevolence and mercy toward the Negro. To tamper with this social plan was unthinkable, since it has theological roots in the goodness of God who providentially controls his universe. Thus, Elliott had no stomach for the northern abolitionist who wanted to deny this providential view of God sending Africans to America, and desired to break the divine trust the southerner had with black servants. The reason Elliott used such strong terms for abolitionists as a "hateful and infidel pestilence" is that he saw them as people who refused to recognize basic theological truth, and denied the working of God in His world.[35] Thomas Smyth also reminded his listeners that it was God's benevolence and plan that brought blacks to America. In the Divine strategy, all people benefit from Africans coming to America and becoming slaves.

> They [the North] forget that God is in this whole matter [of slavery]; that *against their most earnest wishes* he brought this institution into these Southern States, where he had prepared a soil, and has provided a seed, whose fruit now supplies food and raiment, with a home and home comforts, for millions of slaves, for millions of masters, and for untold millions in every nation in the whole earth, *themselves included.*[36]

This proslavery worldview, based in a theology of divine providence and goodness, gave the South a distinctiveness and purpose from God in history. In an

address before the graduating class of the College of Charleston in 1863, James Warley Miles, an Episcopal preacher, missionary, and professor of the history of philosophy, chose to deal with the subject of God's providential plan in history, particularly as it related to the American South. Miles staunchly believed in a world that was created by God with a rational and sovereign blueprint. The bulk of his discourse was devoted to tracing a history of civilizations that saw the failure of nations to live according to biblical precepts. Miles argued that the Confederacy had a mission to perform from the Almighty. Past nations had come and gone, having lived for themselves. The South must learn from this grave error, and realize the awesome responsibility they have to perpetuate a genuinely Christian society. They were at a unique juncture in history, in which they had the opportunity, like no other nation before them did, to establish God's intentions for humanity on the earth.

> If our struggle is only for a selfish independence, in which, when we shall have achieved it, we are to act over again among ourselves the old history of the struggle of sectional parties for power, then we are inevitably destined to further disruption, if not civil war. But if we are true to ourselves, if we are not blind to the indications of Providence, we have the glorious, but awfully responsible mission of exhibiting to the world that supremest effort of humanity--the foundation of a political organization, in which the freedom of every member is the result of law, is preserved by justice, is harmonized by the true relations of labor and capital [slavery], and is sanctified by the divine spirit of Christianity.[37]

God, Miles insisted, was directing the development of His scheme through the Confederacy; the South was commissioned by the Lord to contend for and illustrate great biblical principles.

Since the belief of a providential plan coming from a good God was the dominant understanding among southern preachers, they interpreted the Civil War

through this theological grid. God, they believed, caused the war for His own purposes: to punish the nation for its sins, to protect slavery, and assure southern independence to live according to the Bible. Furthermore, clergymen argued that the final victory would not come from human armies, leaders, or industry, but from God. One preacher confidently asserted to his congregation that the Confederacy was in the hands of a sovereign God who would care for them as He did the ancient Israelites. Just as God had identified with His people in the Old Testament by standing against the pagan Canaanites and leading them to the promised land, so He would providentially lead the South to victory.

> If Pharaoh [Lincoln] will not let us go after all his afflictions, would he have been persuaded by the voice of reason, and the appeals to mercy? The present struggle shows how desperate was their love of the Union. No expense, no principles, no reputation, no blood was too much to be offered upon its altar. The God Dagon fell down, and was smashed before the ark of the Covenant, but this idol [the preservation of the Union] is not to bow to the power of reason, nor the providence of God.... Hence, the Lord, who would deliver us from the snare, led providentially and imperceptibly into the war.[38]

Many southern preachers held fast to their optimism throughout the war that their worldview was correct, that God had a divine plan for the South in establishing a proslavery cosmology, and that He would overcome the North. In September of 1864, Bishop Stephen Elliott, Rector of Christ Church in Savannah, preached a sermon to his Georgian diocese in the apprehension that General Sherman was making his way through the South, had overtaken Atlanta, and was on his march to the sea. Elliott chose as his scripture text a psalm that states: "Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly; for He it is that shall tread down our enemies."[39] Elliott viewed the Confederacy's battle woes as

providential correction, and clung to the idea that God was perfecting His people through suffering and would surely deliver them from their enemies.

> Why should we expect to escape our share of the punishment which comes from God, especially when that punishment seems to be the chastening of a Father and not the judgment of a consuming fire? A national character is a most important element in the future of a State, and in no way is it so certainly gained as by passing a people through a fierce struggle, in which they have been brought face to face with suffering and peril.

Bishop Elliott's confidence came from his theology, derived from his reading of the Bible. God, in the Old Testament with the Israelites, had proven over and over that He was committed to his own to deliver them from pagans, and that he would use adversity as correction. Southerners, like Elliott, saw themselves as God's people, and northerners as, in effect, pagans, because they had strayed from the worship of the one true God and gone after the infidelity of differing theologies which were corrupt to Scripture. Presbyterian clergymen, Thomas Smyth, bluntly put it this way: "An anti-slavery Bible must have an anti-slavery God, and then a God anti-law, order, propriety, and morality; that is no God, but the 'God of this World' [Satan]." With the faith that the South had a genuine religion, Elliott could boldly assert that the North would not be victorious, and that God would help.

> I have no faith in national platforms and Presidential elections; no expectations from European recognition or foreign interference; no trust in the power of cotton, or in the failure of money. I look to God for help, and in due time in will come. We must be patient and enduring--patient under his chastisements, and enduring while he is making things work together for good to us. As I have said to you, again and again, this war is never to be ended by any victories of ours; God will give us just enough of them to enable us to keep our enemy at bay.[40]

The proslavery cosmology of white southern preachers developed from a soil

with theological roots in the belief that the goodness of a Triune God sovereignly controls the universe and all human events within it. This understanding of God was derived from a literal hermeneutic of the Bible as God's Word to humanity. Southern ministers believed that the many differing theologies and philosophies that were flourishing in the North were blasphemous and infidel because they threatened the integrity of Scripture, and thus eroded proper views of who God is. The Bible, therefore, was central to the evangelical preacher of the South; Scripture was divine revelation and provided a blueprint on God's intentions for the world. The existence of a benevolent God of order with a plan permeated the thinking of southern preachers. The South had a distinctive role to play in God's economy by upholding the ideals that God desired, especially since previous civilizations in history had succumbed to self-centeredness and strayed from allowing a perfect God to establish a perfect society. The core of the southern clergy's belief about the nature of God and the Bible provided the foundation for a proslavery worldview. For southern preachers, to attack or challenge the institution of slavery was tantamount to ignoring scriptural revelation and rejecting the providence and goodness of the Triune God. The North, in the eyes of antebellum southern preachers, was becoming increasingly evil and was antithetical to the holiness of God. Separation in the form of denominational splits along sectional lines came first. Eventually, separation from infidelity would not prove to be enough.

---

[1] Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 241-242.

[2] Nelson Head, "The Gospel - Its Character, Requirements and Blessings", in William

T. Smithson, ed., *The Methodist Pulpit, South* (Washington, D.C.: William T. Smithson, 1859), 357. On the changing views of Scripture in early America, see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democritization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 179-183.

H.C. Thweatt, "The Holy Scriptures", in Smithson, *The Methodist Pulpit, South*, 414; William Winans, *Sermons; or A Series of Discourses on Fundamental Religious Subjects; Including a Preliminary Discourse on the Divine Revelation of the Holy Scriptures* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1891), 18; J. William Flinn, ed., *The Complete Works of the Rev. Thomas Smyth* (Columbia, SC: R.L. Bryan, 1910), 8:39.

Thomas Virgil Peterson, *Ham and Japheth: The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978), 112; Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), 279.

Douglas F. Kelly, *Preachers with Power: Four Stalwarts of the South* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), 106.

William Ellery Channing, "Unitarian Christianity", in Keith J. Hardman, *Issues in American Christianity: Primary Sources with Introductions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 99-103; Flinn, *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, 7:46-47; E. Brooks Holified, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978), 85; Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone,* trans. T.M. Greene and H.H. Hudson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 40, 123.

Clement Eaton, *A History of the Old South* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 434.

Quoted in Eugene D. Genovese, and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Social Thought of Antebellum Southern Theologians", in Winfred B. Moore, Jr., and Joseph F. Tripp, eds., *Looking South: Chapters in the Story of an American Region* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 35; Stringfellow's use of the term "legion" is a reference to demons from Mark 5:1-10 in the New Testament.

Steve Wilkens, and Alan G. Padgett, *Christianity and Western Thought: A History of Philosophers, Ideas, and Movements, Vol. 2: Faith and Reason in the 19th Century* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 27-34.

Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 261.

John B. Adger, ed., *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1971), 4:493; C.C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985); Biblical quote is from 1 Timothy 6:3-5.

James Henley Thornwell, "Rights and Duties of Masters" in editor David B. Chesebrough, *God Ordained This War: Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 185.

Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People,* 653.

[14] Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 315.

[15] John W. Kuykendall, *Southern Enterprise: The Work of National Evangelical Societies in the Antebellum South* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 129; Janet D. Cornelius, *"When I Can Read My Title Clear": Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 127-128.

[16] Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millenium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

[17] H.C. Theweatt, *The Methodist Pulpit, South*, 429-30.

[18] Quoted from Genovese, "The Social Thought of Antebellum Southern Theologians", in Moore, *Looking South: Chapters in the Story of an American Region*, 32.

[19] Theweatt, "The Holy Bible", in *The Methodist Pulpit, South*, 428-31; Herbert Hovenkamp, *Science and Religion in America, 1800-1860* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), ix, x; Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *National Responsibility Before God*, (New Orleans: Price-Current Steam Book and Job Printing Office, 1861).

[20] Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in the Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 140-159; James O. Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 83-88; Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, 7:51-54; Winans, *A Series of Discourses*, 79.

[21] Curtis D. Johnson, *Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993), 33-35; Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy*, 92-98; Allen C. Guelzo, "The Science of Duty", in David N. Livingstone, D.G. Hart, and Mark A. Noll, eds., *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Standford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 44-47; D.H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), vii-11; Nathan O. Hatch, and Mark A. Noll, eds., *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 79-100.

[22] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth*, 7:548.

[23] Samuel S. Hill, "The South", in Charles H. Lippy, and Peter W. Williams, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 1:1496; Richard Fuller, *The Cross: A Discourse* (Philadelphia: American

Baptist, 1841), 10; Stephen Elliott, *Sermons by the Rev. Stephen Elliott, Bishop of Georgia,* (New York: Pott and Amery, 1867): 52, 311.

[24] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth,* 9:309, 324, 335-336.

[25] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, and Jonathan S. Carey, *An American Reformation: A Documentary History of Unitarian Christianity* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 3-7; Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 395; David Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 49.

[26] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth,* 7:84.

[27] Winans, *A Series of Discourses,* 86-87.

[28] Lewis O. Saum, *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 3; Elwell, *Dictionary of Evangelical Theology,* 890-891; Tucker, "God's Providence in War", in Chesebrough, *God Ordained This War,* 230.

[29] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth,* 5:514, 518, 526.

[30] James Henley Thornwell, *Judgments, A Call to Repentance. A Sermon Preached by Appointment of the Legislature in the Hall of House of Representatives* (Columbia: R.W. Gibbes and Co., 1854), 9, 22.

[31] John 14:26; 16:13; 8:54.

[32] Thornwell, *Judgments, A Call to Repentance,* 9; Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth,* 5:519.

[33] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth,* 5:518; A.M. Poindexter, *God's Providence: A Source of Comfort and Courage to Christians* (Raleigh, NC, 1861): 2, 6.

[34] James O. Andrew, *Family Government: A Treatise on Conjugal, Parental, Filial, and Other Duties* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1852), 156-157.

[35] Stephen Elliott, *Sermons by the Rev. Stephen Elliott, Bishop of Georgia* (New York: Pott and Amory, 1867), xv, 577.

[36] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth,* 7:544.

[37] James Warley Miles, *God in History* (Charleston, SC: Steam-Power Press of Evans and Cogswell, 1863), 23-24.

[38] Henry Allen Tupper, "A Thanksgiving Discourse", in DeWitte Holland, ed., *Sermons in American History: Selected Issues in the American Pulpit, 1630-1967* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 236-238, 243.

[39] Psalm 60:11-12, KJV.

[40] Stephen Elliott, *Vain is the Help of Man: A Sermon Preached in Christ Church, Savannah, on Thursday, September 15, 1864, being the Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, Appointed by the Governor of the State of Georgia* (Macon, GA: Burke, Boykin, and Co., 1864), 4-5, 11; Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth,* 7:547.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEAL CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

Benjamin Mosby Smith was a distinguished Southern Presbyterian clergymen, seminary professor, church statesman, and advocate of public education. The Bible was Reverend Smith's textbook of choice, and the most reliable source concerning the human condition, from their origins, rights and duties, and purposes in life. "The Bible alone gives us an authentic account of the origin of our race, its earliest form of social organization, and the institution of the first means for its moral culture."[1] For Smith and his fellow evangelical pastors, Adam and Eve constituted the first human family and became the model and cornerstone of proper social organization. The ideal Christian society, for white evangelical southern preachers, was a rigidly stratified hierarchy which had its theological base in the Bible as God's literal Word to humankind and in a God who desired order and discipline in His world. Within the Triune Godhead there exists perfect harmony and organization. Therefore, it was logical and biblical for southern clergymen to understand God's intentions for human society to rest on scriptural precepts that exemplified a clear chain of command. Everything in the world had its place in the hierarchical schema.

> There are no gaps or chasms in the creation of God. All its parts are admirably connected together, making up one universal, harmonious whole. There is a chain of beings, from the lowest to the highest point--from a sand-grain to an archangel.[2]

The social stratification of people was based in the institution of the family as the cosmological bedrock of the world. Husband and father was the head, wife and mother, children, and black slaves were all (in that order) subordinates. Slaves were considered part of the family government and played a critical role in southern society as an ordained part of God's economy. Slavery was never seen by southern divines as a separate institution from the white plantation family. Thus, when northern abolitionists attacked the existence of slavery in the South, it was interpreted by southern evangelicals as assault on the family. Any assailment on the family household was a raid upon the very foundation of southern society. Northern conservatives did not see that is was the South's proslavery worldview that provided a firm basis for a Christian social order.[3] It was the scriptural discernment of the family institution within a proslavery cosmology that was in contradistinction to the North and provided the fodder for a secessionist impulse among many of the southern evangelical clergy.

Order and discipline were probably the most universally applicable words which southern evangelicals used to describe the Christian life.[4] Presbyterians were notorious for systematizing doctrine, Methodists for their hierarchical church polity and straightforward approach to church discipline, and antebellum Baptist church records are replete with cases of correction, especially toward anything that eroded ideas of a traditional family structure. Family was, for evangelical pastors, to be the breeding ground of order and religious training that would be the educational tool to develop godly future leaders and promoters of a genuinely Christian society. "God is a God of order. He is its origin and first exemplar. Order is heaven's first law, and

the principle of all law. It pervades the universe", said Reverend Thomas Smyth of South Carolina. Where there is order there is duty, and every individual must take their place in the stratification of God's societal mandate. "The family is the foundation of society and of the church."[5] The worldview of southern clergymen saw the best expression of biblical fidelity as expressed through the preservation of a well-ordered, hierarchical society that rested on the foundation of the family. The pro-slavery cosmology of evangelical preachers relied on patriarchal and paternalistic values that would ensure a stable social order with a place for everyone. Pure religion involved defining and enforcing the proper behavior of individuals in their God-given familial duties.[6]

For antebellum southern preachers, Scripture was the foundation for ideas of family and the social order. Proper familial relations were enhanced and enjoyed through the centrality of the Bible as the core of the Christian household. "With what warm affection must the husband, the wife, the parents and children, masters and servants, bind the Bible to their bosoms!" said Pastor Rufus Bailey. "Blessed word, which marks the bounds of society, gives its laws, and furnishes a spot in this moral wilderness, cultivated and enclosed, where the domestic virtues can take root and flourish!"[7] The institution of the family came from God, and "is the most important, the happiest, and the most blessed institution with which he has endowed the human race." Family "is truly the foundation of all other government", stated one southern divine.[8] James O. Andrew, a prominent Methodist Bishop and slaveholder, insisted that the Bible be the galvanizing force behind the southern family and society. Every

marriage should begin with Scripture as the foundation for family life. "Let the Bible be there at the start, the first book in your library, and permit no volume afterwards to obtrude itself, which cannot, with a hearty good will, afford to keep company with that blessed old book." Even the physical presence of the Scriptures were to communicate the centrality of an evangelical worldview to all. "And when I say a family Bible, I mean a respectably-sized one, with good print, such as will not tax the eyes of any aged prophet of God who may chance to sojourn with you."[9]

Southern preachers did not simply talk in familial terms as metaphors for perpetuating paternalism, nor did they just construct a social edifice to suit an existing planter lifestyle in order to please their wealthy constituents. Clergymen expounded upon a specific social agenda for everyone within the family because of their evangelical reading of the Bible as Holy Writ. The Bible was, for ministers, an objective and practical book on relations between all people. Their biblicism led to a patriarchal ranking of family with white male as head. Although this may seem similar and applicable to northern evangelical views on family, southerners perceived themselves as an especially family-centered people. Vituperation against Yankee civilization frequently included complaints that northerners tended to the sexual excess of free love, marital instability, and divorce.[10] That is, southern evangelical ministers tended to see the South as the bastion of genuinely biblical expressions of how family ought to operate.

The home in antebellum America was a sacred place, ordained of God for the special purpose of raising godly children that would impact the church and all

"secular" institutions. What occurred in the privacy of the home and family was the starting point for shaping the public world. If the training within the household economy was expressed from the love that came from God, then a virtuous citizenry would arise; however, if the Bible was neglected and familial roles ignored, then society was in danger of moral decay. Rufus Bailey, a pastor whose sermons and writings on issues concerning the family were widely read in the South, maintained that the orderly household structure was the nursery to good society.

> Do you see that honest, industrious, and useful citizen, that devoted husband, affectionate father, and just master? He was prepared for the excellent character he sustains, and for his extensive influence, by parental training in the domestic circle. Do you see another intemperate, profane, or profligate, and unfaithful in his domestic duties? He also was educated for what he is, and will perpetuate his race.[11]

Evangelicalism was of substantial import to the southern home. The South was a kin-dominated society, and was linked together by the evangelical community. Kin connections, not class relations, were the principal determining elements in societal relationships. The uniqueness of southern society derived not only from slavery, but from the ideas of slaves as part of the household economy and the kin associations that were reinforced by membership in local evangelical churches. Preachers in local churches, therefore, were anything but marginal figures in southern life; they were at the forefront of promulgating and disseminating traditional societal roles derived from biblical literalism. Proclamations by preachers of race and gender roles had the dual purpose of reinforcing family values, and maintaining social stability. Church discipline cases frequently revolved around the greatest threats to the family-based social order: sexual offenses, and disorderly private relations between genders within the

home. Divorce, especially, was a strict taboo because it undermined the family and could cause the unraveling of the social order. Public displays of bad conduct were rarely cause for church discipline. This makes sense considering that the cosmological conceptions proclaimed from the pulpit dealt with the private sphere much more than the public realm.[12]

Preachers' perceptions of their society as formed by close-knit family households characterized by biblical fidelity and integrated with a slave system were a basis for southern pride. The administration by white male heads of families presiding over the South was the foundation, in their view, of a superior social system. No other nation or region could boast over a more biblically ideal civilization. The outspoken Presbyterian pastor Frederick Ross smugly acknowledged that the ideal Christian society belonged to the American South.

> I thank God he has given this great work [of a proslavery society] to that type of the noble family of Japheth best qualified to do it--the Cavalier stock--the gentleman and lady of England and France, born to command, and softened and refined under our Southern sky.[13]

Since family played such a critical role in southern society, marriage and marital fidelity were of utmost importance. Marriage was taken seriously, child-bearing and rearing were prolific, and marital vows were to be taken as early in life as possible. Rufus Bailey insisted:

> The married state should be entered upon early in life. This is necessary to form a virtuous community, social happiness, and a powerful people. The constitution of families, therefore, lies at the foundation of the most eventful interests of our race.[14]

The family was a sort of mini-government in which the entire world was built and

impacted. The nuclear family "provides the materials for the construction of all secular and religious institutions", declared Benjamin Morgan Palmer. Thus, it was vital that biblical ideas of family pervade society. A well-ordered, disciplined, and properly functioning household was one in which each person clearly understood their proper position in the hierarchy and sought to fulfill that role according to the biblical parameters of obedience to authority. One preacher commented that "no household is perfect under the gospel which does not contain all the grades of authority and obedience, from that of husband and wife, down through that of father and son, to that of master and servant."[15]

The strength of a nation and a people, according to evangelical southern pastors, was seen in the strength of its families. The precedent to all other forms of social organization is the family government. Pastor Frederick A. Ross of Huntsville, Alabama told his Presbyterian congregation that God "first established the family; hence all other rule is merely the family expanded."[16] The biblical paradigm for the family came from the first family, Adam and Eve. Reverend Benjamin Smith believed that God instituted the family as the basis for all society since it was a family that He first created. Smith quoted Jesus for his argument that the family constitution is the foundation for the operation of the world:

> Have ye not read, that he which made them [Adam and Eve] at the beginning made them male and female, and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.[17]

Smith commented that God's arrangement with the first family was the template from

which the entire social order needed to be viewed.

> It was the first social organization, the germ and the pattern of all others. Adam and Eve constituted a family, and were thus constituted by God.... Any other theory of the family constitution will prove to be a mere figment of infidel speculation.[18]

It was from this establishment of family that God desired to work in the world. In a concise statement of what the ideal Christian society is and how it ought to operate, Smith described the nature of the biblical family:

> If the several members of a household perform their duties, as perfectly as is consistent with that moral infirmity which pertains to man's best services, we are persuaded that the family will be a nursery of sound morality, useful knowledge and true piety. In such a household, love, peace, and order will reign; and, so far as it shall be for God's glory, and the good of its members, health and plenty will abound. Those inmates of the house who are of mature age, will be the most reliable elements of a prosperous state and an efficient church; and those growing up under their influence, will be prepared to take their places, and transmit to others, after them, the benefits of this wisely ordained institution for promoting man's present and future welfare.[19]

In the several tracts, sermons, and books that southern clergymen published concerning the family, the black slave always existed within, and not outside of, the family household economy. A well-ordered administration of family affairs included slaves and their service. For preachers, the slave was an integral part of family government and required the paternalistic care like that of any other member of the household. This did not mean that slaves enjoyed the same rights or privileges as white members of the family, but it did mean that blacks were not simply outside of the plantation structure as a separate institution. This idea was not unique since preachers discerned this organization from Old Testament examples. The model of ancient Israel provided the source from which southern ministers viewed slavery

within the household structure. Among the Israelites there was no profound differ-ence between the relation of the slave to the master and that of the members of the master's kin. The wives and children were just as much under the power of the master as were the slaves. The slaves were not thought of as being inferior, and though they had no real civil rights, they were nonetheless regarded as true members of the family. Abraham served as the archetype for southern clergymen as one who both owned servants, and treated them as persons and members of the household. Thus, the justi-fication for slavery and its relation to family was not simply a construct developed independent of the Bible, nor a concept foreign to evangelicals. The understanding of family and slavery were quite consistent with the preachers' worldview and fit neatly into their orderly cosmology.[20]

The man was the unequivocal head of the household and, before God, steward of all people and possessions within the family. Preachers were consistent about the role of man as husband, father, and master: he is the responsible head of the family household and must execute his duties with great care, wisdom, and conscientious-ness. All persons in the family are subject to him and he has the God-given right of requiring obedience so that proper order and discipline is discharged. Men possess the Divine mandate to operate in a manner consistent with the gospel of love. The man, said Benjamin Smith, "is the head, but should not use his position to be a tyrant, and is to use his position and carry-out his duty without anger and abuse." Preachers were quite clear about the way in which their authority was to be expressed. Since God is a loving Sovereign, so should the head of the household practice benevolent

kindness toward all his subordinates. Man's jurisdiction was not to be a license for personal comfort or gain over his subjects, nor was power to be used to demean those under him. This included the slave, and preachers often lamented the way servants were treated. Some pastors even cited maltreatment and lack of amelioration toward slaves as one reason for the Union's victory over the Confederacy. The male head was to at all times practice sexual fidelity and have a calm disposition toward every family member, including slaves.[21]

In distinction from the North, where the burden of raising a virtuous citizenry fell to the republican mother, southern men were the unquestioned moral and spiritual heads of families. The husband and father was not simply the main material provider of the household, but was to be the leader of spiritual guidance and moral influence. The primary duty of religious instruction fell not to the mother, but the father. Even in the accidental death of a male head, or absence of a man, the main command and responsibility did not pass on to the mother, but the vacuum was filled through male relatives and men of the church. This ensured that the hierarchy would not be upset, and that biblical directives of male authority would remain entrenched.[22]

Evangelical southern preachers took the notion of male headship seriously. If the family was the cornerstone of society, and man the biblically ordained leader of the family government, then the retainment of masculine rule was absolutely essential. Without correct arrangement of roles in the family, human society would fragment and eventually disintegrate under the strain. To not follow and practice strict male headship was to renege on biblical commitment because Scripture is explicit on

the function of man. Clergymen preached an unabashed patriarchalism and were insistent that the man's authority was derived from a biblical pattern of male headship beginning with Adam, expressed through the Jewish patriarchs and Old Testament Law, and affirmed in the New Testament with apostolic teaching:

> In the law prescribing the relation of Eve to Adam after the fall, she was placed under his authority. 'He shall rule over thee.' Genesis iii.16. Such was evidently the normal relation of the wife in all those families, of which a history is given in the Old Book and such is the purport of apostolic teaching, when inculcating the duties of wives. Colossians iii.18. 1Peter iii.1. By the terms of the fourth and fifth commandments, children and servants are recognized as subject to the father and master, and in the fourth, even the 'the stranger' [slave] within the family precincts, is placed in a similar subordination. These teachings of the Old Testament are also confirmed by those in the New. Here then is an organized government, the authority of which is vested in the husband, father, and master.... The government of the family is then a monarchy.[23]

Benjamin Mosby Smith's comments were buttressed by the quotation of the Apostle Paul, which was to be the linchpin argument for male headship: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church."[24]

Although Reverend Smith's biblical exegesis was sound, he nevertheless practiced a selective hermeneutic. That is, he simply chose to ignore much of the context and verses surrounding his scriptural assessment. For the learned southern expositors, this was hardly an oversight; it was purposeful negligence. They, being literal biblicists, would have understood in Paul's injunction to wifely submission that it was prefaced with comments concerning the need for all persons to practice a reciprocal subjection toward one another as the way of a genuine spiritual dynamic. Grammatically, the verb used by Paul in Ephesians 5:18, filled in spirit, is the dominant theme with the Greek participles (speaking, giving thanks, and submitting) as explanatory to

this filling. One, then, who practices Christianity is one who willingly relinquishes self and personal rights in order to promote the good of another, which includes men.[25] Smith and his fellow preachers also chose to overlook the state of Eden before the Fall with God as the only head (not Adam), deliberately ignored the mutual authority of father and mother in the Ten Commandments, and only emphasized apostolic instructions toward men to lead, and did not pay attention to man's responsibility to follow.[26]

A temptation at this point could be to simply relegate southern preachers as patriarchal dominators who promoted the cultural status quo. The ministers certainly were influenced by their culture, and at times filtered the scriptural text through cultural glasses. But this is also true of most persons in any historical epoch. However, a more cogent argument could be made that the preachers' existing theology determined their biblical exegesis. Their cosmology was firmly rooted in God as Creator and master organizer of the universe. He is a God of order. Therefore, it was important for preachers to emphasize that society needed clear lines of authority and submission so that society would not slide into chaos. Southern preachers' perceptions of the North were that of an erosion of authority and a state of religious uncertainty and upheaval. In their attempts to solidify an evangelical worldview and protect the South from societal compromise, they chose to spotlight the man's role as head and all other person's position of submission. Rather than just wanting to keep white males in power, preachers desired structure, order, and conformity with the intention of keeping evangelicalism as the dominant expression of religion in the

South, and the loving, methodical, and triune God as the ultimate head of an ideal Christian society. Southern pastors' views were consistent with their evangelical cosmology.

If society were to operate with any modicum of order, civility, and manner, then southern clergymen believed the submission of women to men was imperative. The integrity of the social fabric depended on each person fulfilling their prescribed roles, especially within the family unit which was the base of all human institutions. Southern preachers rested their understanding of woman's role in biblical literalism. The evangelical clergy had two major theological reasons why women needed to be in submission to man: the order of creation; and, woman's weakness in paradise. Man was created first, not woman. Woman was made for man, to be his helper. Southern ministers argued that in God's orderly wisdom he made the human pair in such a way that it is natural for the man to lead and be aggressive, and for the woman to follow and be receptive to man's authority. To buck the natural order of things as established by God would be unthinkable and most definitely unbiblical. Pastors insisted that the tendency to follow was embedded in Eve by God, and henceforth every woman's normal proclivity and inherent duty was to be submissive to man. The prescribed roles of woman and man comes directly from their makeup as distinct gender creations of God.

> As there must, therefore, in every family and in every society, be a ruler, to whom is committed its charge, and the responsibilities, cares, and duties connected with it -- this rule is given to man who is adapted, by strength, vigor, and mental endowment, for its discharge. To woman God has assigned the not less honorable and equally necessary sphere of domestic duty and given her a mental constitution and a physical frame adapted to it.[27]

Eve's weakness in the garden and original disobedience to God, in being deceived and succumbing to the serpent, is the practical reason for woman's need for submission to man. In the ministers' understanding of gender, the doctrine of original sin was applied to all people, but since sin came through the woman first, man had the right and responsibility to exercise authority over her. If woman were to have authority over a man, it would result in tragedy, as it did in Eden. Through the woman's sin, she solidified her place of submission for all time. Mississippi Presbyterian James A. Sloan asserted that "in consequence of woman's being first in transgression of God's law and tempting him to sin, she has been subject to man's authority and the whole sex is inferior."[28]

Since, for southern theologians, woman was the weaker sex by order of creation and events of the Fall, any notions of women taking authoritative roles over men was wrong and potentially damaging. The North, believed southern pastors, was too liberal in their thinking concerning women. Women's rights, and certainly women preachers, were out of bounds for God's created schema. Whereas women preachers emerged in the antebellum North, they were virtually non-existent in the evangelical South. Southern preachers' worldview simply did not allow for such an anomaly to take place because it did not resonate with biblical literalism and the created order. Dr. Robert L. Dabney was a committed and loyal southerner, a Presbyterian theologian and educator, and a highly influential pastor in the South. Dabney believed, through the lenses of his literal hermeneutic of the Bible and scriptural worldview, that women had no business in any kind of authoritative position, especially with a

pulpit ministry. For Dr. Dabney, women preachers were a telltale sign of religious infidelity and a northern brand of concession with biblical principles. To allow any woman to exercise rule over a man meant that the Bible's influence was severely truncated in both church and society. He sought to contain any influence from competing worldviews that could compromise a scriptural gender structure. Dabney believed that "this common movement for 'women's rights' and women's preaching must be regarded as simply infidel. It cannot be candidly upheld without attacking the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures." Reverend Dabney drew attention to New Testament statements that woman is not to rule or "to usurp authority over the man". Dabney interpreted this as a prohibition against women preachers, since teachers in the church are always in ruling positions. He firmly attested that preaching qualifications are *a fortiori* stipulations for ruling.[29]

This kind of thinking was behind an incident that occurred one Sunday in February of 1839 in a South Carolina Baptist Church. A woman in the church, "Sister Roberts", decided that she had a call to preach and literally "seized the pulpit". She was physically dragged away by the church deacons. The act of attempting to preach was immediately recognized by the congregational leaders as an endeavor to take the position of a man and exercise spiritual authority over them. Women and preaching, in the southern evangelical schema, could not co-exist. Sister Roberts, needless to say, was excommunicated from the church for her actions.[30]

The parameters defining the role of women in both church and society derived from theological reasons. The God of order had established the position of all women

as under the authority of man through creation, and due to the entrance of sin into the earth. The evangelical clergy's cosmology was at the heart of southerners understanding of the social order. Southern preachers had much to say about the role of women as submissive because subordination to men was critical to avoiding societal chaos, averting northern religious inroads, and establishing an ideal Christian civilization based on God's Holy Word. This is not to say that clergymen considered women as sub-human. Instead, preachers upheld the idea that all persons are created in the image and likeness of God. The difference was not ontological, nor of equality of personhood. Thomas Smyth affirmed that "difference of sex does not imply difference of rank, or dignity, or worth, but only a difference of order, purpose and office." Woman is identical to man in respects of basic personage and moral responsibility before God. Yet, she is not equal to him in terms of position, and this "just because her sphere of duty is not the same as man's."[31]

The duties of women were clearly defined and extrapolated upon by southern expositors of the Bible. Her domain was that of the home and the heart. She played a highly important and crucial role in her scope of influence. The female and her proper position in the social organization was vital to preachers' conceptions of society. "All that is dear to humanity, depends on the character that [women's] influence assumes."[32] This concept of the woman's role and identity as associated with the home had its antecedents in the Protestant Reformation. The importance of gender and family underwent renewal with Reformers like John Calvin and Martin Luther who glorified women's role as wife and mother within the Christian family. They

encouraged women to find spiritual fulfillment, not in a convent, but in the family. The revivals of early nineteenth century America helped to heighten this reformation concept and placed renewed emphasis upon the significance of the mother. The changing over from a subsistence to market economy, with the radical transition to factories and manufacturing on a mass scale, left the family-based business in a quandary. Thousands of people found work outside of the family structure, and for practical purposes, someone needed to stay at home with children. Thus, the man typically went to a certain geographical location at a workplace outside the home, while the woman remained within the sphere of the home to raise children and care for the needs of the household. Yet, the South largely remained an agrarian society, and held tenaciously to a kin-based structure. Both large plantations, and yeoman farmers, operated within a household structure that reinforced male authority. Wives and mothers were bound, according to evangelical preaching, to obey their husbands at home. Preachers affirmed and provided a basic worldview that fortified a hierarchical structure and buttressed distinctions of gender roles. The evangelical and proslavery South was the perfect environment, believed southern ministers, to proclaim their cosmology and find within it the place for God's ideals to flourish.[33]

The wife and mother was to concentrate on domestic activities. These were not only to be carried out with diligence, but with a temperament of humility, submission, and without complaining. She was not simply carrying out a duty, but a spiritual function consistent with her role as woman. The relationship between attitude of heart and performance of duty was of concern for preachers. They both desired and

expected the wife and mother to discharge her domestic obligations with the care and virtue of a Christian person. Reverend James Andrew exhorted women to "keep a pure heart, a bright eye, and kind look, loving words, a clean house, a well-managed pantry and kitchen: be neat and tidy in dress and person; love your Bible and your prayers." If the wife practices these things she "will likely have quite as much influence and power as any one good woman ought to be trusted with." The Bible was at the center of requiring and retaining prescribed roles and behavior of women. Rufus Bailey pointed women to Scripture and entreated her to "learn her duty in the word of God." Benjamin Smith, and his fellow clergymen, insisted on obedience and submission of women to be carried out "with cheerfulness and promptness." The attitude and demeanor of woman was necessary because of her sphere within the home. The mother's communication of proper joyful submission was necessary for the raising of godly children. God, Benjamin Smith pronounced, has assigned mothers:

> the most important post of moral agency. As the child draws from her breasts the first nourishment of the frail body, so from the fountains of her love, it derives the first food of the immortal soul.... On her falls the duty of giving the first direction to its capacities for right, and imposing the first restraints on its tendencies to wrong.

The woman, then, had a special God-given duty to the home and family and to fulfill the wishes of her husband as head of the household. She was not to concern herself with matters that did not contribute to this Divine mission. To advocate any sort of alternative to the godly fulfillment of woman's role in society was to go against scriptural revelation and oppose the God of the Bible. Thus, southern perceptions of the North in allowing "women's rights" was nothing less than infidel and an open

confession of heresy to revealed truth.[34]

Although preachers tended toward a flowery portrait of the woman's role and duty within the home, the ideal rarely matched reality. Being responsible for all the domestic chores was an arduous duty. When not confined by pregnancy or childbirth, the existing social and economic conditions dictated her daily routine. She was responsible to see that gardening, canning, preserving, cooking, spinning, weaving, sewing, knitting, washing, ironing, and cleaning were all taken care of within the household. Caring for the needs of husband, children, friends, and even animals was within her sphere. Women in more wealthy households, as well, had a great deal of domestic work. Although they possessed more leisure time and more managerial responsibilities, domestic chores were a continual onus. Most often the plantation mistress was the single white woman on the estate. Beseiged with domestic concerns, and disconnected from other women on widely separated plantations and farms, she was largely cut-off from society. The ideal was to perform these duties with piety, purity, and willful submission. That is, she was to be the perfect southern lady. Yet, because women of all social classes had children with remarkable frequency, and men did not primarily concern themselves with domestic chores, the southern lady (who never complained and always acted with complete manners, humility, and obedience) was more a myth than reality.[35]

Southern ministers preached and championed a vision of women that was con-fined completely to the domestic sphere. They envisaged and required the wife and mother to tend obedient children and supervise submissive slaves, while attending to

the needs of husband and head of the household. The women's voluntary movements of the North, including temperance and missionary work, did not flourish in the southern social environment because it posed a threat to the ideal Christian woman. Pastors in the South did not encourage such organizing among women since it held potential for female leadership and could go against the rigid stratification that was orderly and held the social fabric together.[36] As has already been noted, southern divines had a great deal to say to women. They were specific about their place of submission, the need to engage their energies completely in the domestic world, and the virtue of performing those chores with a cheerful heart and countenance. The fact that preachers harangued on women's duty points to the reality that the image of the southern lady was not achieved. Preaching never occurs in a vacuum; ministers expound upon those things which they perceive as a need. If the proper submissive southern Christian woman was ubiquitous, there would be no need to constantly affirm its necessity. Instead, preachers saw, in their assessment, the paucity of ideal submission and sought to emphasize the importance of placing oneself under the authority of man. Furthermore, southern preachers felt their ideals threatened by women's expressions of non-domesticity in the North. Pastors desired to insulate the South from anything that could diminish from the mythic picture of the woman perched alongside hearth and home. Distancing from liberal ideas, as expressed in northern women's reform societies, was the agenda for many white male evangelicals.[37]

Although the ultimate responsibility for religious instruction of children and

all members of the household, according to pastors, was the male head of the home, women were seen as the primary possessors of character and virtue. They had the high privilege and duty of influencing small children in the ethics and mores of biblical evangelicalism. This influence was vital to southern society, for if the mother failed to effectively pass on the values and character needed to permeate the culture with a scriptural cosmology, then the orderly society of God would cease to function and the family would be endangered. Thus, mothers needed to remain within their domestic sphere and understand their proper role in order to perpetuate important values to future generations of southerners. In a sermon focused on the importance of the mother, Thomas Smyth made clear the necessity of woman's clout in the household economy:

> To her tenderness is left the management of early childhood, and in her is treasured the destiny of the world, for as is the mother such will be the child, such the citizen, and such the future husband, father, and friend. It is woman's to modify disposition, implant sentiment and mould, and fashion character, prejudice, and virtue. Her influence exerted upon the heart, directs the mind, shapes the manners, and gives tone and character to the political and moral condition of a people. To woman is committed the greatest of all sciences, that of morality and virtue![38]

The plantation mother was to learn her virtues, and teach her values, from the fountain of morality, the Scriptures. Rufus Bailey recognized the centrality of the mother's familial sway and said, "she is the protectress of all the domestic virtues, which whither together under her dereliction as they flourish under her care... O, that she may learn her duty in the word of God."[39] Benjamin Mosby Smith eloquently insisted that God has assigned mothers the most important post of moral agency.

As the child draws from her breasts the first nourishment of the frail body, so

from the fountains of her love, it derives the first food of the immortal soul... On her falls the duty of giving the first direction to its capacities for right, and imposing the first restraints on its tendencies for wrong.[40]

Domesticity and motherhood was the highest call for any woman of the South, according to evangelical preachers. They were the guardians of virtue and were needed at home to accomplish the lofty expectations of a God who desired to work through her to build a spiritual Kingdom on earth. "Woman's true sphere, then, is the heart--the home--the family", said Thomas Smyth. "If the influence of women is so universal and so vital, all that is dear to humanity depends on the character that influence assumes."[41] Smyth demonstrated the high ideals of woman by quoting, in a sermon on the necessity of women's character, from Proverbs 31 in the Old Testament:

> Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchant's ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.[42]

Smyth, however, does not quote the entire portion of Scripture which not only describes the virutous woman as within the sphere of the home, but also practicing an entrepreneurial spirit and functioning outside the bounds of the household. The woman of character is described as having the shrewdness to open new possibilities of economic expansion, and understands the workings of the free market.[43] This is yet another instance in which Smyth's biblical exegesis is filtered through his existing theology. The entire passage was not an oversight; instead, Reverend Smyth wanted to emphasize the importance of maintaining and perpetuating an evangelical worldview

that depended on the submissiveness and domesticity of females.

Even though the southern preacher heralded the ideal for women, often within their own homes the wife exercised a great deal of spiritual authority in both church and society. Although many pastors' wives felt the calling to be their husband's companion and helpmeet, sacrificing in pious submission, there were others who did not behave in this manner. Ann Amelia Andrew, wife of Methodist Bishop James Andrew, was certainly a sacrificing spouse and committed to raising their children. However, she also perceived herself as a fellow minister who partnered with her husband in the work of the Lord. She was often criticized for traveling with her husband, sharing many pastoral responsibilities, and not staying at home. The relationship between the southern Pastor and his wife, her actual engagement in ministerial activity, and the power and autonomy she exercised is fodder for much further investigation by historians.[44]

Children were the future hope of perpetuating the values and worldview espoused by parents and preachers. Evangelical strength rested not only in leading adults to a faith in Christ, but in exposing children to the gospel at home. Parents expected their children to adopt their values, succeed in life, and bring honor to the family.[45] The Bible was central to the religious instruction of children and the most used book in the home of evangelicals. The transmission of an evangelical worldview to future generations and the establishment of a Christian society depended upon the inculcation of biblical principles. James Andrew encouraged parents to teach their children "to regard the Bible as the Book of God" and instructed them to "keep the

Sabbath day as emphatically belonging to God." Moral and spiritual education must come from the Bible as God's Word to humanity.[46]

Southern evangelical pastors saw as the most important responsibility a parent could accomplish is the spiritual salvation of their children. Preachers encouraged parents to ensure that their offspring understood the gospel of Jesus and took to heart the redemptive events of the cross and the resurrection.

> The grand end and aim of all your labours and cares with reference to your children must be their proper preparation for the kingdom of heaven. If this end be not attained, whatever else you may accomplish, you will have failed in the first and grand object of all your care and solicitude.[47]

If a Christian society was to flourish and endure, parents must engage in the work of evangelism with all the members of their household, especially the children. The many religious "isms" of the North did not have the salvation of souls as the primary objective of Christianity. By truncating the person of Jesus as simply an uplifting moral example, and diluting the message of the Bible to a handful of ethical pronouncements, true Christianity, according to southern preachers, was heretically compromised. Abolitionism, as expressed by northern evangelicals, was a terrible diversion to the true work of converting souls to Christ. To help protect and perpetuate southern evangelicalism, preachers insisted on the need for children to understand the God of the Bible and His agenda for the world.

In the hierarchical schema, children needed to be in full submission to parents. Evangelicals believed that all persons were inherently sinful and needed the saving grace of Jesus, and solid religious instruction, in order to have a well-ordered society. "You will find in the temper of the little creature before you," said Reverend Andrew,

"all the perverseness and obstinancy of a fallen heart." Therefore, it was imperative to conquer the child's will and prepare the heart for the acceptance of biblical teaching. "The child must understand that your will is to be his law." The child's responsibility was obedience and submission to parental authority. The family, then, was the bedrock of society and the place where an evangelical cosmology would be learned and communicated. Preachers had much more to say about transmission of values in the family context than in the church context. The belief was that, with proper training in the home as the incubator of growth, Christian children would leave the home and make their impact in the church and society as strong evangelicals who love the Bible. The order and discipline that God desires must be learned in the home as every family member accepts their proper role.

> On the part of the child, obedience is required as essential to the unity, peace, and good ordering, of that most interesting community, the family, which must be regarded as the fountain whence flow the streams of good order, as it sends forth into society, men and women who are to build up the glorious fabric of a pure church, and an enlightened, free, and glorious republic.[48]

Submission and obedience among the members of the family, for evangelical ministers, was crucial to the entire scope of southern society. Anything other than the biblical directive to place oneself under authority of the household head was irreverent and would certainly lead to chaos.

Despite the fact that preachers taught that the goal of parents was to instill values, the southern household, especially for teenage boys, had its temptations. Plantation life constantly exposed children to illicit sex and venereal diseases. Many young males spent their nights in the slave cabins, having ignored their mothers'

teaching and exhortation. In actuality, a sexual double-standard existed in which boys engaged in promiscuity with black girls, but white girls were strictly forbidden to fraternize with black males.[49]

The submission of black slaves and direct involvement of masters in their lives would help ensure a Christian social order. Slaveowners were encouraged by southern preachers to think of their servants as belonging to the family household, and to treat them accordingly. The idea ministers communicated was that if slavery were to exist under the guidance of masters who were touched by the grace and love of Christ, and with servants who respond to the gospel of Jesus, then an idyllic social state would exist with the Bible as centerpiece of a thoroughly Christian civilization. Slavery was not simply an attachment to the family structure; it was imperative to southern society. Servitude was a cultural and biblical reality. The issue for antebellum southern clergymen was not whether the peculiar institution was right or wrong; it was how masters fulfilled their obligations, and the obedience of both mind and body of the slave to the head of the household. The consummate southern family was one in which all masters would become evangelical, and in turn, evangelize their slaves. In the cosmological understanding of Stephen Elliott, slavery was a "great missionary institution--one arranged by God."[50] Thus, not only would both slave-owner and servant attain eternal life in the hereafter, but presently inaugurate a firm proslavery worldview and social system here on earth. Virginia Presbyterian Samuel Cassells exclaimed that if slavery were "carried out in a scriptural sense, I can scarcely imagine a better state of society than what might thus exist."[51]

For southern divines, the prevalence of a comprehensive worldview required a Christian social system, which insisted some form of servitude for the black population. "The necessities of every civilized community" declared Benjamin Smith, "demand a class of labourers who sustain the position of inferiors to those whom they serve."[52] The ideal Christian society would serve a special purpose of not only fulfilling God's wishes for an orderly civilization on earth, but would resist theological heresy from the North. In the eyes of southerners, the infidel North stood for a political radicalism that, if victorious under the election of Abraham Lincoln, would extinguish religious liberty and biblical truth. An abolitionist impulse was terribly anti-God, anti-Bible, and anti-family. Lincoln, therefore, was a type of anti-Christ, who could not be trusted, nor ever sanctioned as a president over the South. Lincoln and the South were, in evangelical southerners' thinking, antithetical opposites that could never coexist. Secession, then, was a logical and biblical separation that needed to happen. To topple slavery was to dethrone God and his perfect intentions for an idyllic society.[53]

In the mind of white southern preachers, God had decreed certain people to be in subjection to others. This idea came from the biblical book of Genesis and the plan of God that was presented to Noah and his descendants after the Flood. According to an 1861 sermon preached by the famous Benjamin Morgan Palmer of New Orleans, there is a sovereign plan of God for all the peoples of the earth, both white and black. The three sons of Noah, Shem, Japheth, and Ham, all have their place in the world and a divine destiny to fulfill. Shem has a religious design from God, from which

came the Hebrew and Semitic peoples; from Japheth came the Greeks, Romans, and European peoples, who had the purpose of developing an intellectual culture. On Ham, from which Palmer believed blacks have their origin, God pronounced the doom of perpetual servitude. Thus, the descendants of Ham have the divine destiny of being slaves forever. Each son of Noah, and their descendants, had their role assigned by God to carry out an historic mission. "These facts are beyond impeachment; and nothing can be more instructive than to see the outspreading landscape of all history embraced thus within the camera of Noah's brief prophecy." Therefore, to resist slavery was to oppose God's holy decree concerning the lot of all black persons. This is why Palmer chose the following passage from the Old Testament as his sermon text in justification of war against the North:

> If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their supplication and maintain their cause.

Palmer's cause was nothing short of upholding God's agenda for all the peoples of the earth. Whites and blacks had their God ordained status in the hierarchy of society. For the North to even suggest revoking black servitude or make any effort at defying God's intentions was a call to fight.[54]

White evangelical preachers insisted that the perfect plan of God, which was a proslavery agenda, must be allowed to be fulfilled in the South. It was God himself who, contended Thomas Smyth, brought black slavery into the southern states.

> The condition of slavery has been and is recognized and regulated by God, who first ordained that it should come to pass as a penal infliction upon a

guilty race, for the mitigation of greater evils, and for the good of all.[55]
James Miles reminded the graduates of Charleston College in 1863 that "Providence is accomplishing that which is most agreeable to its all-seeing plan." The Confederacy has a great destiny by God to uphold a proslavery cosmology and social system. Everyone has their place in the Divine economy, and white male southerners must perpetuate the assigned roles of black and white on earth with care and benevolence.

> We have a great lesson to teach the world with respect to the relation of races: that certain races are permanently inferior in their capacities to others, and that the African who is entrusted to our care can only reach the amount of civilization and development of which he is capable--can only contribute to the benefit of humanity in the position in which God has placed him among us.[56]

Despite the fact that blacks were understood as inferiors in many ways to whites, southern ministers upheld the basic humanity of the Negro. Preachers consistently reminded masters that their servants are people. Rufus Bailey told slaveowners that blacks are "intellectual, moral, immortal." Although both black and white have a different lot in life, blacks "can never forget to honour themselves as belonging to the race who were created in the image and likeness of God." Like women, blacks were inferior in position, but not inferior as persons. However, blacks were distinct from all white persons, including women. Although all people, both black and white, man and woman, possessed a moral nature, the prevalent belief among white evangelicals was that the moral nature of the black was more depraved. Since the descendants of Ham were cursed, this implied that they were morally and ethically inferior to the progeny of Shem and Japheth. Thus, the abolitionist and northern idea of emancipation was not only biblically unsound, but meant that blacks would lead

immoral lives if left to their own freedom. Instead, it was critical that all persons function within their prescribed social roles in order that sin may not take root and destroy the purity of the Christian family.[57]

The ideal Christian society was dependent on the strength of the southern family. Evangelical pastors' conceptions of the household were hierarchical, patriarchal, and proslavery. Obedience and submission were essential to the well-being of the social order. The South Carolina Methodist Conference of 1836 declared: "We hold that a Christian slave must be submissive, faithful, and obedient, for reasons of the same authority with those which oblige wives, fathers, brothers, sisters to fulfill the duties of those relations."[58] Southern preachers reserved their most vehement denunciations for abolitionists, because the clergymen interpreted any rhetoric of emancipation as lethal to society, and at its core, against the family and against the Creator God of the universe. In 1841 William Winans vociferously announced that abolitionists were "incendiaries, cutthroats, and...hydra-headed monsters of inhumanity."[59] Viewed through the grid of a proslavery worldview, abolitionists could be nothing less than possessing evil intent. It was one thing to have their heretical ideas expressed, it was quite another to have one elected as president of the United States. The very heart of Christianity was threatened and radical action must be taken to deal with subversion to the perfect God's order, plan, and sovereign intent for the South.

---

[1] Benjamin M. Smith, *Family Religion, or the Domestic Relations as Regulated by Christian Principles* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1859), 9.

[2] William T. Smithson, ed., *The Methodist Pulpit, South* (Washington DC: William T. Smithson, 1859), 79.

[3] Eugene Genovese, "Religion and the Collapse of the American Union" in Randall M. Miller et al., eds., *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 81.

[4] Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 42.

[5] J. William Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth, D.D.* (Columbia, SC: R.L. Bryan Co., 1908), 7:718, 731.

[6] Randall M. Miller et al., eds., *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6, 167; Randy J. Sparks, *Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 116-121.

[7] Rufus William Bailey, *The Family Preacher; or Domestic Duties Illustrated and Enforced in Eight Discourses* (New York: John Taylor, 1837), 18-19.

[8] Quoted in Thomas Virgil Peterson, *Ham and Japheth: The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978), 7, 49.

[9] James O. Andrew, *Family Government: A Treatise on Conjugal, Parental, Filial, and Other Duties* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1852), 26.

[10] Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 104. For a brief historiography of the southern family, see pages 7-9.

[11] Colleen McDonnell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), xiv; Bailey, *The Family Preacher*, 14.

[12] Jean E. Friedman, *Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), xi, 3, 9, 15; Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman House-holds, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 182.

[13] Quoted in Avery O. Craven, *The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 261.

[14] Bailey, *The Family Preacher*, 113.

[15] Quoted in Eugene Genovese, "'Our Family, White and Black': Family and Household in the Southern Slaveholders' World View", in ed. Carol Bleser, *In Joy and in Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 69, 70.

[16] F.A. Ross, *Slavery Ordained of God* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1857), 118.

[17] Matthew 19:4-6.

[18] Smith, *Family Religion*, 10.

[19] Ibid., 111.

[20] Genesis 17:23; Exodus 12:44; Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960): 489.

[21] Bailey, *The Family Preacher*, 20-30; Smith, *Family Religion*, 47; Burton, *In My Father's House*, 105-107; Sparks, *Evangelicalism in Mississippi*, 121.

[22] McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 186-188.

[23] Smith, *Family Religion*, 23-24.

[24] Ephesians 5:23, KJV.

[25] The Greek text referred to in this study is eds. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce Metzger, Carlo Martini, and Allen Wikgren, *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 1983).

[26] See Genesis 1:26-27; Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 5:21; and 1 Peter 3:7.

[27] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, 10:539; Barbara Brown Zikmund, "Biblical Arguments and Woman's Place in the Church" in ed. Ernest R. Santeen, *The Bible and Social Reform* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 97; Genesis 1:18-23; 1 Timothy 2:11-14.

[28] Quoted in Peterson, *Ham and Japheth*, 41.

[29] Robert L Dabney, "The Public Preaching of Women", *The Southern Presbyterian Review* (October 1879): 96-118; eds. Daniel G. Reid et al, *Concise Dictionary of Christianity in America*, 100; 1 Peter 3:1, 5-6.

[30] McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 185.

[31] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, 10:538.

[32] Ibid., 10:545-546.

[33] Sandeen, *The Bible and Social Reform*, 97; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *A Social History of American Technology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 69-91. Cowan's work is chiefly on the North, but is helpful on tracing the attitudes and social changes that took place in transforming America to a manufacturing economy.

[34] Andrew, *Family Government*, 34-35; Bailey, *The Family Preacher*, 11; Smith, *Family Religion*, 50, 79.

[35] Burton, *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions*, 124-137; eds. Janet L. Coryell, Martha H. Swain, Sandra G. Treadway, and Elizabeth H. Turner, *Beyond Image and Convention: Explorations in Southern Women's History* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 1; Anne F. Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Clinton, *Plantation Mistress*, 164-165.

[36] Catherine Clinton, *Tara Revisited: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995), 80; Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 29-30.

[37] Bailey, *The Family Preacher*, 11-12; Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress:*

Women's World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), xv, xvi; Varon, *We Mean to be Counted*, 26-27.

[38] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, 10:539.

[39] Bailey, *The Family Preacher*, 11.

[40] Smith *Family Religion*, 79.

[41] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, 10:542, 545-546.

[42] Ibid., 10:543-544; Proverbs 31:10-15, King James Version.

[43] See especially Proverbs 31:16, 24.

[44] While focused mainly on the northern clergymen's wife, an important starting point is Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth Century Evangelicalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983).

[45] Burton, *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions*, 108.

[46] Andrew, *Family Government*, 54.

[47] Ibid., 48, 112.

[48] Ibid., 129-130.

[49] Clinton, *Plantation Mistress*, 89-90.

[50] Quoted in Janeet Duitsman Cornelius, *Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 185.

[51] Quoted in Robert M. Calhoon, *Evangelicals and Conservatives in the Early South, 1740-1861* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 188.

[52] Smith, *Family Religion*, 96.

[53] Eugene D. Genovese, *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 103, 121.

[54] Genesis 9:25-27, 10; 2 Chronicles 6:34-35; Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *National Responsibility Before God* (New Orleans: Price-Current Steam Book and Job Printing Office, 1861).

[55] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, 7:544.

[56] James Warley Miles, *God in History* (Charleston, SC: Steam-power Press of Evans and Cogswell, 1863), 25, 26.

[57] Bailey, *The Family Preacher*, 130; Peterson, *Ham and Japheth*, 109.

[58] Quoted in McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 179.

[59] Quoted in Sparks, *Evangelicalism in Mississippi*, 124.

CHAPTER IV

DEFENSE OF SLAVERY, SECESSION, AND WAR

White evangelical southern preachers were passionate about their reading of the Bible. In it they saw justification from God for slavery and, particularly, the enslavement of blacks. Clergymen believed that God had a providential plan for the South to be a Christian society built on the principles of Scripture. In order for God's intentions to be fulfilled, black servitude had to be taken seriously as a biblical reality, and necessary for the organization of a thoroughly evangelical household. God, argued Baptist stalwart Richard Furman, would use slavery to bring heathen Africans to the gospel, and teach masters to use their divinely ordained authority to evangelize the Negro.[1] The flashpoint for southern ministers between North and South focused on slavery. To defend slavery was critical for clergymen because abolitionism embodied an antithetical worldview to southern evangelicalism that threatened the ideal Christian society.

Abolitionism saw as its end the immediate emancipation of slaves and the establishment of a more egalitarian society that was not based upon the hierarchical schema propounded by southern ministers. The emergence of abolitionist groups in the antebellum North was fueled by evangelicals who saw antislavery convictions as a logical and necessary outcome of their faith. The American Anti-Slavery Society was formed primarily through William Lloyd Garrison and the wealthy evangelical

brothers Lewis and Arthur Tappan. The revivals of Charles Finney brought not only many converts to evangelicalism, but provided a steady stream of anti-slavery activists to labor for the cause of abolitionism. At its height the American Anti-Slavery Society had 150,000 members. Although there was much internal wrangling among evangelical abolitionists over leadership and control, they continued to share the same basic vision of a more equitable society with freedom for slaves.[2] Despite the fact that both northern and southern evangelicals agreed upon basic cardinal doctrine of Protestant evangelicalism, they took very different paths in the social application of biblical data. Over the decades before secession from the Union, northern evangelicals increasingly developed an anti-slavery view, whereas southern evangelicals insisted upon a proslavery view of the world. It was, essentially, a hermeneutical battle over how to interpret Jesus and the Bible.

In the eyes of southern pastors, the defense of slavery was much more than advocating servitude; it was the support of a way of life in which the family household reigned as the bastion of society, and the master and head of the home ruled with God-given authority, love, and supremacy. To champion an abolitionist spirit and destroy slavery was equivalent to eradicating the biblical family, opposing God, and leading America into moral anarchy and chaos. Southern preachers were not about to settle for notions of emancipating slaves, and vigorously used their pulpits to justify the peculiar institution. The pastors' rhetoric was effective and many were at the forefront of sounding the cry for separation from the North. Clergymen were leaders of significant influence in their communities and had a holy passion to see their

cosmology of an orderly society upheld in the South. Southern evangelicals had been given, said Thomas Smyth, "the high and holy keeping above all other conservators, of the Bible."[3]

Southern preachers saw sectional tensions as nothing less than a clash of world-views between those who knew and obeyed God's Word, and those who did not. It was a battle of the northern individual conscience verses southern communal order, an abstract interpretation of Scripture verses biblical literalism, and liberal theology verses conservative orthodoxy. Northern preachers like Henry Ward Beecher and Gerrit Smith were viewed by the southern clergy as compromisers of God's agenda for humankind because, in southerners' minds, they moved away from a literal inter-pretation of the Scripture text to embracing the spirit of the Word. The South was to stand as God's fortress against all the religious heresies that permeated the North and came together in the advocation of emancipation of slaves. Instead, Christian civiliza-tion, expressed in a proslavery worldview, would continue and prosper, according to southern divines, by providing the structures within which sinful humans could live together in a manner pleasing to God.[4]

Secession from the Union, as an act of separation from a sinful North, was the culmination of many years of frustration for clergymen concerning northern infidelity. It was not something taken lightly, nor an ad hoc response to abolitionists and Lincoln's election; the conflict of worldviews had been broiling for decades. James Henley Thornwell stated in 1850 that:

> the parties in this conflict [of worldviews] are not merely Abolitionists and Slaveholders; they are Atheists, Socialists, Communists, Red Republicans,

Jacobins on the one side, and the friends of order and regulated freedom on the other. In one word, the world is the battle ground, Christianity and Atheism the combatants, and the progress of humanity the stake.

Ten years later, in a prophetic utterance on the eve of secession, Thornwell announced that perpetuating the rightness of the South's cosmology "may be through a baptism of blood." Secession and separation from northern infidels had become a divine right and a sacred duty.[5]

The biblical defense of slavery served as the ground on which southern preachers took their stand against northern infidelity. Scriptural justification of black servitude became the litmus test of a true biblical evangelical in the South, and was the point at which ministers engaged the enemy and sought to beat back the threat of biblical heresy to revealed truth. If a hermeneutical battle could be won over how to interpret the Bible, then the South could retain its evangelical purity; if not, then action must rule over rhetoric. The issue of slavery became intertwined with views of southern piety and nationalism to God's ideal society. To question black slavery was to question scriptural veracity and the stratified household structure that God ordained.[6]

Evangelical preachers did the main work of the proslavery effort in the South. Not only was the pulpit used to propagate views on black servitude, but ministers also contributed more than half of the proslavery tracts ever written in the United States. The ministers indelibly left their imprint on the secular community as well as the church congregation.[7] Pastors felt a profound need to expound on Scripture's approach to human bondage since many northern preachers took the offensive on

declaring slavery as unbiblical. Northerners, like Baptist minister Francis Wayland of Brown University, had said that if it could be shown that Scripture sanctioned slavery, it would mean that the Bible was the devil's book, not God's Word. Among the southern clergy, that kind of argument was tantamount to a declaration of blasphemy.[8]

Antebellum southern preachers responded to northern attacks against slavery by going to the Word of God and systematically ransacking the Bible to find selected proof texts for their slavery apologetic.[9] Southern ministers' reaction against northern preachers and their ideas of emancipation was a backlash toward abolitionism. Since the God of order and benevolent love ordained a rigid social strata for the benefit of His people, the household organization with slavery in place should not be tampered with by northern infidels. Hence, when southern expositors approached the Bible in their strict literalism, they saw the place and the need for black slavery because of their existing theological grid. Although it took some ingenuity to construct some of their exegetical arguments from Scripture, southern preachers at all times acted and preached consistent with their established cosmology.[10]

The biblical defense of slavery fell, broadly, into two categories: the Old Testament established slavery as a Divine decree; the New Testament affirmed God's sanction of human bondage through its silence on the subject of emancipation. Slavery, insisted southern preachers, was a God-initiated and God-ordained reality. Reverend Richard Furman of South Carolina declared that the "right of holding slaves is clearly established in the Holy Scriptures, both by precept and example."[11] In a staunch rebuttal to northern clergymen, Baptist pastor Richard Fuller summarized the southern

position: "What God sanctioned in the Old Testament, and permitted in the New, cannot be sin."[12] Missouri preacher James Shannon addressed a proslavery convention in his state by informing his constituents that "neither Christ nor his Apostles ever commanded masters, not even Christian masters, in a solitary instance, to free their slaves, nor even advised them to do so, nor permitted slaves to free themselves from their masters."[13]

The Old Testament passage from which southern ministers derived their understanding of black slavery is the account of Noah's son Ham and the curse of Canaan. In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, it is recorded that after the Flood, Noah planted a vineyard. He became drunk from its wine. His excessive use of drink led to him lying naked in his tent. Ham entered the tent, saw his father's nakedness, and did not cover him. Ham may have even engaged in sexual misconduct toward Noah.[14] This was in direct contrast to Noah's sons Shem and Japheth, who carefully avoided seeing Noah's nakedness, and covered him. When Noah finally woke from his stupor, he pronounced a curse which was cited by white evangelical preachers as the origins of Negro slavery:

> And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.[15]

The passage was critical to southern exegetes because Ham and his descendants, it was argued, are the Negro race. Ham, insisted proslavery preachers, was the first black man. This assertion was based upon two significant claims that supposedly

arose from the biblical text. First, etymology was employed to claim that the name Ham means "burnt" or "black".[16] Since names in the Old Testament were given to reflect the person's character and destiny, Ham was the progenitor of the black race.[17] This understanding of Ham's name was derived from the Hebrew *cham*, which not only is a proper name in the Old Testament, but is also used an adjective in describing something as "hot". There are only two references in the Old Testament that use *cham* as an adjective; neither passage has to do with becoming burnt or black, and they do not refer to people.[18] This was, at best, strained exegesis of the Genesis text, and, at worst, blatant stretching of the Bible to establish a racist framework. But it was not enough for preachers to affirm slavery's existence in Scripture; they needed to justify black chattel servitude and white superiority over them so that the social order be established and benevolent love be extended to the Negro.

The second claim based on the Genesis chapter built upon the etymological argument, and dealt with the actual character of the person Ham. Ham was obviously more sinful than his brothers, argued southern preachers. He had always been of ignoble manner, which was why he carried the curse. The curse, believed many pastors, was not just one act of unrighteousness toward Noah; it was a culmination of a lifelong display of ungodliness.

> That the character of Ham's life, up to the time when he committed that unchaste, unfilial, and unholy deed, had been but a continued scene of sin and outrage, is strongly intimated in the words made use of by Noah, when he denounced him and said, "cursed Ham", not "cursed *be* Ham."[19]

The reason for constructing this argument was to biblically demonstrate the morally

inferior and corrupt nature of the Negro. It was from this claim that southern divines built their paternalistic ideas that the black person was really better off as a slave, having the necessary arrangement and order in place to check the natural bent of sin. If the black slave were ever allowed to go free, societal pandemonium would break out and the God-ordained hierarchy would turn to demon-driven anarchy. Left unchecked, the Negro could not adequately care for himself, and would delve to the lowest levels of decadence. With Ham established by southern expositors as the progenitor of the black race, then it could be seen that all the Canaanites in the Old Testament were black. From this vantage, it could be argued that the Negro had always been of pagan descent and culture. The Hebrews, furthermore, bought, owned, and sold slaves, which were most certainly blacks.[20] Thus, for proslavery preachers, black servitude was decreed by God and could not be overturned. Passages in the Bible that refer to freedom, including the Israelite bondage, did not apply to the Negro; freedom was strictly for the descendants of Shem and Japheth. Perpetual bondage was the lot for blacks, based upon the curse of the first black man, Ham. From this position, the proslavery clergy moved through the Bible insisting that God never called for emancipation; the original and perpetual decree of slavery does not allow it.[21]

In contrast to Ham, the archetype of the benevolent and orderly household was the patriarch Abraham (a direct descendant of Shem). Abraham, ministers noted, was a slaveholder and was never condemned for the practice. As a master of slaves, Abraham was held up in the Bible as the friend of God, and not a sinner.[22] Therefore, slavery could not be a great moral evil, as abolitionists claimed. If the practice of

buying, selling, and owning slaves was so bad, God would have condemned Abraham for it, or told him to emancipate his servants. Instead, God blessed Abraham with slaves because of his great moral character. Samuel Dunwody, a Methodist preacher from South Carolina, pressed this argument with rhetorical questions:

> Did Abraham consider slavery to be a moral evil? I think not. Abraham was too good a man to persist in any practice he believed to be morally wrong. Did God himself judge Abraham to be guilty of any moral evil, in being a slave-holder? I answer--There is not the least evidence that he did. Had he done so, he would have commanded Abraham to have liberated his slaves.[23]

Dunwody was a part of a cadre of ministers that appealed to Abraham the slaveowner and his superior moral character as evidence that God had designed slavery to exist. However, Reverend Dunwody failed to consider the entire Abrahamic narrative; Abraham, in fear, twice lied and put his wife Sarah's life in jeopardy in order to save himself from harm, and practiced dubious sexual practices in order to have a son. Yet, no southern preacher ever deduced from the Old Testament data that adultery and polygamy are sanctioned by the Almighty.[24]

Southern exegetes left no stone unturned in defending slavery on scriptural grounds. They insisted the patriarchs all owned slaves, the Ten Commandments affirmed it, and the Levitical law sanctioned its use. Samuel Baldwin from Mississippi even argued that the Fall of Adam and Eve resulted in a negation of all natural human rights, therefore, the owning of slaves was consistent with the Bible.[25] The proslavery clergy also believed that since Jesus and the Apostles lived in a world where slavery was rampant and never commanded emancipation, black chattel slavery was justifiable. What Jesus did not condemn, he therefore sanctioned. Furthermore,

since the Apostle Paul gave instructions on the duties of both master and slave, black servitude was a natural and biblical part of human society.[26]

This intense defense of black slavery arose with its exegetical stretching of the biblical text because preachers approached Scripture's view of human servitude looking for an apologetic to their proslavery worldview. Thus, they employed the theology that the Almighty is a God of love and order has chosen to employ a hierarchy of command for his fallen creatures. This would check the Negro's sinful bent and establish a society on earth that reflects the harmony of the triune God-head. Blacks, more than other person in southern ministers' opinion, needed the benevolent leadership of white males and the restraint on decadent character that a rigid stratification within a Christian household could provide. Thus, when preachers felt the need to defend the Christian household with black servitude as a part of it, they went to the Bible specifically looking for proslavery verses. It certainly can be admitted that Scripture does not literally condemn slavery. But ministers had blinders in place in approaching the text by neglecting to notice that the New Testament writers were men who believed in the imminent return of Jesus Christ. The Apostles were not looking to overthrow societal structures, including slavery, that were already in place; this would occur at the Second Coming. Instead, a transformation of individuals and communities through faith in Christ's work on the cross was the goal of New Testament authors. Changing the natural and social order of things in the world was not a part of the Christian mission for the early church; they had greater concerns of gospel proclamation and personal spiritual change that would then affect entire communities.[27]

Southern preachers did not see the inconsistency of their biblical interpretation.

The argumentation for a proslavery position employed by the divines could also be used, ironically, to argue for sanctioning the use of marital divorce as a God-ordained practice. It is mentioned in Scripture, and has regulations concerning its use.[28] But no preacher in the antebellum South ever entertained such a point as this. Divorce in the Old South was a damnatory practice and difficult to obtain since southern custom dictated that a woman stay with her husband even in circumstances of maltreatment. Even if southern evangelical pastors understood the purpose and theology of the New Testament concerning social issues, they may have ignored it because their proslavery conclusions were already made before approaching the text of Scripture.[29] The heart of the issue for proslavery clergymen was a battle of worldviews. They were determined to uphold a proslavery cosmology in the South, and did want any meddling from Yankee heathens to spoil their ideal Christian conceptions and practice of the southern evangelical household as the bastion of a pure society. Thus, the sectional conflict, for southern theologians, was a moral war. The battle was ethical because it developed from a moral impasse of worldviews, with the issue of black slavery as the point at which the clash of cosmologies touched. The Bible was at the core of energizing animosities between two ideological cultures.[30]

The southern clergy's cosmology was at the heart of secession. Their ideas about society influenced popular political culture in the antebellum South.[31] The proslavery message that ministers proclaimed from their pulpits did not fall on deaf ears. Ministers were not voices on the margins of society; they were significant molders of

both public and private opinions. The authority and reputation of the clergy in the antebellum South was high and they took their role as society's moral stewards seriously. Because of the pervasiveness of evangelicalism, pastors were leaders of tremendous influence in communities all across the South.[32] Not only did ministers direct church life, they largely controlled and presided over the southern educational system since it was the preacher who was generally the most intelligent, learned, and well-trained person in many communities. Proportionately, more white southerners attended college in 1860 than white northerners, and many of those colleges were formed from Protestant denominations. Evangelical ministers were instrumental in the formation of a distinctive sectional identity. They helped fuel the political conflict between North and South with a profound religious impact, helping to create an atmosphere and environment that made secession possible, even inevitable.[33]

Southern preachers, more than any other group of people, were responsible for a secessionist mindset. Not only was the Bible argument the cornerstone of a southern defense of slavery, but proslavery politicians justified the peculiar institution from scriptural arguments provided by clergymen. These ministerial sermons were more than rhetoric; the evangelical pastors believed what they preached. In a demonstration of their devotion to the war, for example, large numbers of Methodist ministers joined the fight. Out of approximately 1,500 Methodist itinerants, the church furnished to the Confederate army 364 men, nearly 25 per cent of the total. In 1861 almost one hundred ministers joined the war; half of them were chaplains, the other half were soldiers.[34]

The impact of these preachers and their sermons should not be underestimated. The 1850 census reported there were 8,081 churches in the South; one pastor, at that time, claimed these places of worship could hold up to 2.9 million people. Although church membership constituted one-seventh of the total population, most pastors preached regularly to congregations three or four times the size of the membership rolls. Church attendance was consistently higher than church membership because congregations were active in the community organizing people for purposes of benevolence and other social issues. The clergy's preaching and publications on the biblical defense of slavery had sunk deep enough into southern thought that theologians and laity alike learned to recite the standard scriptural texts and arguments.[35]

Proslavery evangelical pulpits and literature enjoyed a high profile in the antebellum South due to the effectiveness of early nineteenth century revivalism and its many converts. By 1830 evangelicalism was clearly the dominant religion of the South. Evangelicals increased in numbers through the antebellum era as is demonstrated by the tremendous growth of the evangelical Protestant denominations. In the South Atlantic states alone between 1830 and 1854, Baptist membership grew from 99,083 persons to 246,225 members, while Methodists were 92,740 to 232,715, and Presbyterians 23,120 to 41,750. In 1850 there were 7,514 clergymen in the South in a free population of 4,464,651 (one pastor for every 594 people). Due to evangelical success, all classes in the South adhered to a conservative faith and a common orthodoxy. Unlike the North, where theological experimentation became common, southerners in the antebellum period resisted all competing challenges to evangelical

faith.[36]

Clergymen of the antebellum period tended to migrate to sections of the country most compatible with their personal views. Therefore, within the South there was an important unanimity among evangelical pastors concerning the social applications of their worldview. Because of the extraordinary increase of evangelicalism in the nineteenth century, ministers were a considerable force in southern society. The concomitant effect of this influence, and proliferation of a southern evangelical worldview, was a strong sense of shared values and a feeling of community that contributed to pastoral prestige. The pastor became the official voice on both religious and regional beliefs. Thus, the minister's presence at community meetings and political gatherings was not merely perfunctory; he was a representative of God. The evangelical clergyman and southern culture became so intertwined as to be inseparable.[37]

Although the southern evangelical clergy enjoyed status in their pastorates, were powerful influencers of community opinion, and played an important role in the development of southern culture, these did not tend to be the reasons for entering a life of ministry.[38] Instead, they desired to impact both church and culture with the gospel of Jesus, expand the Kingdom of God on earth, and establish the Almighty's agenda for society. Ministers sought to permeate America with evangelical values and beliefs, and to build a Christian society like no other that had ever existed. As committed evangelicals, the conversion experience was the most important factor in a decision to enter the ministry. It was at the moment of personal repentance that many men sensed a "call" from God to preach and devote their lives to the pastorate. This

was not a direct voice from the Almighty, but a subjective inward awareness and desire to give one's life in special service to God, especially to the work of preaching. Thus, for evangelicals, the ministry was a profession unlike any other; ministers had been called to their office by God himself and had a divine function to practice. The skills they needed for their profession could not come solely from formal education, but directly from the Holy Spirit of God. For some evangelicals, like many Baptists, Methodists, and Disciples of Christ, this empowerment from God so superseded anything else that human creatures had to offer that they tended to disdain more formal types of education and "worldly wisdom". Yet, this did not mean that preachers were intellectually inferior. They often had piercing logic to their sermons, and clearly reasoned arguments to go along with their colloquial mannerisms and vernacular speech.[39]

Augustus Baldwin Longstreet had been a successful southern lawyer and Georgia circuit judge, but chose to enter the Methodist ministry at the age of 48, having experienced a conversion to evangelical Christianity a few years earlier in his life. For Longstreet, the decision to enter the ministry was based on his becoming "born again", and an inner yearning to make a difference in southern society with biblical truth. As is typical concerning many evangelical decisions to follow Christ, the Bible played a central role in Longstreet's change of life.

> I commenced studying the Scriptures in earnest, praying God if they really were true that I might be convinced of this truth. I had studied them not more than a fortnight before I began to find in them some wonderful evidences of their divine origin. . . . All my doubts soon vanished, and I became a thorough believer in Christianity.[40]

From that point on, Longstreet felt the call to preach and became an important lay-preacher in the Methodist church. Although Methodism did not place emphasis on formal education, they did stress practical training for the ministry through a spiritual mentor. Longstreet, still in his secular vocation, entered a three-year program with his local pastor which included not only training in the functions of the pastorate, but learning biblical studies, ancient and church history, orthography, etymology and syntax, psychology, and geography. For Longstreet, the decision to enter the ministry was not based upon any desire for upward mobility, since he already enjoyed a successful reputation in his law practice, having at several points in his life run for political office. The tie that bound Longstreet and other evangelical pastors together, whether in the town or the country, whether Methodist or Presbyterian, was their call to ministry and passion to affect southern society with biblical principles. In short, they found Jesus, wanted others to find Him, too, and longed to impact society with the Bible and see the realization of a thoroughly Christian nation in which God's intentions for humanity were established and maintained. The majority of clergymen, especially in rural areas, were willing to endure poverty and lived a precarious line between real want and limited adequacy for the sake of proclaiming biblical ideas and influencing people toward the gospel of Christ.[41]

The consummate function of the evangelical pastor, and the vehicle which helped place him in the mainstream of southern society, was preaching. The sermon had special significance due to the Reformation concept of preaching as replacing the Catholic Mass as a means of grace. Protestantism raised the sermon to new levels and

made it central to corporate worship.[42] Preaching, for evangelical Christians, was not simply a religious homily; the Holy Spirit worked through a preacher to proclaim the Word of God to assembled believers. Coupled with the Protestant conviction that all Christians had direct access to God through Jesus, listening to a sermon with an open Bible on one's lap was nothing less than a holy activity in which God himself were speaking from the pulpit. Thus, preaching was a divine encounter between God and his people.[43] In antebellum southern congregations all attention was directed to the Word of God. People attended worship services mainly to listen to the sermon. Even church buildings reflected the centrality of Scripture and its exposition by preachers. Evangelical places of worship tended to be unornamented with the pulpit as the focus of the sanctuary. The minister, then, functioned primarily as a student of the Bible and a proclaimer of Holy Writ. As one preacher stated, "while the church is con- sidered as the pillar and ground of the truth, preaching must, beyond all question, be regarded as its most important duty." Proclamation of the gospel by a preacher through the power of the Holy Spirit "has, in all ages, been the principal instrument in the hand of God, by which the church has been sustained and advanced."[44]

The primacy of preaching existed not only because of Protestant theology and within the sacred community, but influenced society due to practical reasons. The agrarian life of much of the Old South limited people's options for public experiences to sermons rather than other communal forms, such as the theater, concerts, or festi- vals. Even a person such as Lucy Breckinridge, the daughter of a wealthy Virginia planter, was bound by her rural location. Although Miss Breckinridge had more

access to a broad spectrum of information than most rural southerners, the only public speeches she heard were the sermons of local preachers.[45]

Antebellum southerners not only listened to preaching as a popular form of oral communication, but sermons enjoyed a wide diffusion as a written source for readers. Local newspapers, tracts and treatises, and journals all provided the publication of sermons as a regular staple in nineteenth century America. The interdenominational periodical *American National Preacher* had a circulation of over 25,000 in 1830, which was one of the largest journalistic works in the world at that time. Not only was exegesis of the biblical text and explanation of doctrine spelled out clearly, but it was all to build to a personal and communal application. Exhortation and the explanation of every person's place in church and society was integral to sermons. The dissemination of an evangelical worldview through spoken and published sermons was prolific. Proslavery Christianity, as explained by southern clergymen with a style of convinced unction and pathos, became familiar and influential to many across the South. It was like "logic on fire" as the preaching of James Henley Thornwell was once described.[46]

Evangelical churches exerted a powerful influence on southern culture and thinking. The pastor's sermon was the chief instrument in declaring biblical principles, and the paramount weapon in the struggle with evil.[47] Proclamation of the sovereign nature of God, the need for all persons to submit to the Divine schema, and an increasing sense that the North was straying from literal biblicism fueled southern preachers in their defense of a proslavery cosmology. Northern ministers, from the South's vantage, had stained their pulpits by abandoning sound biblical teaching and

exposition. Since they refused to read the Bible for what it actually says about God, family, and slavery, it would be adulterous to associate with the North and dangerous if northern ideas were imposed on the pure evangelicalism of the South. Dr. Robert Dabney, a professor of preaching, declared that "whenever the pulpit is evangelical, the piety of the people is in some degree healthy; a perversion of the pulpit is surely followed by spiritual apostasy."[48] Separation in the form of a severing from the Union became necessary for many southern ministers in order to preserve scriptural ideas and retain the South's spiritual integrity.

The clergy were deeply involved in the sectional disputes between North and South. Because ministers in the antebellum era tended to migrate to regions of the United States most compatible with their worldview, America was more religiously divided than ever. Zealous abolitionists and slavery proponents were left without effective opposition in their respective sections.[49] This was, along with Protestant denominational schism, the precursor to political rift along sectional lines, and ulti-mately war. Although there were some pastors who dragged their feet on the issue of political disunion, their decades of preaching a proslavery cosmology helped fuel, albeit unknowingly, to serious regional antagonisms. Many more evangelical preach-ers cried for secession and political separation from the Union, having already settled the issue that the North and the South were two distinct, irreconcilable peoples with radically different views on the Bible and the direction society should go. Yet, once secession came, the southern clergy were unified in their promotion and dedication of the Confederacy and the war effort.[50] The ministers' cosmology of a sovereign and

ordered God who desired love and freedom within the bounds of a stratified house-
hold economy was the glue that held them together. The North, with its religious plu-
ralism expressed in political abolitionism, was the enemy that helped congeal evan-
gelical preachers together as standing against the forces of evil.

Reverend Whiteford Smith claimed that a separate southern nation was accord-
ing to God's will and that the Lord never intended for all Americans to be united
together in one Union. The original Union, Smith protested, stood in direct opposi-
tion to the "order of God" that was instituted in the account of the Tower of Babel
early on in human history. Since God took a people of one language and confused
their speech and separated them into several peoples, therefore the Almighty never
intended a joining together of all humanity. The perception of many pastors was that
North and South were so different, and their respective views so irreconcilable, as to
warrant two political entities. Commenting after secession, Smith stated:

> It is not hard to discover in the history of our present struggle the special inter-
> position of Divine Providence to prevent a reconstruction of our former Union.
> . . . It has now been demonstrated that we are two peoples, essentially and for-
> ever separate.[51]

Southern preachers did not always keep a boundary between civil and spiritual
affairs. Human government, as well as the Church, both came from the same source:
God. Therefore, when slavery became an intense political issue, preachers addressed
what the state needed to do because, for them, black servitude was already a matter of
biblical ethics and family solidarity. Although antebellum southern evangelicals
were not given to much political lobbying, many white preachers were prolific about
airing their convictions concerning the direction of civil matters. Southern ministers,

by 1860, had already been in defiant separation of their ecclesiastical counterparts in the North. Political secession from the Union, for them, was a logical, biblical, and necessary step in order to hold together a holy nation that was in distinction to an unholy and irreverent North. Secession was a sacred duty, and the heart of it was religious.[52] Several critics of secession saw the clergy as the active agents that helped make disunion possible; without pastors' energy toward separation, secession would have had far less chance of occurring. A northern Presbyterian noted in 1863 that "the Presbyterian ministers of the South were the leading supporters of the rebellion. It could not have been started without them."[53] A southern pro-Union pastor, frustrated with his minority voice, testified that "the clergy of the South--without distinction of sects--men of talents, learning, and influence--have raised the howl of Secession, and it falls like an Indian war-cry upon our citizens."[54]

Pastors preached and ministered to the southern commonfolk who would make up the new Confederacy and be the Christian soldiers in the army of the Lord. Preachers' rhetoric was effective and powerful, and taken to heart. Alabama Baptist Basil Manly was an ardent proponent of the household plantation structure, himself a slaveowning planter, and respected as a preacher and president of the University of Alabama for 18 years. Manly was not only a leading figure in the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention, but a strong supporter of the secessionist cause, urging separation from the Union. He insisted that supporting a Lincoln government was synonymous to maligning the name of Christ, and firmly called for secession at the Alabama Baptist Convention of 1860. Georgia Methodists also concurred with

Manly's advice and voted 83-9 in favor of secession at their annual conference. Even before Lincoln's election, the secessionist impulse was looming large for many pastors. George Foster Pierce said of his northern Methodist counterparts in October of 1860 that:

> they cannot be faithful to God without aiding and abetting runaway slaves. . . . No quarantine will justify their admission [to the South], no fumigation can disinfect them. Rank, rotten with the foul virus of an incurable disease [abolitionism], foes of God and man, spies and traitors to their country and their kind, let them stay where they belong!

It was not just a religious war against heretical Unitarians, but against fellow evangelicals in the North and all who forsook the plain teaching of Scripture for an abolitionist spirit. Southern preachers supported and encouraged secession so that they might continue on the path of making their cosmological ideas a reality on earth and proclaim biblical values and mores unhindered by Yankee anti-family and anti-slavery efforts.[55]

Secession was an act of separation and purification, a sort of holy cleansing that was intended to sanctify the South from the effluvium of northern infidelity and preserve southerners from an adulterous relationship with the North. Union troops entering the South only firmed the resolve of preachers to keep evil at bay, no matter what the cost may be since, in their belief, the foundations of true Christianity were at stake. "The atheistic and fanatical heresies, that have so sadly corrupted Northern society, and have weakened the power of scriptural faith and piety, have not seriously demoralized Southern society", declared one evangelical preacher. It was the clergy who, when war erupted, sustained the people in their long battle for independence

with a Providential understanding of the conflict, and reminders that a loving and benevolent God would bring order out of chaos. Augustus Baldwin Longstreet encouraged Confederate soldiers to fight "with the Bible in your arms and its precepts in your heart". When some are killed in the struggle, they were to remember that "the shot which sends you from earth, translates you to heaven."[56]

There was significant theological baggage that went with the evangelical preachers advocation of secession and promotion of the war effort. They saw the southern Confederacy as a holy nation devoted to God. The North, in their thinking, had sadly compromised scriptural veracity in favor of a legion of unbiblical religious movements. Northern evangelical counterparts had laid aside a literal interpretation of the Bible in favor of an unsound hermeneutic which was anti-slavery. Slavery was important because it was integrally tied with idyllic notions of the perfect Christian nation which was built on the cornerstone of the family. The plantation household structure, for southern preachers, was a biblical administration of family and should not be tampered with in any sort of way. The hierarchy of roles for every person in the household sought to curb the sinful bents of individuals, especially slaves, and provide a place where daily religious instruction could occur. Abolitionism would completely upset the entire social order, that is, God's societal ideals, and certainly lead to an irreverent and amoral nation. Southern clergymen wanted nothing to do with Yankee meddling in southern affairs. They desired separation from the North and wanted to be left alone to pursue the evangelization of the South. Secession was necessary to curb the inroads of a Lincoln administration dedicated to abolitionism

and atheism. What was at stake when Union troops entered the South was nothing less than upholding Christian civilization. This is why one minister could say that the war "has become for us a holy war, and each fearful and bloody battle an act of awful and solemn worship."[57]

Thomas Smyth believed that America's civil problems were the direct result of northern disobedience resulting in God's imminent judgment. America was in trouble and the North was to blame for its dearth of truth by failing to understand and acknowledge the Bible for what it really says. In a November, 1860 sermon, Smyth made a subtle reference to the North in a quotation from the Old Testament book of Daniel concerning the source of regional tensions:

> Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned gainst him. . . . Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth; for we obeyed not his voice.

Smyth lays the guilt for God's disfavor squarely upon those who have strayed from a literal rendering of God's Holy Word. "To whom, then, and to what is all this misery and destruction of the hopes of man to be attributed? atheists, infidels, communists, free-lovers, rationalists, Bible-haters, anti-christian levelers, and anarchists."[58]

Reverend Smyth, after war broke out, unabashedly imputed the North as the cause for war. Northerners had turned away from God because they refused to listen to His righteous standards. Instead, they went their own way in attempting to establish an anti-Christian social order, a bogus gospel that emaciated Jesus as less than God, and introduced unscriptural beliefs about authority through allowing women to

transgress the divinely instituted social hierarchy and demanding slaves be free from

the southern household structure.   In a prayer published for a Confederate soldiers

prayer book, Smyth understood that because of northern theological decadence, it was

the responsibility of southerners to divide and separate from northerners.   The moral

character of the North demanded that the South isolate herself from unholiness.

> They consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus
> Christ, nor to the doctrine which is according to godliness, but are proud, and
> destitute of the truth. But thou, O Lord, beholdest from heaven the rage and
> madness of this people, who have set themselves against thee, and against us
> who reverence thy word as the word of God.   And as thou hast commanded
> that from such men *we should withdraw ourselves*, we now invoke thine
> omnipotent arm for our protection. May the issue of this war signally prove
> that this battle is the Lord's, and that thou hast made thy word victorious. May
> atheistic blasphemy and blind fanaticism be openly rebuked, and the truth,
> purity, and power of thy word, and the wisdom, equity, and mercy of thy prov-
> idential dealings toward this people be gloriously established in the sight of
> our enemies.[59]

Regional conflict, for white southern preachers, was a moral war and an ethical

struggle to uphold the Bible as God's accurate Word to all humankind. It was a holy

war between the infidels of the North, and the pure bastion of evangelicalism found in

the worldview of the South. Joel Tucker reminded his North Carolina congregation in

1863 that in spite of human efforts to prevent war, God's providence ordained the

struggle.   The South's cause was just and holy because they relied on God and the

Bible, unlike the North who had abandoned true Christianity for an abolitionist spirit.

> Our cause is sacred. It should ever be so in the eyes of all true men in the
> South. . . . We should pray to God to give success to our cause, and triumph
> to our arms. God will defend the right.[60]

---

[1] Paul Harvey, "Yankee Faith and Southern Redemption: White Southern Baptist Min-
isters, 1850-1890" in eds. Randall M. Miller et al., *Religion and the American Civil*

War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 169-170.

[2] Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 365-368; Ronald G. Walters, *The Anti-Slavery Appeal*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). John R. McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Churches, 1830-1865* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

[3] Quoted in James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1957), 23, 26.

[4] Eugene D. Genovese, and Elizabeth Fox-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): 213-218.

[5] John B. Adger, and John L. Giradeau, eds., *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1971), 4:405-406; James Henley Thornwell, *Our National Sins* (Columbia).

[6] Mark A. Noll, "The Bible and Slavery", in eds. Randall M. Miller et al., *Religion and the American Civil War*, 51-52.

[7] McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 210.

[8] Eugene D. Genovese, "Religion in the Collapse of the American Union", in eds. Randall M. Miller et al., *Religion and the American Civil War*, 78.

[9] Although most evangelical ministers defended slavery in the South, there were many who did not. They either sought to reform slavery, fought it with a passion, or simply avoided the issue altogether. For works that address these ministers, see David T. Bailey, *Shadow on the Church: Southwestern Evangelical Religion and the Issue of Slavery, 1783-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); and David B. Chesebrough, *Clergy Dissent in the Old South, 1830-1865* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996).

[10] Ralph E. Morrow, "The Proslavery Argument Revisited", *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (June 1961): 79-94; and, David Donald, "The Proslavery Argument Reconsidered", *Journal of Southern History* 37 (February 1971): 3-18.

[11] Richard Furman, "Exposition of The Views of the Baptists Relative to the Coloured Population of the United States in a Communication To The Governor of South Carolina", in ed. Leon H. McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 260-265.

[12] Richard Fuller, and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery Considered As a Scriptural Institution* (New York: Lewis and Colby, 1845), 170.

[13] James Shannon, *On Domestic Slavery, As Examined in the Light of Scripture* (St. Louis: Republican Book and Job Office, 1855), 13.

[14] Genesis 9:21; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15, Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1, eds. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D.W. Watts (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 198-199.

[15] Genesis 9:25-27, King James Version.

[16] Samuel Dunwody, *Sermon Upon the Subject of Slavery* (Columbia, SC: S. Weir, 1837), 3.

[17] Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 1:44.

[18] Joshua 9:12; Job 37:17; Francis Brown, S.S. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1979), 326, 328.

[19] Theodore Clapp, *Slavery* (New Orleans: John Gibson, 1838), 60-61.

[20] Josiah Priest, although a northern harnessmaker from New York, influenced many southern preachers' thinking on the subject of Ham in his book, *Bible Defense of Slavery* (Glasgow, KY: W.S. Brown, 1853), see especially 88-102.

[21] Thomas Peterson attempted to trace the origins of the Ham myth and how it came to be normative for biblical exposition in *Ham and Japheth: The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978), 42-45.

[22] 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23; Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6-9.

[23] Samuel Dunwody, *Sermon Upon the Subject of Slavery* (Columbia, SC: S. Weir, 1837), 3.

[24] Genesis 12:10-20; 16:1-15; 20:1-18.

[25] Samuel Baldwin, *Dominion, or the Unity and Trinity of the Human Race, with the Divine Political Constitution of the World, and the Divine Rights of Shem, Ham, and Japheth* (Nashville: E. Stevenson, and F.A. Owen, 1857), 12.

[26] James Shannon, *On Domestic Slavery, As Examined in the Light of Scripture* (St. Louis: Republican Book and Job Office, 1855), 13; Alexander McCaine, *Slavery Defended From Scripture* (Baltimore: William Woody, 1842), 17-20; Dunwody, *Sermon Upon the Subject of Slavery*, 15; James Henley Thornwell, "The Rights and Duties of Masters", in ed. David B. Chesebrough, *"God Ordained This War": Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 185-188; The New Testament passage most cited on the instructions for master and servant is Colossians 3:22-4:1.

[27] Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:1-11; Colossians 2:6-3:17; Revelation 1:1-3; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 529-530; Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 47; Kenneth Barker, ed., *The New International Version Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 1817; F.F. Bruce *New Testament History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 178-181.

[28] Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 19:1-11; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16.

[29] Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 80; Donald Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 175.

[30] Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972): 649; Drew Gilpin Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 11; Mitchell Snay, "American Thought and Southern Distinctiveness: The Southern Clergy and the Sanctification of Slavery", *Civil War History* 35 (December 1989): 312.

[31] McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds,* 209.

[32] Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6-7; James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1957), 23.

[33] Eugene D. Genovese, and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Social Thought of Antebellum Southern Theologians", in eds. Winfred B. Moore, Jr., and Joseph F. Tripp, *Looking South: Chapters in the Story of an American Region* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 31; Eugene D. Genovese, "Religion in the Collapse of the American Union", in eds. Randall M. Miller et al., *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 76; Snay, *Gospel of Disunion,* 15.

[34] Chesebrough, *God Ordained This War,* 193; William Sumner Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), 207; Lewis M. Purifoy, "The Southern Methodist Church and the Proslavery Argument", *The Journal of Southern History* 32 (1966): 339.

[35] Mathews, *Religion in the Old South,* 157; C.C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 54-57; Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People,* 659.

[36] The statistics are from the 1850 United States Census, cited in James O. Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 12; On the process of establishing church attendance figures, see Roger Finke, and Rodney Stark, "Turning Pews into People: Estimating 19th Century Church Membership", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25 (June 1986): 180-192.

[37] Charles Stewart, "Civil War Preaching", in Dewitte Holland, ed., *Sermons in American History: Selected Issues in the American Pulpit, 1630-1967* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 235; Charles Reagan Wilson, and William Ferris, eds., *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 1301.

[38] Snay, *Gospel of Disunion,* 6-7; Edward L. Queen, Stephen R. Prothero, and Gardiner Shattuck, Jr., eds., *The Encyclopedia of American Religious History* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1996), 519.

[39] Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 16-30; Martin E. Marty, "The

Clergy", in Nathan O. Hatch, ed., *The Professions in American History* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 80-83.

[40] John Donald Wade, *Augustus Baldwin Longstreet: A Study in the Development of Culture in the South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1969), 101.

[41] Ibid., 224-225; Kenneth Moore Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 2.

[42] Holland, ed., *Sermons in American History*, 13-15.

[43] William B. Lawrence, "The History of Preaching in America", in Charles H. Lippy, and Peter W. Williams, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 2:1308.

[44] Sidney Mead, "The Rise of the Evangelical Conception of the Ministry in America, 1607-1850", in H. Richard Niebuhr, and Daniel D. Williams, eds., *The Ministry in Historical Perspective* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 244; Peter W. Williams, "Religious Architecture and Landscape", in *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience,* 1327.

[45] Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 173.

[46] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democritization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 141; Mead, "The Rise of the Evangelical Conception of the Ministry in America", in Niebuhr, *The Ministry in Historical Perspective*, 246; On the style of preaching practiced by various denominations, see Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order,* 38-42, and Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy,* 61.

[47] Jean E. Friedman, *Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 4-5; Startup, *The Root of All Evil*, 4-5.

[48] Robert L. Dabney, *Sacred Rhetoric; or, A Course of Lectures on Preaching* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1870), 27.

[49] Charles Stewart, "Civil War Preaching", in DeWitte Holland, ed., *Sermons in American History: Selected Issues in the American Pulpit, 1630-1967* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 235; Larry E. Tise, "The Interregional Profile of the Antebellum American Clergy", *Plantation Society* 1 (February 1979), 58-72.

[50] Bertram Wyatt-Brown's study looks at preachers who followed but seldom led the movement toward disunion, but dedicated themselves fully to the new Confederacy in "Church, Honor, and Secession", in *Religion and the American Civil War*, 90-102.

[51] Genesis 11:1-9; Quote is from Kurt O. Berends, "'Wholesome Reading Purifies and Elevates the Man': The Religious Military Press in the Confederacy", in eds. Randall M. Miller et al., *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 145.

[52] Flinn, *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, 7:724-725.

[53] George Junkin, *Political Fallacies: An Examination of the False Assumptions, and Refutation of the Sophisticated Reasonings, Which Have Brought on This Civil War* (New York, 1863).

[54] Quoted in Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation*, 171.

[55] Bill J. Leonard, ed., *Dictionary of Baptists in America* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 180; Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation*, 130, 172-173; Edward R. Crowther, "Holy Honor: Sacred and Secular in the Old South", *Journal of Southern History* 58 (November 1992): 619-36.

[56] Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*, 14, 101; Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation*, 175.

[57] Quoted in Kurt O. Berends, "'Wholesome Reading Purifies and Elevates the Man': The Religious Military Press in the Confederacy" in Randall M. Miller et al., eds., *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 146.

[58] Daniel 9:11, 14, King James Version; Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, 7:542.

[59] Flinn, ed., *Complete Works of Thomas Smyth*, 7:724-725.

[60] Joel W. Tucker, "God's Providence in War", in David B. Chesebrough, ed., *"God Ordained This War": Sermons on the Sectional Conflict, 1830-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 236.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Evangelical clergymen presented the antebellum South with a view of the world through the Bible as God's literal Word to humankind. They prized Scripture as the foundation and guide for all of life, and the only true source for which all human institutions can be built. The Bible, insisted evangelical southerners, contains the only principles on which a society can rest with permanency.[1] They understood God as the perfect Sovereign over all things, the Creator, Sustainer, and Controller of the universe. Preachers emphasized the triune nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who benevolently provided for humankind everything they needed. The Trinity is characterized not only by love, but complete order. As supreme authority, God in His love dispensed kindness and order to the earth through His self-revelation, the Bible. People, having experienced all the effects of being sinful humans, are in desperate need of God's agenda for society. The Lord's providential plan, according to southern ministers' biblical literalism, included a hierarchical and patriarchal pattern for living that would be the means for proclaiming the gospel and dispensing religious instruction. All persons were to function according to their prescribed roles in a rigid social strata that placed the family household as the bedrock of civilization. Within the household economy white males were to exercise God-given authority that was to reflect the sovereign command and concern of the triune Godhead. Just as God had

superior position over all people, so the adult white male was to have a preeminent place above everyone else. Women, children, and black servants (in that order) played subordinate roles in the family pecking order. Their submission was critical to the balance and proliferation of a godly society, and was to mirror the humble service that God required from his subjects. The southern household plantation, when functioning according to biblical precept, was the idyllic social situation for preachers. It was the best arrangement possible to accommodate the sinful bent of humans, especially blacks slaves, and to extend Christian ethics in the culture.

Clergymen believed that the ideal Christian society was a providential trust committed to the South from God. Their proslavery cosmology was, for them, theological orthodoxy that was non-negotiable because it was based on the revelation of God in the Bible. Preachers of the antebellum South saw the North as compromisers of revealed truth, and had perceptions of them as becoming increasingly anti-God and anti-Scripture due to the many different brands of northern religion. Evangelical northerners were also the enemy and included in the religious mix of those who embraced anti-slavery ideas. Southern ministers wanted their region to remain staunchly evangelical and viewed northern abolitionism as the grossest form of religious heresy and blasphemy against God's holy intentions for the South. Preachers reacted vociferously against the idea of slave emancipation; freeing black slaves would mean a significant erosion of their worldview. They were not going to allow their most precious beliefs and practices to be eradicated by abolitionists and freethinkers. To release the bonds of the Negro was to loose the Bible from having any

authority over people's lives. Just as southern Methodists and Baptists portrayed their respective denominational schisms as conservative acts to preserve theological integrity, so southern divines understood political separation from the North, in the form of a secession from the Union, as an undertaking to isolate the South from an anti-God government. The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 as president of the United States was seen as a threat to impose on the South a destructive worldview by force, if necessary, that was contra family and Bible. Southern clergymen played a visible and influential role in secession, portraying it as a vital separation from ungodliness and infidelity. It was an act of purification that was designed to insulate the South from theological apostasy and preserve evangelicalism as expressed in a proslavery worldview.[2]

Southern pastors were serious about secession because they did not think of America as a Christian nation, and lost hope that it could become God's ideal society while politically tied to the North.[3] They believed that a southern Confederacy would have its place as God's holy nation, and be the only place on earth that could fulfill the hierarchical schema as expressed in the Bible. In order to accomplish God's agenda, separation from evil was essential for the evangelical South. Southern evangelicals understood that holiness could not occur without separation from ungodliness. Since the North was perceived as a place with a dearth of truth, withdrawal from them was necessary to genuine spiritual and social fulfillment. This concept is what evangelical theologian Richard Mouw calls "antithetical epistemology", that is, seeing any non-Christian worldview in a stark, antithetical relationship to what God requires of His

people.[4] Thus, when southern preachers felt marginalized in their cosmological con-
ceptions, they first withdrew from northern evangelicals in denominational splits, and
then in political separation from the North by advocating secession.

Preachers were significant molders of public opinion and their sermons swayed
both the church and the broader culture toward an evangelical and proslavery world-
view. The stronghold of slavery was in southern pulpits and black servitude in the
South was something of an evangelical flogging.[5] There were really two religions, an
anti-slavery religion and a proslavery religion, that existed in the respective sections
of North and South. Proslavery religion, according to evangelical southern preachers,
was biblical and right. They believed that anything to do with abolitionism was a
tampering with God's truth and would lead southerners astray for their special mission
to evangelize the South and establish an idyllic state.[6] Southern ministers acted con-
sistent with their worldview by advocating secession and supporting the war effort.
Any prospects of Yankees eradicating the plantation household, which was to be the
place reflecting the glory of God on earth, would need to be met with resistance.

Southern pastors were concerned primarily with internal qualities of a person
and the focus of attention was on the soul. White preachers saw a primary responsi-
bility of evangelicals to work at the conversion of lost African souls. Slavery, then,
was a divine trust. God had providentially brought the Negro to the South for the
very purpose of hearing the gospel and developing internal ethical qualities consistent
with Christianity. Because of their hierarchical conceptions of society, preachers
believed that the brunt of the work of conversion needed to come from masters. So,

the religious sensitivities of household heads was imperative for southern preachers. God, for ministers, was the Master of all people, with human white masters as His instruments for black servants to know and learn of Jesus. Therefore, it was necessary for planters to be less concerned with the culture of honor, and more attentive to the internal souls of all family members.[7]

Pastors believed that white masters must be awakened to their sense of responsibility that slaves were not just chattel, but people in need of God's grace. They exhorted Christian slaveholders that their Negroes were more than mere property, and that they were fellow-heirs of immortality.[8] Preachers viewed the religious instruction of blacks as part of the larger program of God which aimed at saturating southern society and culture with a thoroughly southern evangelical Protestant worldview. The behavior and beliefs of blacks needed to change so they would understand their place in God's orderly cosmos.[9] Conversion to Christ was a prerequisite for all persons to enter the spiritual Kingdom of God, and needful to realize the earthly Kingdom built on the plantation household economy.

Although southern preachers and many secular planters were often at odds in their respective worldviews and did not always share the same values, there were points at which their ideas touched. Without their common thoughts, the Confederacy could not have coalesced together to fight a common foe. The South was a world of masters and slaves, for both preacher and planter. There was a cultural pecking order that they both shared. The rigid social stratification of all persons, patriarchy, and hierarchy brought them together as defending the status quo. There were clear

boundaries for people, and distinctive roles for every individual to fulfill. Secession from the Union was the best way for planter and preacher in the South to keep out strangers and strange ideas that threatened society. The propensity of the North to construct an egalitarian framework of roles, whether for blacks or for women, was foreign to southern men and inconsistent with both the culture of honor and southern evangelical constructs of the ideal Christian society.[10]

Engaging the North in battle and sustaining the war effort was helped by the views of southern preachers. Their providential view of the South and firm belief in the sovereignty of God ennobled them to see and encourage others that the Almighty was on their side and that ultimate victory would be to the righteous. After all, God would not allow the grand design of His society to be corrupted and fall to the likes of northern infidels. Confederate preachers never ceased to sermonize on the civil conflict and based their messages on the fundamentals of their worldview: God controls the universe and everything in it, and will uphold his Divine revelation of the Bible as true and right. This belief led clergymen to conclude that God initiated war in order to protect His proslavery agenda for southern society, and to separate the South from the leaven of northern abolitionism.[11]

Despite, or perhaps because of, the providential view of the South, ministers found it hard to accept southern defeat. When battles were lost and the war ultimately over, pastors charged congregations and the southern populace with a lack of faith in God's ability and desire to further evangelicalism in their region. In a more positive light, war was a chastening tool to refine His beloved children.[12] Although slavery

was eradicated and proslavery conceptions of the ideal household disappeared, southern preachers largely avoided social reform, challenging it as a Yankee secular corruption of God's true intentions for society. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, who held his position as Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans until his death in 1902, never let go of his evangelical worldview. Indeed, war did not deter him in the basic core theology of God's intentions for society.[13] Not only were the southern clergy prominent in fueling sectional antagonism, they were integral to the New South as a stabilizing influence.

Religion played a formative role in the development of a proslavery worldview in antebellum America. The evangelical Protestant convictions and beliefs of southern preachers resonated with many people. Indeed, religion animated much of the proslavery rhetoric and played a significant part in the sectional antagonisms between North and South. Alongside the pillars of historical study that include gender, race, class, and ethnicity, the religious beliefs and behaviors of antebellum southerners have their place, bringing illumination beyond more secular explanations of events of the human experience.[14]

---

[1] H.C. Theweatt, "The Holy Scriptures", in William T. Smithson, ed., *The Methodist Pulpit, South* (Washington, D.C.: William T. Smithson, 1859), 428.

[2] Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 147-148, 151-152, 178-179.

[3] For a discussion on America as not established as distinctively Christian, nor evangelical, see Jon Butler, "Why Revolutionary America Wasn't a Christian Nation", in James H. Hutson, ed., *Religion and the New Republic: Faith in the Founding of America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

[4] Richard Mouw, "Evangelical Ethics", in eds. Mark A. Noll, and Ronald F. Thiemann, *Where Shall My Wond'ring Soul Begin? The Landscape of Evangelical Piety and*

Thought (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 78-80.

[5] Jon Butler, and Harry S. Stout, eds., *Religion in American History: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 226-227.

[6] Ibid., 236.

[7] Erskine Clarke, *Wrestlin' Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in the Old South* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 104-105, 160.

[8] Quoted in Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 224.

[9] Donald Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 139.

[10] Edward R. Crowther, "Holy Honor: Sacred and Secular in the Old South", *Journal of Southern History* 58 (November 1992), 619-36; Kenneth Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 81.

[11] Charles Stewart, "Civil War Preaching", in ed. DeWitte Holland, *Sermons in American History: Selected Issues in the American Pulpit, 1630-1967* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 235-237.

[12] Ibid., 237; Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[13] Philip Shaw Paludan, "Religion and the American Civil War", in eds. Randall M Miller et al., *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 33; eds. Daniel G. Reid et al., *Concise Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 255.

[14] For example, see a collection of essays in honor of Martin Marty by eds. Jay P. Dolan, and James P. Wind, *New Dimensions in American Religious History* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993).

PRIMARY SOURCE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adger, John B., and John L. Gieradeau, eds. *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1971.

Andrew, James Osgood. *Family Government. A Treatise on Conjugal, Parental, and Filial Duties*. Philadelphia: Sorin and Hall, 1846.

Atkinson, Thomas. *Christian Duty in the Present Time of Trouble. A Sermon Preached at St. James Church, Wilmington, North Carolina on the Fifth Sunday after Easter, 1861*. Wilmington: Fulton and Price, 1861.

Bailey, Rufus William. *The Family Preacher; or Domestic Duties Illustrated and Enforced in Eight Discourses*. New York: John Taylor, 1837.

Baldwin, Samuel. *Dominion, or the Unity and Trinity of the Human Race, with the Divine Political Constitution of the World, and the Divine Rights of Shem, Ham, and Japheth*. Nashville: E. Stevenson, and F.A. Owen, 1857.

Broaddus, Andrew. *It is a Fearful Thing to Live*. Raleigh, NC, 1861.

Chesebrough, David, ed. *God Ordained This War: Sermons on the Sectional Conflict*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991.

Clapp, Theodore. *Slavery*. New Orleans: John Gibson, 1838.

Dabney, Robert L. *Sacred Rhetoric; or, A Course of Lectures on Preaching*. Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1870.

Dickson, A.F. *Plantation Sermons, or Plain and Familiar Discourses for the Instruction of the Unlearned*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1856.

deTocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*. J.P. Meyer, ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

Dunwody, Samuel. *Sermon Upon the Subject of Slavery*. Columbia, SC: S. Weir, 1837.

Elliott, Stephen. *Sermons by the Right Reverend Stephen Elliott, D.D., L.L.D., the Right Reverend Bishop of Georgia*. New York: Pott and Amery, 1867.

_____. *Vain is the Help of Man. A Sermon Preached in Christ Church, Savannah, on Thursday, September 15, 1864, Being the Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, Appointed by the Governor of the State of Georgia.* Macon: Burke, Boykin, and Co., 1864

Flinn, J. William, ed. *Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth, D.D.* Columbia, SC: R.L. Bryan Co., 1908.

Fuller, Richard. *Sermons.* New York: Sheldon, 1860.

Fuller, Richard and Francis Wayland. *Domestic Slavery Considered As a Scriptural Institution.* New York: Lewis and Colby, 1845.

Hardman, Keith J. *Issues in American Christianity: Primary Sources with Introductions.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993.

Holland, Dewitte, ed. *Sermons in American History: Selected Issues in the American Pulpit, 1630-1967.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971.

Jones, Charles C. *The Glory of Woman Is the Fear of the Lord.* Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1857.

Junkin, George. *Political Fallacies: An Examination of the False Assumptions, and Refutation of the Sophisticated Reasonings, Which Have Brought on This Civil War.* New York, 1863.

Kant, Immanuel. *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone,* trans. T.M. Greene and H.H. Hudson. New York: Harper and Row, 1960.

Kendrick, J.R. *An Address to Christians, on the the Claims of Total Abstinence.* Charleston, SC: George Parks and Co., 1852.

Leland, A.W. *A Discourse Delivered Before the State Temperance Society of South Carolina.* Columbia, SC: I.C. Morgan, 1838.

McCaine, Alexander. *Slavery Defended From Scripture.* Baltimore: William Woody, 1842.

Miles, James W. *God in History.* Charleston: Evans and Cogswell, 1863.

Norton, Andrews. *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians Concerning the Nature of God and the Person of Christ.* Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1856.

Palmer, Benjamin Morgan. *National Responsibility Before God.* New Orleans: Price-Current Steam Book and Job Printing Office, 1861.

Pierce, George F. *The Word of God: A Nation's Life. A Sermon Preached Before the Bible Convention of the Confederate States.* Augusta, GA: Office of the Constituionalist, 1862.

Plumer, William S. *Thoughts on Religious Instruction of the Negroes in This Country.* Savannah, GA.: Edward J. Purse, 1848.

Poindexter, A.M. *God's Providence A Source of Comfort and Courage to Christians.* Raliegh, N.C.: 1861.

Priest, Josiah. *Bible Defense of Slavery.* Glasgow, KY: W.S. Brown, 1853.

Ross, Frederick A. *Slavery Ordained of God.* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1857.

Shannon, James. *On Domestic Slavery, As Examined in the Light of Scripture.* St. Louis: Republican Book and Job Office, 1855.

Smith, Benjamin M. *Family Religion, or the Domestic Relations as Regulated by Christian Principles.* Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1859.

Smithson, William T., ed. *The Methodist Pulpit, South.* Washington, DC: William T. Smithson, 1859.

Thornwell, James Henley. *Judgments. A Call to Repentance. A Sermon Preached by Appointment of the Legislature in the Hall of the House of Representatives, Saturday, December 9, 1854.* Columbia: R.W. Gibbes, 1854.

_____. *Discourses on Truth.* New York: R. Carter, 1855.

Tucker, Joel W. *God's Providence in War.* Fayetteville, NC: Presbyterian Office, 1862.

Winans, William. *A Series of Discourses on Fundmental Religious Subjects, Including a Preliminary Discourse on the Divine Revelation of Holy Scripture.* Nashville: E. Stevenson and F.A. Owen, 1855.

SECONDARY SOURCE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Ahlstrom, Sydney. *A Religious History of the American People.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972.

Ahlstrom, Sydney and Jonathan S. Carey, eds. *An American Reformation: A Documentary History of Unitarian Christianity.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985.

Aland, Kurt, Matthew Black, Bruce Metzger, Carlo Martini and Allen Wikgren, eds. *The Greek New Testament.* Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 1983.

Bailey, David T. *Shadow on the Church: Southwestern Evangelical Religion and the Issue of Slavery, 1783-1860.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The American Jeremiad.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.

Bodo, John R. *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954.

Boles, John B. *The Irony of Southern Religion.* New York: Peter Lang, 1994.

Bozeman, Theodore Dwight. *Protestants in the Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977.

Brackney, William H., ed. *Baptist Life and Thought: 1600-1980.* 1983.

Brown, Richard D. *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Burton, Orville Vernon. *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Butler, Jon. *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Butler, Jon and Harry S. Stout, eds. *Religion in American History: A Reader.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Calhoon, Robert M. *Evangelicals and Conservatives in the Early South, 1740-1861.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988.

Calhoun, Daniel H. *Professional Lives in America: Structure and Aspirations, 1750-1850.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.

Carwardine, Richard J. *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Cash, Wilbur J. *The Mind of the South.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941.

Chesebrough, David B. *Clergy Dissent in the Old South, 1830-1865.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996.

Clark, Erskine. *Wrestlin' Jacob: A Portrait of Religion in the Old South.* Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979.

Clinton, Catherine. *Tara Revisited: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend.* New York: Abbeville Press, 1995.

_____. *The Plantation Mistress.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1982.

Cooper, William J. *The American South: A History.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996.

Cornelius, Janet Duitsman. *Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.

_____. *When I Can Read My Title Clear: Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991.

Coryell, Janet L., Martha H. Swain, Sandra G. Treadway, and Elizabeth H. Turner, eds. *Beyond Image and Convention: Explorations in Southern Women's History.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998.

Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. *A Social History of American Technology.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Craven, Avery O. *The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953.

deVaux, Roland. *Ancient Israel.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.

Eaton, Clement. *A History of the Old South.* New York: Macmillan, 1975.

_____. *The Mind of the Old South.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964.

Elwell, Walter A., ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985.

Farmer, James O. *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values.* Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986.

Faust, Drew Gilpin, ed. *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987.

Friedman, Jean E. *Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Geertz, Clifford. *Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Genovese, Eugene D. *The Slaveholders' Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1982.

_____. *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998.

Goen, C.C. *Broken Churches, Broken Nation.* Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985.

Gunn, Giles, ed. *The Bible and American Arts and Letters.* 1983.

Gutjahr, Paul C. *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Harrell, David E. *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866.* Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966.

Hardman, Keith J. *Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987.

Hatch, Nathan O. and Mark A. Noll, eds. *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Hill, Samuel S., ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South.* Macon, GA, 1984.

Holifield, E. Brooks. *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978.

Holland, DeWitte T. *Sermons in American History: Selected Issues in the American Pulpit, 1630-1967.* 1971.

_____, ed. *The Preaching Tradition: A Brief History.* 1980.

Hovenkamp, Herbert. *Science and Religion in America, 1800-1860.* University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978.

Howe, David Walker. *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970.

Hyerman, Christine Leigh. *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt.* New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1997.

Jamison, A. Leland, and James Ward Smith, eds. *Religious Perspectives in American Culture.* 1961.

Jenkins, William Sumner. *Proslavery Thought in the Old South.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935.

Johnson, Curtis D. *Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to the Civil War.* Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993.

Johnson, Paul E. *A Shopkeeper's Millenium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1978.

Keillor, Steven J. *This Rebellious House: American History and the Truth of Christianity.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Kelly, Douglas F. *Preachers With Power: Four Stalwarts of the South.* Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992.

Kuykendall, John W. *Southern Enterprise: The Work of National Evangelical Societies in the Antebellum South.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982.

Ladd, George Eldon. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985.

Leonard, Bill J., ed. *Dictionary of Baptists in America*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

Livingstone, David N., D.G. Hart, and Mark A. Noll, eds. *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Loveland, Anne C. *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980.

Mathews, Donald G. *Religion in the Old South*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

McCardell, John M. *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1979.

McCurry, Stephanie. *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Politics, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

McDannell, Colleen. *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986.

McKivigan, John R. *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Churches 1830-1865*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Miller, Glenn T. *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Antebellum Theological Education*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990.

Miller, Randall M. *Catholics in the Old South*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983.

Miller, Randall M., Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson, eds. *Religion and the American Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Nash, Ronald H. *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1988.

Neibuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper and Row, 1951.

Noll, Mark A. *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992.

_____. *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997.

_____, ed. *Religion and American Politics from the Colonial Period to the 1980s.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Peterson, Thomas Virgil. *Ham and Japheth: The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978.

Petry, Ray C. *No Uncertain Sound: Sermons That Shaped the Pulpit Tradition.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1948.

Powell, Milton B., ed. *The Voluntary Church: American Religious Life, 1740-1860, Seen Through the Eyes of European Visitors.* New York: Macmillan, 1967.

Queen II, Edward L., Stephen K. Prothero, and Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., eds. *The Encyclopedia of American Religious History.* New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1996.

Reid, Daniel G. et al., eds. *Concise Dictionary of Christianity in America.* Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995.

Rudolph, W. and H.P. Ruger, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.* Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.

Saum, Lewis O. *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980.

Scott, Anne F. *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Sellers, Charles. *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Silver, James W. *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda.* Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing, 1957.

Smith, Timothy. *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975.

Snay, Mitchell. *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separtism in the Antebellum South.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Sparks, Randy J. *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773-1876.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994.

Startup, Kenneth Moore. *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997.

Stokes, Melvyn and Stephen Conway, eds. *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996.

Sweet, Leonard I., ed. *The Evangelical Tradition in America.* Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984.

_____. *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth Century Evangelicalism.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983.

Taylor, William R. *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and the American National Character.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Thompson, Ernest Trice. *Presbyterians in the South.* Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963.

Varon, Elizabeth R. *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Wade, John Donald. *Augustus Baldwin Longstreet: A Study in the Development of Culture in the South.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1969.

Walters, Kerry S. *The American Deists: Voices of Reason and Dissent in the Early Republic.* Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992.

Walters, Ronald G. *The Anti-Slavery Appeal.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

Wertenbaker, T.J. *The Old South: The Founding of American Civilization.* New York: Scribner's, 1942.

White, James F. *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture.* New York, Oxford University Press, 1964.

Wilkens, Steve and Alan G. Padgett. *Christianity and Western Thought: A History of Philosophers, Ideas, and Movements, Volume 2 - Faith and Reason in the 19th Century.* Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000.

Wilson, Charles Reagan, and William Ferris, eds. *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Articles

Boles, John B. "The Discovery of Southern Religious History". Edited by John Boles and Evelyn Thomas Nolen. *Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Sanford W. Higginbotham.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987.

_____. "Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South: From Religious Dissent to Cultural Dominance." Edited by Charles Reagan Wilson. *Religion in the Old South.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985.

Bowden, Henry Warner. "The Historiography of American Religion". Edited by Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams. *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience, volume 1.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988.

Butler, Jon. "Why Revolutionary America Wasn't a Christian Nation". Edited by James H. Hutson. *Religion and the New Republic: Faith in the Founding of America.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

Chesebrough, David B. "'There Goes Your Damned Gospel Shop!' The Churches and Clergy as Victims of Sherman's March Through South Carolina." *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 92 (1991): 15-33.

_____. "A Holy War: The Defense and Support of the Confederacy by Southern Baptists." *American Baptist Quarterly* 6 (1987): 17-30.

Donald, David H. "The Proslavery Argument Reconsidered". *Journal of Southern History* 37 (February 1971): 3-18.

Finke, Roger and Rodney Stark. "Turning Pews into People: Estimating Nineteenth Century Church Membership." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25 (1986): 180-92.

Genovese, Eugene D., and Elizabeth Fox-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): 211-34.

Hill, Samuel S. "The South". In *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience*. Edited by Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988.

Holifield, E. Brooks. "Thomas Smyth: The Social Ideas of a Southern Evangelist". *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51 (Spring 1973): 24-40.

Lawrence, William B. "The History of Preaching in America". In *The Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience, Vol. 2*. Edited by Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988.

Marty, Martin E. "America's Iconic Book." In *Humanizing America's Iconic Book*. Edited by G.M. Tucker and D.A. Knight. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.

Mead, Sidney E. "The Rise of the Evangelical Conception of the Ministry in America". Edited by H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams. *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*. New York: Harper, 1956.

Morrow, Ralph E. "The Proslavery Argument Revisited". *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (June 1961): 79-94.

Mouw, Richard. "Evangelical Ethics". Edited by Mark Noll and Ronald Thiemann. *Where Shall My Wond'ring Soul Begin? The Landscape of Evangelical Piety and Thought*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000.

Noll, Mark A. "Protestant Theology and Social Order in Antebellum America". *Religious Studies Review* 8 (April 1982): 133-42.

Nord, David Paul. "Religious Reading and Readers in Antebellum America". *Journal of the Early Republic* 15 (Summer 1995): 241-72.

Purifoy, Lewis M. "The Southern Methodist Church and the Proslavery Argument". *The Journal of Southern History* 32 (1966):

Snay Mitchell. "American Thought and Southern Distinctiveness: The Southern Clergy and the Sanctification of Slavery". *Civil War History* 35 (December 1989).

Sweet, Leonard I. "Nineteenth Century Evangelicalism." In volume 2 of *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience*. Edited by Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988.

Tise, Larry E. "The Interregional Profile of the Antebellum American Clergy." *Plantation Society* 1 (February 1979): 58-72.

Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. "Religion and the 'Civilizing Process' in the Early American South." In *Evangelicalism and American Politics*. Edited by Mark Noll and Joel Carpenter. New York, 1989.

Zikmund, Barbara Brown. "Biblical Arguments and Women's Place in the Church". In *The Bible and Social Reform*. Edited by Ernest R. Sandeen. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.