IN GOD’S PRESENCE: CHAPLAINS, MISSIONARIES, AND THE RELIGIOUS SPACE OF WAR AND PEACE

By

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To my parents
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................................................................................. 4

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................. 7

CHAPTER

1  INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 9
   Theorizing the “Sacred” in the American Civil War Era: A Discourse on Method .......................... 9
   Chapter Outline ...................................................................................................................... 19
   Scope of Dissertation .......................................................................................................... 21

2  MEN OF THE CLOTH ............................................................................................................ 25
   Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 25
   The Clergy and Organized Religion in Antebellum America ................................................. 26
   Challenges For Wartime Clergy .......................................................................................... 31
   The Antebellum Lives of Several Sample Clergy .................................................................. 39

3  CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS ............................................................................................................ 51
   Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 51
   “Awash in a Sea of Faith”: Religion in Antebellum America .............................................. 52
   “Seeing the Elephant”: Christian Soldiers Go Off to War ................................................... 62
   Comrades and Friends: Soldiers and Their Spiritual Guides ................................................ 72
   Wartime Religion and the Written Word .............................................................................. 77

4  CONSTRUCTING SACRED SPACE IN CAMP: WORSHIP PRACTICES ................................ 81
   Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 81
   New Wartime Worship Practices ......................................................................................... 82
   Reproducing and Adapting Antebellum Worship Practices ................................................ 95

5  CONSTRUCTING SACRED SPACE IN CAMP: CHURCHES, BATTLES, AND DIVERSITY ........ 130
   Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 130
   Building Churches in the Civil War Armies ......................................................................... 130
   The Sacred and the Profane .................................................................................................. 139
   Diversity in the Camps ......................................................................................................... 158

6  FIGHTING, DYING, SICK, AND WOUNDED ........................................................................... 173
   Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 173
Religiosity During Combat: Navigating the Boundaries of Life and Death ............. 174
Aiding the Dispossessed: Ministering to the Sick, Wounded, and Dying in the Hospitals .......................................................................................................................... 192
The End of Worldly Suffering: The Religious Space of the Dying ......................... 216

7 CLERICAL CARE IN GENERAL HOSPITALS AND PRISONS ............................ 227

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 227
Time is on Our Side: Sacred Space in the Union General Hospital .................... 228
Fighting Profane Space in the Union General Hospital ....................................... 244
Prisons: Inculcating Religiosity and Civil Religion ................................................. 250

8 CONCLUSION ...................................................................................................... 268

BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................................................................................... 281

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH .......................................................................................... 312
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Using insights drawn from spatial theory, this dissertation examines religious developments during the American Civil War era, by focusing on the military chaplains and missionaries who served the spiritual needs of the Civil War armies. It looks specifically at how clergy and soldiers navigated the wartime religious world in military camps, battlefields, hospitals, and prisons. In these varied spaces, soldiers and clergy intent on maintaining a spiritual life initially tried to replicate the idyllic world of the antebellum church. Instead of succeeding in that endeavor, they found themselves constructing a new religious world, needing to adapt to wartime circumstances including constant movement, persistent deprivations, and the peculiar challenges posed by living in an almost entirely masculine setting.

The wartime religious world contained vestiges of the prewar period including providential thinking, revivalism, and belief in the Good Death. However, the changes were more marked. The wartime religious world fostered themes of religious and societal equality. With few exceptions, chaplains and missionaries ministered to men regardless of religious belief, racial identity, or army affiliation. An organization of
Northern evangelical missionaries, the United States Christian Commission (USCC), in particular focused much attention on the spiritual development of African American soldiers and civilians. While first emerging within the camp and battlefield environments, the prison and the general hospital inculcated civil religion within the ranks of Civil War soldiers. The spiritual life of Civil War soldiers had a large impact on postbellum religious changes such as the expansion of black churches, the growth of civil religion in the North and South, and the gender composition of American churches.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Religion and war have always been at the center of the human condition. Warfare often leads to heightened religiosity. The American Civil War era in particular cannot be fully explained without understanding religion’s role in the conflict. The goal of this dissertation is to shed light on how wartime clergy interacted with the flock of male soldiers within the bloody, fratricidal conflict known as the American Civil War. This chapter sets out to do three things: first, discuss the methodology undergirding the dissertation; second, provide a chapter outline of the dissertation; and finally, provide an overview of the dissertation’s scope.

Theorizing the “Sacred” in the American Civil War Era: A Discourse on Method

Emile Durkheim, the founder of the discipline of sociology, first conceptualized the sacred and the profane. Viewing sacred space as a social category, Durkheim conceived of the world as divided into sacred and profane realms and viewed their distinction as universal. This study demonstrates how almost anything could be imbued with the sacred. Not part of its empirical nature, an object’s sacred character is imposed upon it. The sacredness of one part of an object is the same as its whole.3

Over forty years passed before another scholar advanced Durkheim’s work on the sacred. Writing in the late 1950s, noted religious theorist Mircea Eliade’s seminal _The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion_ builds on Durkheim’s work. For the first time, Eliade explores the concept of sacred space, arguing that Durkheim incorrectly reduces the sacred and profane to social processes.4 Instead, Eliade posits that the sacred is the product of hierophanies, defined as “an irruption of the sacred that results

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2 Not all scholars agree with the sacred and profane binary. For example, religious historian Colleen McDannell argues that material culture does not provide much evidence for a distinct separation between the sacred and the profane in Christian life. Instead she asserts, that “the scrambling of the sacred and the profane” is common in American Christianity. (Colleen McDannell, _Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America_ (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 8).

3 Durkheim, _The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology_, 37, 229.

in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different.⁵ This ontological space is part of the nature or essence of being, is centered, and is consecrated. It may include a built environment such as a church or nature. Moreover, this space exists within a certain sacred time.⁶

Eliade also defines profane space as fundamentally opposed to the sacred. This space exists within profane time where acts devoid of religious meaning are set. An essential part of the religious world, profane man can behave like religious man, although his actions contain no religious meaning.⁷

Dating from the late 1970s, religious historian Jonathan Z. Smith’s work challenged Eliade’s theoretical framework by stressing, like Durkheim, that sacred space is socially constructed.⁸ Smith’s sacred is situational, not substantive as Eliade argued. Thus, nothing may be considered intrinsically sacred or profane.⁹ Smith also introduces the concept of power into the discussion of space by explaining the power dynamics within religious space.¹⁰

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⁵ Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 26. A sign may also indicate a place’s sacredness. (Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 27)


⁷ Ibid., 68, 204.


⁹ Smith, To Take Place, 104 and Smith, Map is not Territory, 291. In Map is not Territory, Smith references the work of Mary Douglas to show how this conception has been employed in earlier studies. See Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966)

¹⁰ Noted theorist Michel Foucault also discusses the power of space, especially in his work Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).
Smith’s work further theorizes the role of ritual and its relationship to space.\textsuperscript{11} Noting their key relationship to “the ritual drama” and ranking them according to power, Smith discusses the degrees of sacrality in the Jewish Temple.\textsuperscript{12} Smith’s ranking of sacred space demonstrates similarities with the levels of holiness explained in an antebellum Methodist Camp Meeting Manual and provides a context for the revivals held in civil war military camps.\textsuperscript{13} For Smith, ritual sacralizes things and people.\textsuperscript{14}

Subsequent scholarship by theologian Belden Lane, historian Edward Linenthal, and scholar of comparative religion David Chidester, have stressed the need to look at the specific environment of American religious space.\textsuperscript{15} Lane views sacred space in America as ‘storied’ space while Chidester and Linenthal note its contested nature.\textsuperscript{16} Lane argues that the experiences of space and place structure spirituality (our experience of self and others in relationship to God), at the same time spirituality structures our landscape (our vision of the where of our experience).\textsuperscript{17} His conception of the liminal space of the evangelical revival applies nicely to Civil War era revivals.


\textsuperscript{12} Smith, \textit{To Take Place}, 57-58.

\textsuperscript{13} See Barlow Weed Gorham, \textit{Camp Meeting Manual: A Practical Book for The Camp Ground in Two Parts} (Boston: H.V. Degen, 1854).

\textsuperscript{14} Smith, \textit{To Take Place}, 105, 109.

\textsuperscript{15} See Belden Lane, \textit{Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality} (1988) and Chidester and Linenthal, \textit{American Sacred Space} (1995)


\textsuperscript{17} Lane, \textit{Landscapes of the Sacred}, xi.
During these movements identifying with marginalized and displaced people, God cannot be contained in one place.\textsuperscript{18}

Chidester and Linenthal’s work adds insight to this discussion by showing the contested nature of American religious space. Arguing against Eliade’s binary conception of religious space, this book demonstrates how the profane and the sacred, are not always separate or opposites within the American context. Moreover, it reinforces Eliade’s discussion of time’s central role in the production of sacred space, especially in relation to memory and narrative, ritual and practice, and its influence on historical factors and change.\textsuperscript{19}

More recently, religious theorist Thomas Tweed has stressed the importance of the twin concepts of dwelling and crossing to the study of religion.\textsuperscript{20} His first work explores how religion and place engage with the subthemes of mapping, meeting, and migration.\textsuperscript{21} In his later work, he argues that to truly understand religion one must see it as employing spatial tropes, consisting of dwelling and crossing (finding a place as well as movement across space) as well as confluences and flows (complex processes). This conception explains the fluid nature of religion.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} Lane, \textit{Landscapes of the Sacred}, 154, 158.

\textsuperscript{19} Linenthal and Chidester, \textit{American Sacred Space}, 17-18, 25. My work will incorporate a version of Chidester and Linenthal’s conception of contested space.


\textsuperscript{21} Tweed argues mapping refers to how people “orient themselves in a natural landscape and social terrain, transforming both in the process;” meeting refers to how groups interact at “contact zones;” and migration refers to the “movements across and within national boundaries.” (Tweed, \textit{Our Lady of the Exile}, 136)

\textsuperscript{22} Tweed, \textit{Crossing and Dwelling}, 59, 62.
Other scholars, including Louis P. Nelson and Jeanne Kilde have described the architecture of sacred space. Nelson’s edited volume examines how Americans throughout history have utilized sacred space and its impact on religious practice. Collectively, these studies show how belief and practice inscribe a place as sacred, space’s relationship to socio-political identity, and the instability of sacred space. While Nelson examines a broad range of religions, Kilde focuses on how Christian architecture impacts sacred space, specifically how church buildings influence worship practices.

Apart from general theory on sacred space, one may gain insight into spatiality by looking at how sacred space operates in Christianity and Judaism. Seth Kunin describes dynamic and static sacred spaces in Biblical Judaism. For example, the Israelite Tent of Meeting served as a dynamic sacred space. As the Israelite camp moved, this space moved along with it. On the other hand, the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem represented static space. Formalized in a time and place, this sacred space

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exuded the presence of the holy. People could occupy or access it only during specific times, when it served as both a religious center and a strong external boundary.²⁸

Theologian Douglas Davies provides a much needed context for how religious space operated within the Christian tradition. He notes how specific Christian rituals and practices such as baptisms, hymns, and sermons help sacralize a space.²⁹ Moreover, this space develops out of the formal priesthood’s power to administer sacraments, the place of “self-sacrificial service to one’s neighbor,” the community of believers which inhabit the space, and through its role as a point of contact between humanity and God.³⁰

In this dissertation, I have drawn more heavily on Jonathan Z. Smith’s conception of situational sacred space, as opposed to Eliade’s more ontological definition. Religious space may be broadly defined as the place where one confers with the divine, a physical site that offers spiritual guidance and fulfillment.³¹ Sacred space contains religious power, created by lay or ordained clergy who worship within the bounded area which is not naturally sacred. Entering this space draws otherwise irreligious individuals toward God, away from profane influences. It also exists as inclusive of all people who wish to obtain religious enlightenment, no matter their race, gender, or class status.

²⁹ Davies, “Christianity,” 43-44, 50-51, 56.
³⁰ Ibid., 52, 55-56.
³¹ Jane Hubert defines the term sacred as: “restriction through pertaining to the gods. The concept of sacred implies restrictions and prohibitions on human behaviour-if something is sacred then certain rules must be observed in relation to it, and this generally means that something that is said to be sacred, whether it be an object or site (or person), must be placed apart from everyday things or places, so that its special significance can be recognized, and rules regarding it obeyed.” (Jane Hubert, “Sacred Beliefs and Beliefs of Sacredness,” in *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*, ed. David L. Carmichael et. al (London: Routledge, 1994), 11.)
Communal spaces which should encompass more than one individual, sacred spaces appeared as bastions of democracy within the rigid hierarchy of Civil War armies. In addition, religious rituals such as confession, and baptism, help to sanctify religious space.

Space may be categorized as profane and “contested” in addition to sacred. Profane space describes the places without clerical influence inhabited by man’s vices including gambling, profanity, and drunkenness. Contested space appears when the sacred and profane blur. For example, in the contested space of the Civil War battlefield men fought, killed, and died at the same place and time that clergy delivered last rites and absolution, sacralizing space through ritual.

The study of religious space is important because one cannot divorce religious experiences from ritual space. Doing so misses a crucial aspect of cultural performance within a “constructed” space. Within a specific place and time, rituals and symbols take on a distinct meaning which changes situationally. For example, the absolution given by Father Corby to the Irish Brigade before they joined the fight at Gettysburg served a different purpose than absolution given to a mortally wounded soldier in the wake of a battle.

The study of religious space helps scholars better understand the Civil War era, offering insight into the religious experience of soldiers and clergy. Although twentieth century scholars developed religious spatial theory, nineteenth-century Americans thought in similar terms. They acknowledged the sacred, the “contested,” and the profane as a part of their daily lives. Published and archival sources shed light on these themes, especially the writings of Civil War chaplains and missionaries.
By examining spatial relationships between clergy and soldiers, one gains insight into larger issues of religious leadership, faith, belief, and practice—which still concern contemporary religions. These issues address broad questions of religious import which could apply to nearly any war, or crisis situation. My dissertation will demonstrate how the trials and tribulations of war shaped the faith of soldiers and their respective clergy and how war affected religious belief and practice. Most importantly, it will show the centrality of the role of clergy as spiritual guides and leaders. In this new wartime world, antebellum religious spaces were reconceived. Instead of static physical spaces being largely responsible for creating religious meaning, wartime clergy generated religious belief by their presence. A dynamic sacred space moved along with the Civil War chaplain or missionary, as needed to accommodate changing wartime circumstances.

This definitional framework does not include the study of lived religion. According to the theory of lived religion, one may not separate religion from other practices of daily life. According to American religious historian Robert Orsi, one of the foremost proponents of lived religion, religion explores how “people in particular places and times, live in, with, through, and against the religious idioms available to them in culture.” In my opinion this conception of religion is too broad. Although nineteenth-century America was infused with religion, this religion was commonly relegated to

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distinct aspects of individual’s lives. Thus, a spatial approach is more useful than one focused on “lived” religion.

My conception also sets aside the anthropological approach pioneered by Clifford Geertz and most famously applied by historian Rhys Isaac.34 To substantiate his arguments, Isaac uses the classic Geertzian “thick description,” taking a single incident and abstracting further and further from it. Geertz also considers religion as a system of symbols needed to answer the big questions of humanity.35 In my perspective, this approach is problematic because arguments are based on too little evidence, and Geertzian theory does not discuss power or social conflict. I argue that degrees of power and social conflict help explain religious thought and practice. These topics can easily be examined within the context of religious space.

The use of religious space as a definitional framework originated in the early part of the twentieth century, and present day scholars continue to publish on this topic. To date, however, no historian has used religious spatial theory to examine the Civil War era. This is long overdue, considering the spatial turn in other humanistic fields. The use of spatial theory precludes the “lived” religion approach, or the cultural anthropological approach employed by other American religious historians.

Chapter Outline

This introduction will be followed by six topical chapters arranged in three Parts. Part One introduces the major themes, both theoretical and empirical, laying the groundwork for a close reading of the war years. Part Two - chapters three through six - addresses the Civil War period and contains the main thrust of the dissertation. Finally, Part three concludes the dissertation by discussing its main themes and considering the war's impact on religious change in the post-bellum period.

Chapter one, “Men of the Cloth” introduces the twin foci of my study: the war’s military chaplains and missionaries. It discusses the antebellum religious environment from which they emerged. Then, it shows how they adapted pre-war beliefs and practices to the wartime environment. Finally, it provides insights into the motivations and background of Civil War clergy.

Chapter two, “Christian Soldiers” introduces the soldier as worshipper, while also exploring the role of religion in antebellum society. What antebellum religious beliefs and practices did soldiers bring to their wartime lives? How did soldiers adapt these antebellum beliefs and practices to wartime exigency? How through interactions with chaplains and missionaries did soldiers try to replicate the relationships between preacher and parishioner from the antebellum church world? By reading religious tracts, periodicals, and testaments, how did soldiers adapt antebellum messages of faith and salvation to the wartime environment?

While the first two chapters provide an introduction to the dissertation’s main questions, chapters three, “Constructing Sacred Space in Camp: Worship Practices” and four “Constructing Sacred Space in Camp: Churches, Battles, and Diversity” deal with how Northern and Southern clergy created a new religious world adapted to
wartime exigency in the camp environment. Chapter three discusses the new wartime worship practices which developed in the camps. Then, it analyzes those antebellum practices which Civil War clergy reproduced and adapted to a new wartime environment, lacking the resources of the pre-war church. Chapter four examines church building in the Union and Confederate armies, battles that clergy waged between the sacred and the profane and religious diversity in the camp environment.

Turning from religious practice in the military camps, chapter five “Fighting, Dying, Sick, and Wounded” discusses clerical experiences during combat and in hospitals. Both in hospitals and on battlefields, soldiers and clergy framed new responses to death and dying. Ministers constructed makeshift religious space on the battlefield even as soldiers fought and died around them. In the immediate aftermath of battle and in hospitals, clergy created religious space amidst medical personnel. Chapter six “Clerical Care in General Hospitals and Prisons,” considers religion in the war’s new institutions: general hospitals and prisons. These two environments were new religious spaces with no pre-war precedent. With some success clergy used antebellum religious practices to minister to the men in these institutions. Within general hospitals, chaplains worked alongside missionaries (USCC delegates in the Union) and female nurses to create a religious space. In prisoner of war camps, imprisoned clergy or nearby “enemy” clergy, worked to keep the men occupied in religious pursuits and away from profane influences. Out of these environments emerged a civil religion which would flourish in the post-bellum era.

Finally, the conclusion provides an overview of the dissertation’s themes and then situates them within nineteenth-century religious history. It aims to mark out the
dissertation’s contribution to the scholarship, and indicate where future historians might build off this work. Collectively, the dissertation analyzes how clergy had mixed success in trying to remake the antebellum religious world during the Civil War.

**Scope of Dissertation**

This dissertation analyzes the religious experiences of soldiers and clergy during the American Civil War. It traces wartime clergy and the members of their flock as they navigated wartime religious spaces, specifically the camp, the battlefield, hospitals, and prisons. Armed with experience and background from antebellum America, clergy tried to remake this wartime world modeled on the prewar church community. In so doing they created a new, wartime world which offered some consistencies with antebellum practice and some differences.

The overriding question that drives this study is: How did people construct a religious life in wartime? From this question flow several others: What was the clergy's role in wartime religious life? How did clergy respond to the challenges of war? What aspects of religiosity did clergy abandon and what did they embrace? How did soldiers respond to the work of these spiritual leaders?

The religious beliefs that soldiers had when they marched off to war differed from the religious practices that allowed them to endure during wartime. How then did clergy shape religious practice to help men endure a military life? Did religious practice differ when death seemed closer in hospitals, prisons, or on the battlefield vs. the camp environment? Did a religious normalcy develop during wartime which evolved over time? How then did the experience of war affect post-bellum religious belief and practice?
This dissertation will speak rather universally of all soldiers and clergy, except when I raise particular evidence about the Union versus the Confederacy or specific racial differences. In the antebellum world there were substantial differences in religious practice in the North and South, among different denominational groups, and between whites and blacks. Religious northerners, especially northern evangelicals, believed in contributing to the improvement of societal morals, while southern evangelicals tended to focus more on personal religious faith. Blacks in both sections, but especially in the South, exhibited a more unrestrained emotionalism within their church services, than most whites, except when whites participated in revivalism. In both sections, Catholic worship focused on ritual, an established hierarchy, and the priest as God's intermediary. Most Protestants, and especially members of evangelical sects, tried to develop a personal relationship with God, with their pastors helping to facilitate this. Both the North and South exhibited religious diversity, but the more varied population in the Northern states, coupled with increased immigration to that region, caused a wider array of spiritual practices than in the more homogenous South. In the wartime world, much of those differences were diminished, in light of the exigencies of war. This dissertation will be alert to those differences where they still occur in the wartime environment, but its main insights apply to both armies and to both black and white soldiers.

A central theme which will appear over and over again within this work is ecumenicalism. Simply put, the wartime environment fostered ecumenicalism. Soldiers and clergy largely abandoned denominational and sectarian differences which had been important during antebellum times. Instead, soldiers worshipped collectively by unit,
praying alongside the chaplain assigned to them regardless of his denomination. Combat conditions and the presence of death made soldiers more inclined to think about religion and less inclined to worry about sectarian differences. However, all markers of sectarian difference were not discarded. For example, Catholic clergy tried to maintain their sacraments including absolution, mass, and confession.

To date the literature on religion during the Civil War era has been largely descriptive, chiefly documenting the religious activities of chaplains and missionaries during the war.36 Recent books provide little discussion of the diversity of religious experience available in antebellum America, and its connection to wartime religiosity; nor do they assess how wartime religiosity precipitated changes in post-bellum religion. My work applies insights from religious theory to address historical questions concerning the activities of chaplains and missionaries during the Civil War and their impact on post-bellum religious change. It speaks to broader themes in nineteenth-century American religious historiography concerning revivalism and the growth of evangelicalism; the development of a civil religion in both the North and the South; the expansion of independent black churches; and the masculinization of religious adherence.

The scope of the dissertation is substantial, offering an intensive examination of how clergy and their flocks navigated the wartime religious world, based primarily on the tools available to them from antebellum America. The next chapter examines clergy and organized religion in antebellum America. It explores the antebellum religious

36 See for example Warren B. Armstrong, For Courageous Fighting and Confident Dying: Union Chaplains in the Civil War (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1998); Steven E. Woodworth, While God is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2001); George C. Rable, God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
environment from which these clergy emerged, and how they adapted to wartime necessity before offering insight into their pre-war lives.
"Before advancing upon the enemy, on the afternoon of July 2, a religious ceremony was performed that, in the sublime magnificence and grandeur of its surroundings, was never equaled on this continent," Major General St. Clair Mulholland of the Irish Brigade recalled. On this, the 2nd day of Gettysburg in 1863, Mulholland saw chaplain William Corby administer absolution as the men prepared to join the fight:

“Standing in front of the brigade, which was drawn up in a column of regiments, [Corby] made a fervent and passionate appeal to the men to remember in the hour of battle the great Captain of all, Jesus Christ, and to have contrition for all their sins, that they might be prepared to die for the cause for which they fought." “Every man fell upon his knees, the flags were dropped,” Mulholland then observed, “and Father Corby, looking up to heaven, called down the blessing of the Almighty upon the men. Stretching out his right hand (as the lips of the soldiers moved in silent prayer) he pronounced the words of absolution.”

Mulholland’s account of the Roman Catholic priest Father William Corby at Gettysburg remains perhaps the most famous incident of wartime religiosity. Corby, who went on to become president of the University of Notre Dame, is a well-known figure, although few know much about the events that led him to that awful battlefield in central Pennsylvania. Most of the Civil War’s chaplains and missionaries were far more

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1 Major General Mulholland, “The Irish Brigade in the War for the Union”, in Memiors of Chaplain Life: Three Years with the Irish Brigade in the Army of the Potomac, ed. Lawrence Frederick Kohl (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 385. Mulholland was colonel of the 116th Pennsylvania on the second day of Gettysburg in 1863.
anonymous figures, toiling on battlefields and in camps in relative obscurity.² This
chapter attempts to put a face on a handful of these thousands of wartime clergymen.³
It explores the antebellum religious environment from which they emerged, and how
they adapted to wartime exigency before offering insight into their pre-war lives.

In setting up the dissertation, this chapter attempts to do three things. First, it
analyzes a series of precedents that antebellum clergy established which Civil War
clergy would later follow. Second, it shows how Civil War clergy would adapt precedents
from this antebellum religious world to wartime constraints and in so doing create a new
wartime religious world. Third, it provides insight into the antebellum lives of figures who
will reappear throughout the dissertation. In sum, the chapter introduces the clerical
cohort integral to the dissertation, as well as the religious worldview gained from the
antebellum era, and how clergy adapted it to wartime exigency.

**The Clergy and Organized Religion in Antebellum America**

The evangelical fervor of the Second Great Awakening created a need for new
ways of looking at, and experiencing, religiosity. In turn, clergy adopted innovative
religious methods to reach an increasingly diverse population. Through their religious
activities, antebellum clergy set a series of precedents for Civil War spiritual leaders to
follow.

First, antebellum clergy used the minister-led revivals of the Second Great
Awakening to reach the unconverted and build the church community, a process which

² The majority of the missionaries discussed in this dissertation were members of the United States
Christian Commission (USCC), an evangelical organization that provided for the spiritual and temporal
welfare of Union soldiers.

³ For the best available listing of Civil War chaplains see John W. Brinsfield, William C. Davis, Benedict
Maryniak, and James I. Robertson, Jr, eds., *Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains* (Mechanicsburg, PA:
Stackpole Books, 2003), 129-256.
Civil War clergy would later emulate. Thousands of worshipers flocked to the famed camp meeting and revival at Cane Ridge, Kentucky in 1801. Spurred by the enthusiasm at Cane Ridge, new evangelical churches cropped up throughout the region. During the decades to come, the more established Protestant denominations (Episcopals, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians) grew slowly while the evangelical Baptists and Methodists rapidly expanded. By the eve of war, however, the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists had dissolved into Northern and Southern branches due to conflict over slavery. A larger number of Baptist and Methodist clergy served the Civil War armies than ministers belonging to the more established Protestant denominations.

Through the antebellum revivals, clergy developed ways to use physical places to shape religiosity. Rev. B.W. Gorham’s 1854 camp meeting manual explores the spatial preparations necessary to set up these meetings. According to Gorham, revivalists created specific spaces for the family tents, a stand, and a broad isle. Within the circular space of the camp ground, the tents occupied up to a full acre. A stand was ideally positioned on the northern side. In the center of the space, a seven foot wide broad isle lined with seats, ran thirty five feet from the stand towards the back of the camp ground.

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5 Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation*, 13. In the South, Methodist and Baptist clergy took faith to the masses. Baptists created a fluid evangelistic structure, proclaimed an individualistic emphasis on conversion and demonstrated spiritual vitality. Methodists utilized camp meetings and circuit preaching stations to preach salvation based on opening your heart to God’s love. (Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God*, 55-56)

6 See Rev. B.W. Gorham, *Camp Meeting Manual, A Practical Book for The Camp Ground in Two Parts*. This book details the events of an antebellum camp meeting, emphasizing the spatiality of these meetings.
Civil War clergy would create similar religious spaces in hospitals and camps. While not so interested in the dimensions, wartime clergy actively carved out physical religious spaces where they could reach the most listeners.

Beyond the revivals, clergy shaped by the Second Great Awakening helped to initiate a new structure for a multitude of voluntary organizations. The North saw a particular rise in these groups because Northern clergymen urged their parishioners to pursue a vision of God’s Truth, which included taking responsibility for improving societal morals. Missionary societies, publication and education groups, societies for moral reform and numerous organizations representing a vast array of humanitarian interests, sprang up against this backdrop of religious ferment. The men who founded the wartime United States Christian Commission (USCC), emerged out of this exciting world of religious reform and cultural activism.

The United States Christian Commission also followed antebellum practices when they produced and distributed publications to promote religious interest. Eager participants in a burgeoning religious print culture, antebellum clergy dispensed Bibles, tracts and other religious reading materials to willing readers. Through participation in this print culture, evangelicals of the period tried to create “purity and presence in the world.”

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8 J. Matthew Gallman, *The North Fights the Civil War: The Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1994), 109 and Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God*, 57. While the Northern clerical message was about societal responsibility, Southern ministers preached a focus on individual spirituality and morality. (Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God*, 57.)


material) in rural Virginia, sold or gave away thousands of books.\(^{11}\) Due to increased demand during the Civil War, ordained clergy augmented the work of full-time colporteurs.

In addition to disseminating publications, pre-war spiritual leaders of both races created innovative ministry techniques to reach largely illiterate Southern slaves.\(^{12}\) In the first half of the nineteenth century, the black Christian preachers who served the African American community on the Georgia coast persuaded some in the face of opposition from alternative spiritual figures such as conjurers.\(^{13}\) During the same period, white minister Charles Colcock Jones used “scripture cards,” a catechism with questions and answers, and practical remarks to reach the mostly illiterate slaves.\(^{14}\)

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\(^{13}\) Clarke, *Dwelling Place*, 154. For more information on plantation conjurers, see Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). These black preachers even established their own independent churches in the antebellum period. Andrew Bryan, the era’s most famous preacher, established Savannah’s First African Baptist Church. (Clarke, *Dwelling Place*, 62)

Bridging the racial and cultural gap between blacks and himself proved difficult, but Jones found some success through his mentorship of the black preacher Sharper.\textsuperscript{15} However, Jones (and other white preachers like him) only reached a small minority of African Americans, for on the eve of the Civil War most blacks and whites worshipped separately.\textsuperscript{16}

Antebellum Catholic clergy further pioneered new methods to reach immigrants, another dispossessed group, who these priests felt needed to see the light of Christ. Largely immigrants themselves, the Catholic clergy identified with the struggles of their parishioners. Through their ministry, these priests tried to adapt this multinational church to a democratic society. As they reached the mainly Irish immigrants, clergy experienced increased nativism and anti-Catholic sentiment manifested most clearly in the pre-War Know-Nothing party.\textsuperscript{17} In sum, Catholic clergy spoke to a small, but disciplined minority in the midst of a Protestant-dominated American religious culture.

In all these ways, antebellum clergy developed strategies and created precedents for their successors to follow during the Civil War. Influenced by the evangelicalism of the Second Great Awakening, clergy helped build a new structure for voluntary organizations and revivals. These clergy also pioneered the use of publications to create religious interest, and new techniques for reaching African Americans and immigrants. However, clergy encountered numerous challenges during the American Civil War. They needed to adapt their antebellum beliefs and practices to a constantly

\textsuperscript{15} Clarke, \textit{Dwelling Place}, 136-137, 247-250, 253, 453.

\textsuperscript{16} White clergymen such as Jones “helped create a Scripturally-based moral consensus accepting and even sanctifying slavery, using it as an ethic to guide the conduct of Christian masters and a challenge to convert slaves.” (Miller, \textit{Both Prayed to the Same God}, 56).

\textsuperscript{17} Ahlstrom, \textit{A Religious History of the American People}, 540-543, 546, 548, 564-568.
changing wartime environment, which required the development of new organizations and institutional structures.

**Challenges For Wartime Clergy**

Both northern and southern clergy were anxious to provide pastoral care to the men who joined the Civil War armies. However, at the outbreak of the conflict, neither side knew how to use these spiritual advisors most effectively, and both sides faced a host of organizational challenges relating to the clergy. Decisions needed to be made concerning which clergy would go, the length of their service, how denominational difference would be handled, and what their duties would be. In sum, clergy needed to adapt their antebellum religious world to wartime necessity. This would take some time, but eventually a complex structural apparatus would emerge which dictated how clergy would operate within the wartime arena. Out of this structure a new religious world would develop, different from organized religion in the antebellum era.

In response to wartime challenges, the Union and Confederacy developed a multi-tiered set of responses which combined both private energies and official military policies. In the North, the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC) and the United States Christian Commission (USCC) acted as private philanthropic responses to gaps in the military’s official coverage of the soldiers’ temporal and spiritual needs. Although both were Christian organizations, the USCC primarily addressed the soldiers’ spiritual needs, while the USSC mainly took care of their temporal needs.¹⁸ Alongside these missionaries, worked the individual clergy assigned by the military to regiments, brigades, hospitals, and other military posts.

¹⁸ These organizations are introduced here but will be discussed in much more depth later in this section.
At the beginning of the war, the clergy’s new roles as chaplains and missionaries required definition. As official religious representatives of both armies, chaplains served in hospitals, regiments, and at other military posts. Most of these wartime chaplains were from Protestant denominations, but a few Catholics and Jews dotted the ranks of the wartime clergy. In practice, most of the distinctions between Catholics and Protestants dissolved in the face of the war’s challenges. Attached to a specific regiment, chaplains preached, discussed private religious matters with soldiers, conducted funerals, comforted the sick and wounded, and wrote home to the families of the deceased.\(^{19}\) Although early in the war the soldier in the field commonly received uneven pastoral care from poorly prepared clergy, as the conflict wore on these clerical volunteers served faithfully and, as historian Steven Woodworth suggests, “worked themselves at a killing pace.”\(^{20}\)

To work under these stressful wartime conditions, stronger bonds developed between Civil War clergymen than had existed in the antebellum era. Although attached to specific regiments, chaplains often preached for one another and helped each other with other ministerial duties. For moral and emotional support, many joined Chaplains’ Associations.\(^{21}\) Here chaplains discussed with their peers difficulties they encountered and received needed encouragement to deal with the stressors of combat duty. These


\(^{20}\) Ibid., 149, 153.

bonds allowed clergy to provide guidance and religious instruction, gleaned from the antebellum religious environment, to the members of their flock dealing with wartime difficulties.

For the first time in their lives, many clergy received fixed term--appointments, enlisting for a particular term of service not unlike soldiers and receiving commissions as did officers. Although part of the military establishment, these men of the cloth enjoyed more freedom than their uniformed comrades. Chaplains received furloughs much more easily than men in uniform. And when soldiers were busily drilling or marching into battle, the clergyman had much more freedom to move around the camp without specific orders.22 When the men were in combat the roles became even less clearly defined. Some clergy tended to the wounded or – in a few rare cases – took up a weapon to fire on the enemy.23

The scale of the official military chaplaincy stretched the resources of antebellum America. According to the most recent scholarship, 2,398 individuals received commissions as U.S. Army chaplains, U.S. Navy chaplains, or hospital chaplains of U.S. Volunteers. Of these, almost 40 percent were Methodists, 17 percent were Presbyterians and 12 percent were Baptists. The rest of the chaplains included African American clergy, Irish priests, Scottish Congregationalists, Presbyterian ministers, and

22 Although chaplains received furloughs in greater numbers than other soldiers, many times chaplains went home primarily in order to help the troops under their supervision. For example, chaplain diaries and letters often speak of distributing soldiers’ pay to the families of the enlisted men they served.

23 Woodworth, While God is Marching On, 157 and Shattuck, A Shield and Hiding Place, 60. At the same time, army protocols failed to define this worship space. During the American Civil War, the official United States army regulations designated no space in the military camp for religious purposes. (Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861 With an Appendix Containing the Changes and Laws Affecting Army Regulations and Articles of War to June 25, 1863 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1863), 76-80.)
German Lutheran pastors. In the Confederate armies, 1,308 chaplains served. Of these only 42 percent were fully ordained ministers. Methodists made up 47 percent, Presbyterians 18 percent, Baptists 16 percent, Episcopalians 10 percent, and Roman Catholics 3 percent. Ministers of five other denominations composed less than 1 percent each.

Along with these commissioned chaplains, Civil War armies created a new kind of temporary spiritual worker, attracting thousands of religious missionaries intent on bringing spiritual teachings and religious comfort to the troops. Rarely attached to a specific regiment, these men and women moved from place to place as needed. In other senses they functioned much like chaplains: providing care in hospitals, distributing Bibles and other religious literature, and preaching to troops in camp. The temporary role of army missionaries meant that they could tend to their flocks on the home front while making fairly brief excursions to the men in the field. Yet, this flexibility came with a price: missionaries commonly lacked the sort of intimate familiarity with the troops – and with military life - that characterized the close relationships between chaplains and soldiers.

In both the North and South, the missionaries adopted antebellum techniques by emphasizing the distribution of tracts, Bibles, and other forms of religious literature.


26 Woodworth, While God is Marching On, 160-163. Most, but not all missionaries had flocks at home.

27 The South could never supply the demand for Bibles while the North, with its more expansive printing capacity could. During the war, the American Bible Society, located in the North, even donated Bibles to Southerners. (Woodworth, While God is Marching On, 165-166).
These men represented several denominations that had large memberships in the Southern states—the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, and the Methodists—each of which sent their own contingent of colporteurs. In his 1876 memoir, Confederate missionary William W. Bennett noted that the missionaries as a group sought “to turn the thoughts of the soldiers not to a sect, but to Christ, to bring them into the great spiritual temple, and to show them the wonders of salvation.”

Other pre-war constituencies, tract societies, aided the spiritual work of clergy trying to navigate the complex wartime religious world. The Evangelical Tract Society, organized in the Confederacy in July 1861, combined the efforts of Christians from various denominations to issue over a hundred different tracts. The Soldiers’ Tract Association provided *the Army and Navy Herald* free of charge to Confederate chaplains and missionaries. In the North, the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society distributed Bibles and tracts. Historian Beth Schweiger argues that the tracts and Bibles themselves served as “the great evangelists of the war.”

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29 Ibid., 72, 74-76.

30 *Army and Navy Herald*, Macon, Georgia, Vol. II, No.6, February 9, 1865, 2. Other religious papers which served the Confederate military included: *The Soldier’s Friend* (Baptist; Atlanta); *The Army and Navy Messenger* (Evangelical Tract Society; Petersburg, Va.); *The Soldiers’ Visitor* (Committee of Publication, Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States; Richmond, Va.); and *The Soldier’s Paper* (Soldier’s Tract Association, ME Church, South; Richmond, Va.)." (Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia*, 241)

31 Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples*, 132.

publishing industry in nineteenth-century America developed before the Civil War, and the war saw continued growth in these areas.33

Many northern missionaries would serve with the newly formed United States Christian Commission (USCC), a product of the combined power of the antebellum evangelical worldview and the realities of wartime necessity. This national group formed in November 1861 upon the urging of the New York Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA).34 Led by Philadelphia merchant and Presbyterian lay leader George H. Stuart, this organization of Northern evangelical missionaries closed its labors a few months after the war’s end. A small number of paid field agents supervised volunteer delegates.35 USCC delegates sent to the battlefield served two weeks, while hospital and camp delegates served six weeks. These delegates worked toward two main goals during the war, one spiritual and the other physical. First and foremost, Christian Commission delegates helped regimental and hospital chaplains provide pastoral care for their men, distribute tracts, and hold worship services. Secondly, they provided for


34 However, not all Union missionaries were affiliated with the United States Christian Commission. Some worked for independent tract societies or missionary associations. (Woodworth, *While God is Marching On*, 174.) For a good overview of the USCC see M. Hamlin Cannon, “The United States Christian Commission,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 38, no. 1 (June 1951): 61-80.

35 At its height, the USCC supported about five thousand delegates from various denominations across the North, and fielded superintendents in each army corps. (Woodworth, *While God is Marching On*, 167.)
the physical needs of the soldiers themselves. No comparable organization existed within the Confederacy.\textsuperscript{36}

The USCC helped Union chaplains and missionaries construct permanent chapels, the epicenter of camp religiosity, and the wartime iteration of the antebellum church. During the winter of 1863-1864, the USCC provided large canvas coverings for log chapels.\textsuperscript{37} These chapel flies helped immensely in constructing the chapels which in turn drew large numbers of men to the revivals, surging through the Union armies in the latter half of the war.

The scale of the USCC's wartime activity dwarfed the work of any voluntary society in antebellum America. Annually, an average USCC delegate distributed stores worth $5,536 and publications worth $1,487.74. The typical delegate would have attended 118 prayer-meetings, preached 89 sermons, and written 140 letters for the soldiers.\textsuperscript{38} As these statistics demonstrate, USCC delegates served an essential role in the Union branch of this new wartime religiosity.

Out of the same antebellum Protestant milieu emerged an even larger and more celebrated philanthropic organization, the United States Sanitary Commission, which provided many of the same services as the USCC. Organized and led by elite Protestants prominent in business, medicine, and other civic fields, the Sanitary


\textsuperscript{38} Moss, \textit{Annals of the United States Christian Commission}, 733-734.
Commission utilized paid agents instead of volunteers. Rejecting humanitarianism as a primary motive in their work, the USSC’s experts believed that by relieving suffering they could educate the nation in discipline and order.  

The presence of these two organizations exposed tensions within this new wartime religious structure. In addition to the inherent tensions between the evangelical (USCC) and liberal (USSC) wings of American Protestantism, the two organizations conflicted on how they provided relief. While Sanitary Commission workers distributed supplies to authority figures such as surgeons, the USCC distributed relief directly to the men.

Emerging out of the same antebellum religious environment, chaplains and missionaries worked together to serve the spiritual needs of the Union and the Confederacy, and in so doing created a new wartime religious world. However, soldiers in the Union and the Confederacy did not have identical spiritual worlds, for the Northern soldier benefited from a more highly developed religious infrastructure than his Southern counterpart. The Union had more available clergy and more resources to aid them, especially through the support of the United States Christian Commission. From the beginning of the war, both sides suffered from problems filling clerical positions in their units and not every regiment or even brigade was lucky enough to have a chaplain assigned to them. And even in those units that enjoyed an official clergyman, the

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chaplain often remained hard pressed to minister to all under his charge. Over the course of the conflict, both sides grew more successful at meeting soldiers’ religious needs, as they gradually developed an integrated system of official efforts run through the military chaplaincy and invaluable private assistance through the various missionary groups. In these new wartime environments, the public and private entities worked together to address wartime demands. Besides offering extra manpower, without the fundraising of the tract societies and such groups as the United States Christian Commission, military chaplains would have had much more difficulty providing religious literature or a convenient place to minister to their troops on Sundays.

Wartime challenges required clergy to adapt their antebellum religious beliefs and practices to new circumstances. This required the development of new clerical organizations and institutional structures, such as a chaplaincy corps and missionary organizations, such as the United States Christian Commission. Public and private entities worked together to address both temporal and spiritual needs, emerging from wartime exigency. The antebellum lives of those clergy who eventually went off to war provide a rich context to their wartime activities.

The Antebellum Lives of Several Sample Clergy

The thousands of wartime clergy were a remarkably diverse lot. They came from all over the country, and represented nearly all major religions. A brief survey of fourteen of these men illustrates that breadth, while also introducing some of the men whose voices will reappear in the pages ahead. By examining the antebellum background of these men, one obtains a sense of the worldview which they would bring into the war. The majority, significantly older than the men they ministered to, worked in various churches or educational institutions before the war and went to war with their
flock. Members of this cohort included Frederic Denison, William Wiatt, Charles Todd Quintard, Francis Springer, Henry S. White, Robert Audley Browne, Robert Franklin Bunting, and Louis-Hippolyte Gache. The other, younger clergy were driven by a sense of duty or patriotism and enlisted for reasons similar to the common soldiers. These men included Henry Clay Trumbull, Adolphus Williamson Mangum, William Corby, Charles Alfred Humphreys, Thomas Scott Johnson, and James Russell Miller.

Taken together, these figures provide an illustrative snapshot of the wartime clerical experience. These clergy worked with whites and blacks, foreigners and natives, as well as Catholics and Protestants. They ministered in the Western and Eastern armies, camps, prisons, hospitals, fortifications, and battlefields. Like their comrades, few of these individuals served as chaplains or missionaries for the entire war. The USCC delegates both served for about six weeks.

Minister Frederic Denison’s pre-war life in small town America was representative of many fellow Baptist clergy. Born in 1819 in Stonington, Connecticut, Denison graduated from Brown in 1847. For eight years prior to the war he was employed at a Baptist church in Westerly, Rhode Island. When the conflict began, Denison had been serving as chaplain of the Pawtucket Light Guard, a militia unit based in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Seeking further service, he enlisted in the First Rhode Island Cavalry in November 1861, having been elected the unit’s chaplain. Forty-two at enlistment, he was older than most of the men in his regiment.


Like Denison, future Baptist minister William Wiatt grew up in a small town immersed in evangelicalism. Born in 1826 in Gloucester County, Virginia, Wiatt was baptized in August 1842 at age sixteen. At eighteen he began a teaching career. He taught for five years at a primary school in King and Queen County until his wife’s death in 1849, when he moved to a new teaching position in Covington, Kentucky. Two years later Wiatt took up another teaching post in Lowndes County, Alabama, where in April 1854 he was ordained as a Baptist minister. By 1856, he had returned to his native Gloucester County, to serve the Providence and Union Baptist churches. Over the course of the next five years, the Providence congregation tripled in size and was one of the first white churches in Virginia to allow African-American membership. When the war began, Wiatt resigned both his Gloucester pastorates, and enlisted as a private in the Twenty-Six Virginia Infantry Regiment. He was appointed the regiment’s chaplain in October 1861 at the age of thirty-five.44

Although he did not follow the traditional route to the priesthood, Charles Todd Quintard received the same intensive clerical training as his wartime Episcopalian colleagues. Born in 1824, in Stamford, Connecticut, Quintard trained as a physician, graduating from the University of the City of New York in 1847. While serving as a Professor in the Medical College of Memphis, Tennessee, Quintard began to prepare for a position in the clergy. Showing an aptitude for theology, he befriended Bishop Otey and was admitted to candidacy for Holy Orders in 1854. Installed as ordered deacon in Calvary Church, Memphis in January 1855, Quintard advanced to the priesthood one year later. In 1856, Charles moved to Nashville to serve the Church of the Advent and

Francis Springer’s strong Lutheran background provided him with the tools to effect change in antebellum education. Born in Franklin County, Pennsylvania in 1810, Francis Springer received ordination in the Lutheran Synod of Maryland in 1817 and focused his ministry on that state’s poor. In 1839, he moved to Springfield, Illinois where he served as the resident scholar at a trade school for boys. Installed as pastor of the St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Hillsboro, Illinois in 1847, Springer also served as the elected head of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the West. In that year he renamed the Hillsboro Academy, the Literary and Theological Institute of the Lutheran Church of the Far West. Springer moved with the college to Springfield where the school became known as Illinois State University. By 1855 Springer had resigned from the presidency of Illinois State University and began helping to organize the newly formed Republican Party on the local level. By the outbreak of the war, Springer served as superintendent of Springfield’s public schools. In September 1861, he and his son John G. Springer enlisted in the 10th Illinois Cavalry. At fifty-one, his age and experience earned him the regiment’s chaplaincy.

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47 Ibid., xv-xvii.
Like many of his Methodist colleagues, Henry S. White ministered to numerous churches before joining the war. Born in North Hoosick, New York in 1828, White graduated from the Methodist Biblical Institute of Concord, New Hampshire twenty-three years later. Over the next eleven years, he served several churches in the Providence Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In January 1863, he received an appointment as chaplain of the North Carolina-based Rhode Island Regiment of Heavy Artillery.\(^{48}\)

Robert Audley Browne’s extensive pastoral experience made him a good fit for the army. Born in Steubenville, Ohio in 1821, Presbyterian Browne moved with his family to Pittsburgh as an infant. Reared in the first Associate Reformed Church, where his father served as ruling elder, he stayed in Pittsburgh for college, graduating in 1840 from the Western University. After college he entered Allegheny, Pennsylvania’s Presbyterian Theological Seminary where he trained under John T. Presly and Rev. J.L. Dinwiddie. At age twenty-one, he became licensed to preach the gospel and received ordination two years later. Browne served briefly as Pastor pro term in the Second Associate Reformed Church of Pittsburgh before becoming pastor of two Lawrence County churches in 1846. He then served as pastor of the First United Presbyterian Church of New Castle, Pennsylvania which Browne had organized in 1849. Motivated by a strong sense of patriotism, he obtained a leave of absence from the congregation to join the 100\(^{th}\) Pennsylvania Volunteers in the late summer of 1861.\(^{49}\)


Presbyterian Robert Franklin Bunting’s prewar missionary experience was replicated by numerous wartime clergymen. Born in 1828 in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, Bunting received baptism at Mill Creek Presbyterian Church where his maternal uncle was the ruling elder. At nineteen, after three years of college preparation at Hookstown Academy, Bunting entered the junior class of Washington College, a Presbyterian college located in Washington, Pennsylvania. Graduating from Washington in 1849, he pursued a divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary and a Master of Arts at Princeton College. After spending his summers as a colporteur on Long Island, in August 1851 Bunting became licensed as a probationer for the Gospel Ministry at a Monmouth County, New Jersey church. After passing his exams in November 1852, Bunting remembered his childhood dreams of living in Texas, so he requested and received ordination as an evangelist to that state. According to his son, Bunting hoped to make Texas into a Bible State, part of the Protestant Christian Empire. By 1860 he led the largest Presbyterian congregation in the state.\textsuperscript{50} Offered the chaplaincy of the Eighth Texas Cavalry, he accepted it in November 1861.\textsuperscript{51}

Like many other Catholic clergy, Louis-Hippolyte Gache was an immigrant. Born in 1817 near the village of Beaulieu, Ardeche, France in 1836, at the age of nineteen, he began his studies at the French Jesuit college-en-exile at Chambery, Savoy, in the Kingdom of Sardinia. In September 1840 the Society of Jesus accepted Gache as a

\textsuperscript{50} Thomas W. Cutrer, ed. \textit{Our Trust is in the God of Battles: The Civil War Letters of Robert Franklin Bunting, Chaplain, Terry’s Texas Rangers, C.S.A.} (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), xvii-xxi.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., xxi.
novice and two years later he took the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.\textsuperscript{52} Ordained a priest in March 1846, Gache and several other Jesuits journeyed to the American South to serve the nascent Jesuit mission there. During 1847-1848 Gache worked in St. Laundry Parish, serving as prefect of students and general manager of the farm at Grand Coteau and St. Charles College. However, in 1849 Gache's superiors reassigned him to the Jesuit College at Spring Hill near Mobile, Alabama where he served as master of novices and spiritual director to the seminarians and lay students. A short time later, the College of Saints Peter and Paul in Baton Rouge, named Gache its first president. Only two years later, Gache received transfer orders again, which removed him from his Baton Rouge post and sent him back to Spring Hill. He stayed there until April 1861 before traveling to Pensacola, Florida and enlisting as a Confederate chaplain in the 10\textsuperscript{th} Louisiana.\textsuperscript{53}

Driven by the same sense of patriotism as other members of the second cohort, Congregationalist Henry Clay Trumbull had little clerical experience before donning Union blue and becoming a chaplain. Born in 1830, Trumbull had two jobs before the war. From 1850-1857, Trumbull worked in the railroad business at Hartford, Connecticut. He later received an appointment as Connecticut’s Sunday school missionary and became an active member of the Republican Party. In September 1862 at age thirty two, Trumbull was ordained as a Congregational minister and became the chaplain of the 10\textsuperscript{th} Connecticut.\textsuperscript{54}


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 16-25.

\textsuperscript{54} Maryniak and Brinsfield, \textit{The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: The Union}, 233-234.
Like other pre-war Methodists, Adolphus Williamson Mangum had some experience as a circuit rider. Born on Flat River, North Carolina in 1834 to a politically connected family, Adolphus was the son of Colonel Elison G. Mangum and also related to a U.S. Senator from North Carolina.\(^55\) Graduating from Randolph-Macon College in 1854, Mangum subsequently became a Methodist minister.\(^56\) By 1856 he had joined the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and been sent to Hillsboro circuit. From 1858-1859, he served the Chapel Hill station before transferring to the Roanoke circuit in 1860. At the beginning of the war, he was ministering to the Salisbury circuit.\(^57\)

William Corby, like other young Catholic priests, combined his vows with a patriotic fervor that made him eager to serve the Union army. Corby was born in 1833 in Detroit, Michigan to an Irish immigrant father and a Canadian mother. After completing an education in the common schools at age sixteen, he worked for his father’s real estate firm for four years. In 1853, he entered the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, intent on studying for the priesthood. After working for years under the tutelage of Notre Dame’s founder, Father Edward Sorin, Corby entered the novitiate in 1857 and three years later took his final vows. In 1861 Corby was employed as the director of the Manual Labor School, and pastor of St. Patrick’s parish in South Bend. The war disrupted his career trajectory. In the fall of 1861, Corby headed east at the request of

\(^{55}\) The Mangum Family Papers at the University of North Carolina’s Southern Historical Collection contain detailed information on the lives of many of the members of this distinguished family.


Father James Dillon. Before the end of that year, he received an appointment as chaplain of the Irish Brigade’s 88th New York Volunteer Infantry.\(^{58}\)

Charles Alfred Humphreys and other prewar Unitarian ministers emerged out of an elite white Northern society. A child of privilege, Charles was born in 1838 to Deacon Henry Humphreys and Sarah Blake (Clapp) Humphreys. After an education at Dorchester schools, Humphreys enrolled at Harvard in 1856. Graduating with the class of 1860, he then enrolled at Harvard Divinity School. Governor John Andrew of Massachusetts offered him a chaplaincy position before his ordination as a Unitarian minister on July 14, 1863 at Harvard’s Divinity Hall Chapel. Immediately after this ceremony, he took up his position as the chaplain of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry. By late August he had joined his new unit commanded by a Harvard classmate, Caspar Crowninshield.\(^{59}\)

Presbyterian Thomas Scott Johnson joined the ranks of other Civil War clergy whose fathers were ministers. His father held several pastorships and taught school, necessitating his family’s movements around New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. By the time the Johnson family moved to Oxford, Wisconsin in 1855, Thomas had become interested in a clerical career and frequently accompanied his father as he preached. With money an issue, Thomas taught briefly in a small country school near his parent’s home in order to earn enough for college. In 1856, he enrolled at Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin and graduated four years later. Having decided to

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become a preacher, Thomas worked as a teacher in New York for a year to earn money for a seminary education. Thomas enrolled at Princeton Theological Seminary, his father’s alma mater. During his first year at Princeton, the war began and, although registered for the draft, Thomas did not receive a notice of conscription. After graduating with his class in March 1864, Thomas unsuccessfully applied to various open chaplaincy positions in New York and New Jersey regiments. Viewing service in the USCC as the next best option, Johnson believed that working as a USCC delegate would be the first step in his eventual election to a chaplaincy. In June 1864, at age twenty-five Johnson disembarked at Fortress Monroe, Virginia eager to begin working as a delegate.60

Finally, Presbyterian James Russell Miller represented the numerous Civil War clergy who felt called to Christian ministry. Born in 1840 near Frankfort Springs, Pennsylvania in southern Beaver County, Miller frequently took part in family prayers during childhood. He spent his early childhood attending district school in Hanover Township before his family moved to a farm near Calcutta, Ohio when Miller was fourteen. For three years, James worked on a farm during the summer months and attended school during the winter. In 1857, he entered Beaver Academy in Beaver County, his birthplace. In October of that year, James entered the Associate Presbyterian Church of West Union, located near Calcutta. On the eve of war, in 1861 Miller matriculated at Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, graduating in June 1862. By autumn of 1862, James had matriculated at the United Presbyterian Church’s theological seminary located in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. Before

he had finished a year of seminary education, he heeded the call of military service. Receiving his ordination after the war, Presbyterian James Russell Miller started his work with the USCC in March 1863, serving as a delegate in Falmouth Village, Virginia.

As the preceding biographies demonstrate, future Civil War clergy brought a wide array of educational and spiritual experiences to their wartime work, reflecting the diversity of antebellum America’s religious world. Most of these clergy belong to one of two cohorts. The vast majority of the clergy were men in their thirties and forties who went off to war with their flock. Significantly older than the young men whom they served, these men had worked in various churches and/or educational institutions before the war. Although a minority, the second group contained young clergy, who went off to war with less clear prewar ties to the men they served. Some straight out of the seminary, these men were driven by a sense of duty or patriotism. Close in age to the soldiers they served with, they were probably motivated to enlist for similar reasons.

Two common threads tied these two cohorts together. First, like most of the enlisted soldiers they served, the majority of these clergy hailed from small town America. Second, many clergy had multiple professional experiences before the war. “The

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61 John Thomson Faris, *Jesus and I are Friends: The Life of Dr. J.R. Miller* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1913), 3-4, 6-7, 10-11.


63 A few clergy went to war on their own.
incommunicable experience of war” would broaden the horizons of these two groups of clergy, just as it did the enlisted men to whom they ministered.64

These clergy and their colleagues composed part of an army of religious support personnel which accompanied the soldiers, and their attempts at promoting wartime religiosity will be discussed throughout the dissertation. Most of these men received formal theological training, yet others worked as lay practitioners. All emerged from an antebellum world in which Christianity, especially evangelical Christianity, reigned supreme. During the antebellum period, clergy set a series of precedents by supporting revivals, a thriving religious print culture, voluntary societies, an immigrant church, and missionary activities among slaves. In sum, clergy were the spiritual arbiters of the antebellum era.

The developments in the antebellum religious sphere set the stage for the religious activities of clergy during the Civil War. For the majority of clergy, their experiences during the pre-war years, mainly in churches or educational institutions, provided them with the proper skills to work with soldiers in the camp, hospital, prison, or battlefield. The next chapter examines the common soldier and his experience with wartime chaplains and missionaries while also exploring the antebellum religious experience of the non-clergy. To understand fully the complex and fluid nature of wartime religion, one must first view antebellum religiosity from the perspective of clergy and the soldiers in their flock.

CHAPTER 3
CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

Introduction

From a military camp near Hanover Junction, Virginia, Confederate soldier James Ross wrote to his mother Frances in June 1863. Ross shared his thoughts about the siege of Vicksburg, the different military situation from the year before, and his efforts to secure back pay for his deceased brother. He also described his religious excitement. The night before, during nightly brigade services, he heard a Methodist minister preach the best sermon he had “almost ever listened to.” He also remarked on the religious revival spreading through his regiment and other nearby brigades, noting that “if there is a place in the world that needs a revival of religion it is the army.”

This chapter, considering the soldier as worshipper, attempts to do four things. First, I explore the antebellum religious beliefs and practices which soldiers would later apply to their wartime lives. Second, I show how soldiers adapted these antebellum beliefs and practices to wartime exigency, thus creating a new wartime religious structure. Third, I analyze how through interactions with chaplains and missionaries soldiers tried to replicate the relationships between preacher and parishioner from the antebellum church world. Finally, I show how by reading religious tracts, periodicals, and testaments, soldiers adapted antebellum messages of faith and salvation to the wartime environment.

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1 James Ross to Frances H. Ross, 1 June 1863, letter box 1, Ross Family Correspondence, 1861-1864, Library of Virginia, Richmond.
Religious experiences which began in childhood and continued throughout their adult lives shaped soldiers’ approach to religion. The religious world which many future Civil War soldiers inhabited, as Jon Butler concluded, was “awash in a sea of faith.” These future soldiers would eventually apply antebellum religious beliefs and practices to their wartime lives. While some experiences were shared, others applied to distinct constituencies. What they learned could not be adopted indiscriminately, but required adaptation to the rapidly changing wartime circumstances.

From an early age antebellum Americans were introduced into religious communities through informal and formal education. Families routinely gathered for evening prayers. Rural and urban children often received religious instruction at Sabbath or Sunday schools. Millions of young children were thus introduced to evangelical Protestant Christianity, which in turn shaped the social and cultural worlds of their antebellum communities. Antebellum Americans learned how to use faith and salvation as a foundation for their future lives.

From their childhood onward, most Protestants learned about the importance of church attendance and observing Sunday as a day of rest. Prewar Americans from a

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small town or western area regularly attended any available church services. While some attended out of reverence, others were merely curious or hoped to be entertained. Ordinary Americans observed a variety of religious forms, from Catholic services to African American meetings.\(^5\) At the services of liturgical traditions such as Catholicism and Episcopalianism, Americans viewed a standardized order of events. When attending the services of non-liturgical denominations such as Baptists, unscripted or improvised church services were the norm. Regardless of the services they attended, Americans belonged to a single denomination. By the eve of the war, influenced by the Sabbatarian movement, many in the growing country observed Sunday as a Sabbath day of rest.\(^6\)

In antebellum America physical church spaces varied. In rural Virginia, old wooden houses and clearings in the woods might serve as a meeting space for Sunday worship. Baptisms might occur in nearby creek banks.\(^7\) In cities, congregations enjoyed more ornate furnishings, including pew cushions, carpets, and curtains, complete with an indoor baptistery.\(^8\) Antebellum men gained comfort in these varied spiritual spaces, through interaction with other believers and feeling a sense of closeness to the divine.\(^9\)

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\(^5\) Lewis O. Saum, *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America*, 36-38, 40, 42.


At the same time, a typical Protestant Sunday church service also followed a common method of worship.\textsuperscript{10} After the minister prayed and read the Bible, he would explain Scripture through a lengthy sermon.\textsuperscript{11} Then the congregation would recite a hymn or psalm, and additional music might be played. After that, the congregants would break for a meal before returning for more prayers and another sermon.\textsuperscript{12} In Jacksonville, Illinois, men could attend a Sunday service at eleven in the morning, and then a prayer meeting eight hours later. On Wednesday night, another prayer meeting would be held.\textsuperscript{13}

Antebellum Roman Catholic men accepted the heightened ritual aspects of their particular faith by acknowledging that only through ritual could one hope to achieve the sacred. The central ritual of their faith was the Mass, which all Catholics were supposed to hear on Sunday and during specified holy days. During this ritual, they watched the priest, adorned in special robes, pray in Latin, and walk about the altar. Candles, incense, flowers, and bells added further ambiance and sacrality to the physical space.\textsuperscript{14} Other communal rituals which Catholic men observed with help from their priest included Communion, confession, and baptism. Outside of these specific communal rituals, Catholics also were required to perform individual rituals of devotion.

\textsuperscript{10} These Protestant services required listening as the primary worship practice. (Kilde, \textit{When Church Became Theatre}, 12.)

\textsuperscript{11} Both Catholics and Jews viewed sermons as subsidiary to the main liturgy. (Sarna, \textit{American Judaism}, 78)

\textsuperscript{12} Kilde, \textit{When Church Became Theatre}, 8-9. The preceding describes an early nineteenth century Congregationalist church service. Presbyterian services tended to also contain communion, distributed like a shared meal by the church elders, also known as presbyters.

\textsuperscript{13} Doyle, \textit{The Social Order of a Frontier Community}, 160.

\textsuperscript{14} As members of a liturgical tradition, Catholic ritual required congregants to respond to the priest.
Through these private acts, people became closer to individual saints as well as Jesus and Mary.\textsuperscript{15}

Both Catholics and Protestants saw their clergy as exemplars of virtue and dignity in a problematic world.\textsuperscript{16} In addition to holding services on Sunday, they offered them the opportunity for immersion in the baptism waters, and officiated over marriage vows. Clerical figures were also always ready to distribute tracts.\textsuperscript{17} In sum, without clerical help, devout men would be lost.

Pre-war Americans accepted the role of revivals as community building activities which crossed sectarian boundaries.\textsuperscript{18} Mainly held in the winter months and lasting multiple days, during these events participants often exhibited strange behaviors.\textsuperscript{19} According to a preacher who conducted them, “thousands fell under the power of God, and cried for mercy.”\textsuperscript{20} Conversion experiences were equally jarring as participants experienced falling for the first time: "Immediately before they became totally powerless, they were sometimes seized with a general tremor, and often uttered several piercing


\textsuperscript{16} Ministerial education requirements differed according to denomination. Presbyterians, Catholics, and Episcopalians maintained very high academic standards at their theological seminaries, requiring a rigorous plan of study for clergy to gain ordination. On the other hand, Methodists and Baptists had lower standards, which was one reason their denominations grew at a much faster pace. (Williams, \textit{What Americans Believe and How They Worship}, 213).

\textsuperscript{17} Schweiger, \textit{The Gospel Working Up}, 26, 68.

\textsuperscript{18} Doyle, \textit{The Social Order of a Frontier Community}, 161-162.

\textsuperscript{19} Saum, \textit{The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America}, 72.

shrieks in the moment of falling.”21 Through these communal experiences participants bonded with other believers in a religious setting.

In addition to its powerful influence on community, antebellum Americans acknowledged how revivals created a new religious orientation toward physical space. Most peacetime churches contained structures which separated the preacher and the audience, including box pews and elevated pulpits.22 Evangelical revivals caused Americans to reconceptualize church space as something moveable that fostered intimacy, not separation. A temporary, inexpensive, and portable structure, the tabernacle epitomized this type of space.23 However, Protestant revivalists of the early nineteenth-century usually did not construct a tabernacle, instead using an existing building, field, or commons.24 In general, any available space was used where people could congregate and pray together, cultivating this intimacy.

The majority of mid-nineteenth century Americans acknowledged God’s presence in their everyday lives, seeing His controlling handi-work through providence. Their personal writings, including marriage proposals and letters of advice to children, spoke freely of Providence. Such writings focused providential thinking on personal and immediate matters, ascribing good events to God’s purposes. In sum, pre-Civil War


22 Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre*, 23. The preacher’s religious authority was apparent through physical elevation. (Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre*, 19).


24 Ibid.
Americans accepted providential thinking. In addition to formal worship practices, prewar Americans of all ages accepted scriptural guidance about how to live. Even the more casual believers could understand the core Biblical lessons. These lessons broadly displayed moral and ethical precepts pivotal to surviving an uncertain life, full of ups and downs.

Antebellum Americans could also turn to easily available religious tracts and religious periodicals, part of the burgeoning religious print culture of the era. Founded in May 1825, the American Tract Society produced over five million tracts annually by 1850. These tracts typically presented a central message through a moral woven into the narrative. According to historian Paul Boyer, this message demonstrated the punishment faced by individuals who broke moral and ethical codes of conduct. Many antebellum tracts told men of the importance of home and family; others denounced specific vices. Along with tracts, religious periodicals illustrated the truth of the gospel

25 Miller, Both Prayed to the Same God: Religion and Faith in the American Civil War, 33 and Lewis O. Saum, The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 3-4, 6, 10, 23. For more on providential thinking, see Nicholas Guyatt, Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Although most Americans shared these broad providential notions, Protestants and Catholics sometimes derived different messages from Sunday services. Experiencing a personal conversion, evangelical Protestants confessed their faith in Jesus as their savior, and demonstrated a regenerated religious faith in both thought and deed. On the other hand, Catholics defined their Christianity by communal acts in the Church, not personal religious practice and experience. Kent T. Dollar, Soldiers of the Cross: Confederate Soldier-Christians and the Impact of War on Their Faith (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 9.


to antebellum Americans. This form of communication also helped evangelicals identify as part of “the priesthood of all believers.” According to this reformed concept, Christians must serve as mediators between God and others, facilitating the relationship between individual souls and the Word.

Even as most Americans shared certain core beliefs, the rest of their belief systems evolved in diverse ways, reflecting sectional, racial, and ethnic differences as well as sectarian splits. Pre-war immigration added a more diverse range of denominations to the North than the South, permitting a spectrum of Christian beliefs and practices. Antebellum Southerners, on the other hand, were immersed in an evangelical worldview and culture which had gained increased popularity during the Second Great Awakening. For the first time, the religious practice of formerly marginalized social groups, including enslaved blacks and poor whites, became more public. Focusing on personal experience, evangelicals tried to replace class distinctions with differentiations based on moral and ideological purity. United over the presence of God, these evangelicals, believed in the transformative quality of an intense religious experience, and emphasized individual integrity. Conveying their faith through the power of the revival, evangelicals imparted religious beliefs by preparing children for religious practice.

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29 Williams, *What Americans Believe and How They Worship*, 164.

30 Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God*, 53. Jews also immigrated to America during this time period, bringing with them a community-centered religious culture that fit in well with the urban environment in Northern cities. Their small numbers ensured that they would have a very limited impact on the wider Christian culture in nineteenth-century America.

31 Historian Donald Mathews believes evangelism can be understood in historical terms as both a social process and a religious perception. (Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, xvii) By the middle of the nineteenth century, a majority of southern whites were evangelicals. (Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 5-6.)

32 Evangelical fellowship replicated kinship bonds (Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 145).
adult conversion and welcomed outsiders who routinely attended their churches.\textsuperscript{33} Moreover, women gained new public roles in some evangelical congregations.\textsuperscript{34}

These new public roles for women emerged out of their long-standing participation in religion, and religious directed reform movements. Women, especially ones belonging to the middle class, actively participated in regular congregational life, as well as in evangelical camp meetings and revivals. Participation in these activities provided them with a way to move beyond their normal domestic sphere.\textsuperscript{35} At the same time, their work affirmed the patriarchal nature of antebellum religious communities, since women did not speak from the pulpit or lead services.\textsuperscript{36} Nationwide, female church members comprised two-thirds of Protestant church members, while in the South that number was even higher.\textsuperscript{37} Tied to their religious work, women formed the vanguard of moral reform organizations in pre-war America, such as the interdenominational temperance crusade. The movements for peace reform, Sabbatarian laws, and the antislavery

\textsuperscript{33} Mathews, \textit{Religion in the Old South}, xvii, 11, 13, 38, 48, 99. Although the preceding analysis is generally true, historian Christine Heyrman is careful to point out that “evangelicalism has never been a static, monolithic structure of belief” and neither have its adherents “been an undifferentiated mass.” (Heyrman, \textit{Southern Cross}, 254).

\textsuperscript{34} Heyrman, \textit{Southern Cross}, 204.


campaign also galvanized the women (and men) of the antebellum evangelical churches.  

By the eve of the Civil War, both enslaved and free African Americans had developed their own awareness of evangelical practices. Driven by the unique cultural and social conditions under which they lived, blacks often cast their entire cosmos in religious terms. The evangelical revivals offered them a vision of a new world which combined their rich African cultural inheritance and American social conditions to accept a radical New Birth. The conversion experience became the contact point between the Evangelical movement and traditional African culture. By the beginning of the war, black evangelicals established their own independent churches, outside of white supervision or participation.


In the midst of an evangelical-dominated religious world, many Americans still belonged to non-evangelical Protestant groups. These groups, including the Dutch-speaking Reformed, English Episcopalians, and German Lutherans identified with their European antecedents, adopting European prayer books and creeds. They split, however, over the issue of accommodation to the American religious environment.41

While most antebellum Americans adhered to one branch of Protestantism or another, Catholics – and especially recent immigrants to the northern states - learned how to construct their own religious institutions on unfamiliar and often hostile terrain. In fact, Catholic American parish life exhibited many of the attributes of the larger evangelical Protestant culture, including emotional spiritual renewal, heartfelt religious experiences, miraculous cures, and revivals. This Catholic religious subculture protected its adherents from the often hostile Protestant majority, through a system of churches, schools and colleges.42

Throughout their lives, Americans saw the profound religious divisions in peacetime America. Nationally, dozens of competing sects tried to attract Protestant men. By the Civil War, in Jacksonville, Illinois, eighteen different congregations representing eight separate denominations attracted approximately half of the population.43


42 Finke and Stark, The Churcning of America, 115, 117, 127, 139-140.

43 Doyle, The Social Order of a Frontier Community, 157-158. American Christians were divided into four principal groups: evangelical Protestants, traditionalist Christians, non-Trinitarian monotheists, and diverse American originals. Each of these Christian groups had differing understandings of their Christian faith. In the early part of the century, the dominant group, evangelical Protestants, were further divided among formalist and anti-formalists. Formalists wanted order in society, worship practices, and in their own lives. Anti-formalists wanted freedom from this structure. With the evangelist Charles Finney’s arrival
Future Civil War soldiers took antebellum religious beliefs and practices, and applied them to their wartime lives. As they matured, they received instruction in providence, the Bible, ritual, and the importance of Sunday services. They also learned about religious reading material, revivalism, and the pivotal role of women in religion. The rest of their belief systems evolved due to sectional, racial, or ethnic identity.

The next section examines the religious responses of Christian soldiers as they experienced war for the first time. Soldiers faced a new challenge in this wartime environment: how to adapt antebellum religious attitudes and practices without their former structures.

“Seeing the Elephant”: Christian Soldiers Go Off to War

With the help of chaplains and missionaries, Civil War soldiers created a new religious world for themselves. In this new world, soldiers experienced many religious challenges for the first time. The wartime religious environment was constantly in flux, and soldiers needed to adapt to these changing circumstances.

All young soldiers wondered how they would respond to their first combat experience. The transition from civilian to soldier was often abrupt and jarring, presenting young men with a host of new experiences, challenges, hardships, and fears. Most saw the prospect of “seeing the elephant,” as an important test of their manhood. How would they respond in the face of battle? But the transition to wartime

in the 1820s and 1830s, the evangelicals stopped competing amongst themselves and by the 1830s they focused on threats by Catholics and the Mormons out West. (Johnson, “Sectarian Nation,” 14-17.)

also posed important religious challenges. How would their experiences with Christianity in antebellum America serve them in their lives as soldiers? No doubt the military environment these soldiers entered in 1861 differed dramatically from their peacetime experiences. To keep sane in this new environment, soldiers linked these wartime religious experiences with their antebellum lives. In turn, they adapted antebellum beliefs and practices to wartime necessity. This provided them with a new religious structure, which helped them survive their wartime struggles.

In order to perform their wartime duties, religious soldiers needed to reconcile their participation in the conflict with their private religious convictions. How could they maintain their commitment to Christian principles in the face of the carnage to come? To accomplish this, they first defined the war as a just war, and a matter of self-defense. Convinced of the justness of their cause, both Confederate and Union soldiers concluded that their side would triumph. As Confederate Tally Simpson wrote, "God certainly is on our side, and we should trust in Him to deliver us from the hands of our enemies." A high-ranking Union officer echoed Simpson's sentiment when he


remarked, “Faith in God is the sheer anchor of our lives, it is the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night to guide our feet through the bloody seas which surround us, and when God is for us, who can prevail against us?”

Next, soldiers had to reconcile a wartime environment full of tremendous death and misery with their antebellum religious convictions. All soldiers first needed to justify killing the enemy in battle, overcoming the religious problems inherent in killing another human being, such as the Biblical commandment, “You shall not murder.” This particular type of killing required hard work to address emotional and religious constraints, and adapt to combat. It also produced irreversible transformations in soldiers who, learned to numb basic human feeling. “Undoubtedly war has a demoralizing effect upon the soldier,” wrote Confederate John Casler of the Army of Northern Virginia. “He becomes familiar with scenes of death and carnage, and what at first shocks him greatly he afterwards comes to look upon as a matter of course.”

Nineteenth-century Americans were cognizant of their own mortality but soldiers needed to be ready for death at any moment. Killing others kept soldiers constantly aware of their own mortality, another departure from pre-war practice. Moreover, nineteenth-century Americans believed that life was simply a temporary condition, and most believed in the hereafter. According to this conception, those Christians who

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50 Drew Gilpin Faust, This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2008), 33, 60.

51 John O. Casler, Four Years In the Stonewall Brigade (Dayton, OH: Morningside Bookshop, 1971).
accepted and died in Christ enjoyed the living rest of eternal life in heaven.\textsuperscript{52} However, the mass suffering and death of combat left some soldiers doubting the existence of heaven, or the benevolence and agency of God. Some soldiers even doubted their very faith in God.\textsuperscript{53} Union soldier William T. Shepherd lamented the role of non-believers in camp. "We had quite an argument with some of the boys--about their religion," he wrote, "and I find every description of belief and disbelief--Some are the worst of infidels--and I shudder to think of their ideas in regard to the Great Creator and His word."\textsuperscript{54}

Connected to their work of killing and the possibility of their own demise, many soldiers for the first time fought the often disastrous effects of wartime disillusionment. Concentrating on the war proved difficult later in the conflict after the battles of Gettysburg, Cold Harbor, and Spotsylvania. According to historian Gerald Linderman, soldiers became more disillusioned over the course of the conflict. Moreover, the continuous combat in 1864 and 1865 prevented soldiers from participating in religious observances, further decreasing their early war piety.\textsuperscript{55} For a generation of nineteenth-century Virginians in the Army of Northern Virginia, Confederate nationalism and religious beliefs sustained each other until they merged. Instead of becoming disillusioned, during 1864 and 1865, the so-called "last generation" saw the conflict as a

\textsuperscript{52} Steven E. Woodworth, \textit{While God is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers} (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2001), 41, 44, 48, 50.

\textsuperscript{53} Faust, \textit{This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War}, 174, 188. Throughout the war, Faust argues, religious soldiers remained fixated on death. (Faust, \textit{This Republic of Suffering}, 176).


holy war. By the end of the war, these soldiers transformed into Confederate zealots.

In addition to fighting disillusionment, common Civil War soldiers had to reconcile antebellum evangelical beliefs with their wartime service. This evangelical culture in the Confederate armies eased the common man’s transition to camp life, and molded new recruits into a more effective army. It also provided psychological reassurance to soldiers threatened on a daily basis with personal annihilation. In sum, through evangelicalism the common soldier sought both personal reintegration and how to cope with the war’s assaults on his humanity.

In the Union armies, pre-war evangelicals adapted to the war alongside their comrades from other religious traditions. These Union evangelical soldiers were as devout as their Confederate counterparts. They served alongside Catholic immigrant soldiers, non-evangelical Protestants, and African American troops serving in the United States Colored Troops who practiced their own unique brand of Christianity.


57 It is unclear whether Northern soldiers underwent a similar transformation since there is no comparable study of them.


Religion helped to sustain combat motivation in this new wartime world. In the Confederate armies, both officers and enlisted men commonly drew consolation from religion, to help express both resolution and anxiety. “I have this consolation, that God has a finger in the mighty events that are being transacted on this continent,” Tally Simpson wrote in February 1863, “and he will direct us as he sees fit.” Soldier narratives also reveal how fear for one’s survival and concern for one’s family on the home front helped generate spiritual activity. “My trust is in God, & whatever may befall me,” a Union soldier wrote to his wife in June 1863, “I know that Christ is my friend & that my loved ones at home are in his hands and that however long I may be detained from them, & however far away they are in his hands. He is always near those who call upon Him in faith.” On a wider community level, religion helped soldiers create Confederate nationalism and sustained their combat motivation. In the Union armies this spiritual fervor aided in the creation of a type of patriotism which sustained soldiers through combat.

A crucial reminder of their peacetime worlds, the Bible retained spiritual power for war-bound Christian soldiers. The scriptures stood at the center of the American religious imagination and throughout the war troops in both Northern and Southern

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61 Everson and Simpson, Jr., eds., Far, far from home, 196.


63 Watson, “Religion and Combat Motivation in the Confederate Armies,” 41, 47-48. Historian Larry Logue argues that religious consolation was limited since defeats and shortages of supplies eventually trumped the assurances of clergy. (Larry M. Logue, To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1996), 78)
armies desired Bibles.\(^{64}\) Encountering ever-dwindling supplies, chaplains and missionaries tried their best to supply this wartime need. "I suppose every man in the Confederate army carried a Bible, given with blessing by a mother or sweetheart," a soldier in the 21\(^{st}\) Virginia Infantry explained. "This Bible was read as a book never was before. I read mine through the first year. They were a blessing to many—and life savers too, as I heard of and saw many lives saved by bullets striking the Bible carried in the breast pocket."\(^{65}\) When writing to a father about his son’s death, a Union officer recalled the deceased’s fondness for the Bible “the vade mecum of his army life. It was his rule, invariably to read a few chapters before retiring at night."\(^{66}\)

In addition to the Bible, soldiers relied on prayers from their youth.\(^{67}\) Through prayer, soldiers spoke to a God who provided for their protection, peace, physical needs, and their own spiritual well-being. Viewing prayer as a request that God may or may not grant, soldiers also noted its limitations.\(^{68}\) Another vestige of this antebellum world, salvation through Jesus Christ, retained importance for many soldiers going off to war.\(^{69}\) Some were saved prior to enlistment, while others went through conversion experiences within the military camp or hospital. Confederate Alva Benjamin Spencer of

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\(^{67}\) In his 2005 work Soldiers of the Cross: Confederate Soldier-Christians and the Impact of War on Their Faith, Kent Dollar argues that of the nine Christian soldiers he studied, every one sustained their antebellum prayer habits. (Dollar, Soldiers of the Cross, 83)

\(^{68}\) Woodworth, While God is Marching On, 72, 76.

\(^{69}\) Salvation was one of the central tenants of evangelical Protestantism.
the 3rd Georgia remembered seeing several soldiers converted: “I have seen Mr. Hyman, a baptist minister of Thomas Ga. Brig., baptize and receive into the baptist church, nine of our best soldiers . . . On the night of the same day, quite a number were sprinkled into the Methodist church. Although all the chaplains in our brigade, are of the Methodist denomination, all who profess conversion do not join the Methodist church.”

Viewed as unconverted heathens in the eyes of their fellow Christian soldiers, other soldiers rejected the opportunity for salvation.

Along with salvation, Civil War soldiers fervently believed in a new understanding of providence. Wartime providential thinking differed from what guided prewar Americans, since it now combined the highly individualistic and personal with more nationalistic goals. At the war’s beginning, Confederate Christian soldiers believed that since God favored the South, they would win the war. In the summer of 1861, Captain John Preston Sheffey wrote “Do not be uneasy about me. My fate is in the hands of the great God who has sided with us and I am content to abide the issue.” Northern Christian soldiers thought similarly about the role of providence. One even remarked that God’s providence depended on the Union’s decision to fight for the abolition of slavery. “Ever since the first Battle of Bull Run in 1861,” the soldier wrote to his wife “I

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71 Woodworth, While God is Marching On, 53, 56, 58-59, 64.


have been fully satisfied that the hand of God was especially in this war and that we
would not see the end until we were ready to put away oppression from all the land, and
allow the four million of bond-men go free.” According to Mark Noll the crisis over the
workings of divine providence was one of the two main theological crises of the Civil
War.  

In this new wartime environment, some well-established antebellum religious
groups, such as Catholics, stayed together. Adrift in a veritable sea of evangelical
Protestantism, Catholic soldiers experienced difficulty in practicing their religion unless a
Catholic chaplain guided them. The majority of these soldiers belonged to
predominantly Catholic regiments or Brigades serviced by Catholic clergy. For example,
Father William Corby served as chaplain of the Army of the Potomac’s Irish Brigade and
Father John Bannon served the Confederacy’s 1st Missouri Brigade.

Regardless of their background, this new wartime religious world required extra
effort from Civil War soldiers to practice actively their pre-war Christian faith. First, they
had to combat the vice-filled military camp, free of the mediating influence of women.
Second, the normal structures of religion were not as easily accessible.  

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75 According to Noll, the debate over the Bible and Slavery was the other theological crisis of the Civil War
period. See Mark A. Noll, The Civil War as a Theological Crisis (Chapel Hill: The University of North
Carolina Press, 2006), esp. chp. 3 “The Crisis over the Bible” and chp. 4 “The Negro Question Lies Far
Deeper than the Slavery Question.”
76 See David W. Rolfs, “No Nearer Heaven Now but Rather Farther Off”: The Religious Compromises
and Conflicts of Northern Soldiers,” in The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers, ed.
Aaron Sheehan-Dean (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007) and Kent T. Dollar, “Strangers in a
Strange Land”: Christian Soldiers in the Early Months of the Civil War,” in The View from the Ground:
Experiences of Civil War Soldiers, ed. Aaron Sheehan-Dean (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky,
2007). Rolfs’ points are further developed in his recently published work, No Peace for the Wicked:
Northern Protestant Soldiers and the American Civil War (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press,
2009)
and 1862, Confederate Christian soldiers encountered a military world in which few soldiers showed interest in spiritual matters and religious services occurred irregularly. Nevertheless, these religious soldiers sought Christian fellowship with other pious soldiers. When they could not attend formal religious services, they held prayer meetings to sustain their faith.\(^7^7\)

Northern religious soldiers also encountered difficulty reconciling their faith with their military duties, in the process compromising aspects of their pre-war religiosity. Many stopped attending weekly services and observing the Sabbath. Moreover, as the war wore on, these Christian soldiers found themselves hating their Confederate foes, seeking revenge for their enemies’ supposed transgressions, and blurring the line between killing and murder. As the war continued, these soldiers encountered increased cognitive dissonance. Some experienced depression emerging from the possibility that the violation of God’s commandments would never be forgiven.\(^7^8\)

Antebellum denominationalism was barely present in the wartime religious world. Often regimental chaplains came from different denominations than the men they served. Yet soldiers’ attendance at religious events or their faith in their regimental or brigade level clerical figure was unaffected. Even Catholic soldiers seemed undisturbed by the religious attention of a Protestant chaplain or missionary. Protestant soldiers also

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\(^7^7\) Dollar, ““Strangers in a Strange Land,” 145, 147, 152-153, 158. Dollar further argues that the religious efforts of these early Christian soldiers helped lay the groundwork for future military revivals. (Dollar, “Strangers in a Strange Land,” 160)

\(^7^8\) Rolfs, ““No Nearer Heaven Now but Rather Farther Off”, 125, 136. Cognitive dissonance is a psychological condition defined as the “anxiety that results from simultaneously holding contradictory or otherwise incompatible attitudes, beliefs, or the like.” (“cognitive dissonance” www.dictionary.com (accessed October 27, 2009)).
accepted Catholic priests. For virtually all soldiers, the form of religious guidance did not matter. Denominational conflict seemed to dissolve in the military camps.

War-bound soldiers confronted a new and dangerous reality for which they were ill-prepared. Armed with prayer books, bibles, and other tools of evangelicalism, beginning soldiers were able to construct a new religious world based on antebellum beliefs and practices. This world contained vestiges of peacetime religious life, adapted to a wartime environment of large-scale death, disillusionment, and vice. Other aspects of this strange new world, such as ecumenicalism deviated from established antebellum patterns.

Civil War soldiers expressed existing religious beliefs and practices, though these required adaptation and change for their faith to survive. Even more so than in their antebellum lives, these young men found themselves turning to clergymen as guides in navigating this unfamiliar spiritual terrain.

Comrades and Friends: Soldiers and Their Spiritual Guides

Through interactions with chaplains and missionaries, soldiers tried to replicate the relationships between preacher and parishioner from the antebellum church world. But in the midst of war, this relationship between clergyman and believer became more difficult to maintain, even while many young men felt a much greater need for spiritual guidance. Together, soldiers, chaplains, and missionaries reshaped antebellum ritual, revivals, and Christian associations. In turn, this new wartime religion reached large numbers of previously uninitiated individuals.

From the beginning of the war, soldiers viewed chaplains, in fulfilling certain fundamental religious functions, as similar to peacetime preachers. As such, they interacted with them during formal and informal prayer, ranging from a weekday prayer
meeting to a Sunday chapel service. In addition, military chaplains were primarily responsible for holding formal worship services, providing soldiers with a crucial link to their antebellum experiences.

Antebellum parishioners were accustomed to ministers (and priests) playing important roles in the community that went well beyond formal religious practice. The local clergyman in a small town – in either the North or the South – played a valuable role in the daily lives of his flock, offering counsel, attending social gatherings, ministering at weddings and funerals, and essentially being a significant presence in the life of the community. Once they had marched off to war, soldiers looked to the military clergy for similar roles. By performing these actions, chaplains won the support and acceptance of the men they served.79 Although “not a very intellectual and cultivated minister,” Confederate Harry Lewis described his chaplain in April 1864 as “a sincere and hard working Christian.”80 Soldiers could feel comfortable speaking to and confiding in chaplains. In a letter to his mother, George F. Cram depicted his chaplain as “a model man and well fitted for an army chaplain, very frequently he comes into our tent and spends the evening with us, always talking hopefully of the future.”81 In addition, chaplains wrote letters to family members of soldiers who had been killed in battle, died

79 Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., A Shield and a Hiding Place: The Religious Life of the Civil War Armies (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 60-62. Occasionally, chaplains did fail in their spiritual duties, and leadership roles. Writing about his chaplain in the summer of 1862, Confederate Harry Lewis explained, “One thing is certain, hypocrite or not, he exercised no moral influence in the regiment and commands not the respect of its members. This is a great pity for we sadly need the restraining influence of religion in camp, and a good holy man at the post would do untold good.” (Robert G. Evans, ed., The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Civil War Letters and Reminiscences (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 94.


in camp, or were hospitalized; acted as postmasters for their units; maintained the regimental or brigade library; taught reading and writing; and served as informal bankers, sending money home to families of men in their regiment or brigade.\textsuperscript{82} For all their help, many soldiers saw (and loved) their chaplain as a father figure.\textsuperscript{83}

Union soldiers also interacted with United States Christian Commission delegates, who like traditional missionaries, sought to spread the gospel. Helping regular clergy forge powerful bonds with men, these delegates interacted regularly with many soldiers: when ministering to the wounded and dying after battles, during prayer at USCC stations established near large bodies of troops, when helping chaplains conduct Sunday services, and when distributing religious reading material. This work focused on urging soldiers to accept Jesus. In August 1864, Emerson Opdycke compared the Christian Commission to its sister organization, the United States Sanitary Commission. "The Sanitary Commission does more necessary good," he wrote, "than the Christian Commission; the latter gives religious counsel to hospital inmates, and distributes reading matter and writing material to them, the former feeds and clothes the sick and wounded soldiers; which are matters of primary importance and necessity; both should be well sustained."\textsuperscript{84} Another Union soldier also thought highly of both organizations, stating in an April 1864 letter to his father: "The ‘Christian’ & "Sanitary Commissions’ do much more good in the army than many persons at the north suppose. At every town of importance in the South within our lines there are ‘Soldiers homes’ where food &

\textsuperscript{82} Shattuck, Jr., \textit{A Shield and a Hiding Place}, 62.

\textsuperscript{83} See chapter eight “The Boys Love Him as a Father”: Civil War Chaplains, in Woodworth, \textit{While God is Marching On}, 145-159.

\textsuperscript{84} Glenn V. Longacre and John E. Haas, eds., \textit{To Battle for God and the Right: The Civil War Letterbooks of Emerson Opdycke} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 207.
lodging can be had free of charge and ‘reading rooms’ similar to these under their special control.”

Many soldiers also saw their wartime clergy as a vital bulwark against the immoral influences that soon came to permeate the military camps. In the absence of the social constraints on behavior that preserved morality on the home front, many young soldiers turned to gambling and alcohol, while taking advantage of the sexual opportunities offered by prostitutes and camp followers. Although many men embraced these new freedoms with enthusiasm, many Christian soldiers worried about the immoral influences in their midst, sending concerned letters home or penning diary entries recording their comrades’ transgressions. Captain Samuel Fiske, of the Army of the Potomac, complained midway through the war about alcohol consumption in the army. “Very many young men who have been hitherto models of sobriety,” he maintained, “have, since coming to war, lost their good principles and are falling victims to this evil habit.” Whatever their own personal behavior, soldiers in both the Union and Confederacy came to recognize that the clergy and missionaries in their midst constituted a force for the sacred in a largely profane military world.

As the war continued, pre-war relationships were renewed as soldiers interacted with chaplains and missionaries during revivals, ritual periods, and in the formation of Christian associations. The hallmark of evangelical Protestantism in antebellum America, revivals usually occurred in Union and Confederate armies after Gettysburg. At these events clergy held services on an almost daily basis, convincing untold

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85 Holcomb, *Southern Sons, Northern Soldiers*, 143.

numbers of men to declare their devotion to Jesus Christ. For example, Confederate Tally Simpson experienced revivalism during the summer of 1863. He attended his brigade’s preaching led by a regimental chaplain each morning at nine o’clock. Tally’s letters contain his thoughts on the various preachers: "Mr. C is my favorite. He is an excellent man and an excellent preacher and is bound to do a good deal of good in his present field of action. The Rev Dr. Stiles of Georgia, the great army revivalist, has preached for us twice. He is a very able man and preached two elegant sermons. He is on the order of the great Baker, but a much abler man."

Beyond the revival, the replication of traditional Protestant and Catholic rituals in the wartime environment fostered strong bonds between clergy and soldiers. During and after formal religious ceremonies, Protestant clergy baptized and converted soldiers. Their Catholic counterparts, held confessions and mass absolution ceremonies as needed, such as Father William Corby’s famous one at Gettysburg in 1863. Serving as the building blocks of religious space, these rituals kept alive the connection between religion in the military and civilian spheres.

In addition to their ritual practices, soldiers also revitalized pre-war Christian associations through relationships with clergy. Aided by chaplains and missionaries, these groups of soldiers, fought profane influences and promoted religiosity among their peers. In 1863, the Army of the Tennessee’s chaplains attempted to organize a Young Men’s Christian Association in each brigade. Soldiers flocked to these organizations

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87 Everson and Simpson, Jr., eds., Far, far from home, 273-274.

during revival movements. For example, during the revivalism during the winter of 1863-1864 in the Army of Northern Virginia, Confederate officer Cullen Andrews Battle, remembered a celebration of the Christian Association. At this time, a distinguished preacher from Richmond presented the text, "Lift up your heads, O, ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of Hosts, Mighty in battle, He is the King of glory." The sermon was powerful," Battle recalled, "and the effect was wonderful. Many, perhaps hundreds, came out on the Lord's side that day."90

Soldiers maintained basic contacts with military clergy, missionaries, and USCC delegates throughout the war. These contacts were based on antebellum relationships between a preacher and his parishioner, adapted to wartime exigency. During their wartime service, missionaries and chaplains focused on adapting antebellum ritual, revivals, and Christian associations to the wartime environment. These three actions composed the building blocks of religious space.

The wartime relationships soldiers formed with chaplains and missionaries were based on similar relationships with antebellum clergy, adapted to wartime exigency. These relationships were partially sustained through the religious publications available to Civil War troops.

Wartime Religion and the Written Word

By reading religious tracts, periodicals, and testaments, soldiers adapted antebellum messages of faith and salvation. Born of the burgeoning religious print

89 Shattuck, A Shield and a Hiding Place, 89, 101.

culture in nineteenth-century America, these works reinforced the evangelical themes perpetrated by Civil War clergy. In turn, soldiers, with the assistance of clergy, looked to this religious literature for guidance in light of wartime difficulties.

The religious military press instructed soldiers who were eager for spiritual instruction on how to adapt their peacetime evangelical beliefs to new wartime roles.\footnote{During the war, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists distributed soldier papers. (George C. Rable, \textit{God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War} (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 132).} Often these tracts confronted the core challenge: how to reconcile warfare and religious belief? Articles and tracts reinforced the ideal of the Christian soldier, fighting for a just cause. Southern periodicals strengthened soldiers’ identification with the Confederate cause and also explained how the wartime environment threatened their religious liberty.\footnote{Kurt O. Berends, “‘Wholesome Reading Purifies and Elevates the Man’: The Religious Military Press in the Confederacy,” in \textit{Religion and the American Civil War}, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1998), 132, 134, 146. For information on how wartime religious publications in the South contributed to the construction of a Confederate national identity, see Michael T. Bernath, \textit{Confederate Minds: The Struggle of Intellectual Independence in the Civil War South} (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), especially p.86-89, 96, 105-107, 261-262.} Accessible to Christian Confederate soldiers, the pages of \textit{The Army and Navy Herald} discussed various aspects of religion in the army.\footnote{Other religious papers serving the Confederate military included: \textit{The Soldier’s Friend} (Baptist; Atlanta); \textit{The Army and Navy Messenger} (Evangelical Tract Society; Petersburg, Va.); \textit{The Soldiers’ Visitor} (Committee of Publication, Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States; Richmond, Va.); and \textit{The Soldier’s Paper} (Soldier’s Tract Association, ME Church, South; Richmond, Va). (Irons, \textit{The Origins of Proslavery Christianity}, 241)\textit{The Soldier’s Paper}} For each day of the week, a section entitled “Daily Bread” provided a short biblical verse followed by commentary. Other articles, focused on religious practice, conversion, and faith.\footnote{This analysis is based on issues of \textit{The Army and Navy Herald} dating from February 9, 1865; March 16, 1865; March 23, 1865; March 30, 1865; and April 6, 1865. These are the only published issues available in Duke University’s Special Collections.} Such publications strove to spark renewed faith in the armed forces of the Confederacy. More broadly, the
numerous wartime religious publications sought to support the evangelical mission, improve morale, and define the nature of the war.\textsuperscript{95}

In addition to the religious press, Bibles guided and inculcated faith in Civil War soldiers just as they did pre-war Americans. Nineteenth-century Americans looked to the Bible for guidance and hope in all kinds of situations. Serving as a constant companion from battlefield to camp, soldiers carried these books with them everywhere. “I try to read my Bible every day,” wrote a Confederate soldier, “but sometimes I am prevented by having to move or other unavoidable circumstances.”\textsuperscript{96} Testaments were commonly found in the pockets of soldiers killed in battle. Soldiers often spent idle time reading these books and derived much consolation from them. Union soldier Harvey Reid and his tent mates decided to “have a chapter in the Testament read every night before going to bed” having declared that “anyone, who by noise or light, irreverent remarks, disturbed the reading, should be fined 25 cents.”\textsuperscript{97}

Alongside these religious periodicals and Bibles, soldiers read familiar seeming religious tracts which tied antebellum themes to the wartime reality for religious edification and consolation. Wartime chaplains and missionaries distributed tracts to soldiers hungry for religious literature.\textsuperscript{98} Often distributed just before battle, some tracts

\textsuperscript{95} Berends, “Wholesome Reading Purifies and Elevates the Man”, 134, 146.


\textsuperscript{97} Frank L. Byrne, ed., The View from Headquarters: Civil War Letters of Harvey Reid (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1965), 7.

\textsuperscript{98} Soldiers preferred practical and portable tracts that contained narrative and dialogue instead of just doctrine. (Rable, God’s Almost Chosen Peoples, 133.)
such as “Death of a Christian Soldier” urged soldiers to convert before death.\(^9\) For soldiers, this particular message was especially pressing for death might await them at any time. Others such as “Don’t Play Cards Boys” and “Don’t Swear” warned soldiers to stay away from vice including drinking, gambling, and swearing.\(^1\) More generally, many such as “Can I Be Religious While I am a Soldier?” contained stories of faith and salvation, to which war weary soldiers could cling.\(^2\)

The religious military press, testaments, and tracts helped facilitate the creation of religious space throughout the conflict by reinforcing traditional messages of faith and salvation which soldiers could adapt to the wartime environment. To the literate soldiers of the Union and Confederate armies, these materials proved to be their best “friends,” providing comfort and consolation in addition to serving as a way to occupy idle time in camp or hospital.

By reading religious tracts, periodicals, and testaments soldiers adapted antebellum messages of faith and salvation to the wartime environment. The next chapter examines the construction of sacred space in camp, through an analysis of worship practices. It shows how chaplains and missionaries interacted religiously with soldiers, carving out a new spiritual space amid the profaneness of the camp environment.

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\(^1\) Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples*, 132-133. *Don’t Play Cards Boys* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 186?), 1-8 and Jeremiah Bell Jeter, *Don’t Swear* (Richmond, VA: Raleigh Board of Missions of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention, 186?), 1-8.

\(^2\) *Can I Be Religious While I am a Soldier?* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers’ Tract Society, Virginia Annual Conference, M.E. Church, South, 186-?), 1-4.
CHAPTER 4
CONSTRUCTING SACRED SPACE IN CAMP: WORSHIP PRACTICES

Introduction

“How sweet to thus worship God beneath the bright shining stars. Have God to look upon you. How rich the singing, how earnest the prayers, for comrades sick and well, for officers, for our Army, our devoted cause, and then how the Church at home is remembered and wife and children, parents, friends and all absent loved ones. Ah, tis sweet to mingle with such scenes of worship.” So reflected the Rev. Andrew Jackson Hartsock of the 133rd Pennsylvania Volunteer infantry in an October 1862 diary entry detailing his time spent in the Army of the Potomac. Providing clues to how religion developed in the camp environment, this chaplain’s reaction reflected his perceptions about religion in the Union army.

This chapter explores how chaplains and missionaries created worship opportunities in the wartime military camps during both active campaigning and winter quarters. Through worship in the camp, chaplains and missionaries attempted to recreate antebellum religious practices. Instead of succeeding in that endeavor, they fashioned a new religious world adapted to wartime necessity. In fact, the war reduced the overall difference between religious practice in the North and South. This chapter attempts to examine this world by focusing on two things. First, I explain the new wartime worship practices which developed in the camps. Second, I analyze those

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1 James C. Duram and Eleanor A. Duram, eds. Soldier of the Cross: The Civil War Diary and Correspondence of Rev. Andrew Jackson Hartsock (Manhattan, Kansas: Military Affairs/Aerospace Historian Publishing for the American Military Institute, 1979), 19.

2 Although this chapter focuses on the camp experience, some aspects of camp life, including the construction of chapels will be addressed in chapter four.
antebellum practices, which Civil War clergy reproduced and adapted to a new wartime environment, which lacked the resources of the pre-war church.

**New Wartime Worship Practices**

New worship practices developed during the course of the war. Differing from antebellum norms, these practices reflected the war’s effect on religious belief and practice. Wartime circumstances required clergy to re-envision how they ministered to their flock, starting with their conception of religious space.

Chaplains and missionaries cultivated a dynamic sacred space within the military camp. While antebellum worship tended to occur within static buildings such as churches, wartime space became more fluid. Within the camp, the chaplain or missionary created new sacred dynamic spaces, conducting services, prayer meetings, and other religious functions.³

Cognizant of these shifting conceptions of space, Civil War clergy worked with fellow chaplains to create worship opportunities for soldiers. Cooperation tested clergy, who were used to an antebellum climate where they worked alone.⁴ In the war’s first year, Union chaplains Robert Browne, William Mahon, and James Merwin each led part of a service at the Naval School in Annapolis, Maryland. Browne began with the introductory prayer, followed by Mahon’s preaching, and Merwin’s treatise on

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³ Seth D. Kunin, *God’s Place in the World: Sacred Space and Sacred Place in Judaism* (London: Cassell, 1998), 21-22, 144-145. "Formalized in time" static space can be occupied or accessed only during specific times. (Kunin, *God’s Place in the World*, 25-26.)

⁴ Clergy did, however, cooperate during antebellum revivals. For example, the participants at the Cane Ridge revival included eighteen Presbyterian ministers, at least four Methodist clergy, and one Baptist preacher. (Paul K. Conkin, *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 127.)
temperance and camp vices. David Holt of the 16th Mississippi Regiment participated in a communion service during the winter of 1863-1864, led by fifteen chaplains. Two chaplains jointly officiated, on opposing sides of a raised platform. “They gave out the hymns at the same time,” Holt recalled, and the “whole congregation sang [them] in unison, but the prayers and the sermons were different. Yet there was no confusion.” Another Confederate chaplain remembered how in the second half of the war chaplains officiated over each others’ regiments. This cooperation crossed the Protestant-Catholic divide, impermeable during the antebellum era. Midway through the war, Confederate Catholic and Protestant chaplains alternated officiating duties at a daily funeral service held in the camp’s cemetery. Chaplain Pere Louis-Hippolyte Gache voiced his opposition to the agreement, since the Catholic priests involved were not following the strict guidelines of the Latin ritual in order to be responsive to Protestant interests. This evidence suggests how most wartime clergy emphasized the communal aspect of their religious duties, and did not view their churches as individual fiefdoms.

While ministering to the troops, military clergy routinely put aside their antebellum sectarianism to care for men of all denominations. Congregationalist Union chaplain Joseph Twichell cared for an eighteen year-old Quartermasters orderly who had suffered two hemorrhages of the lungs during the war’s first summer. “Although a Catholic he expressed a willingness that I should pray with him, and I did so,” Twichell

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5 Robert Audley Browne to his wife, letter, October 16, 1861, Robert A. Browne Papers, U.S. Army Military Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA.


7 William Robert Gwaltney, July 26, 1863 and January 24, 1864 diary entries, Folder 1, W.R. Gwaltney Papers, 1862-1948, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill.

8 Gache, A Frenchman, A Chaplain, A Rebel, 190.
recalled, “using the Episcopal form of "Visitation of the Sick.""9 This soldier preferred
Twichell instead of a clergyman of his own denomination, because he had already
established a relationship with him. Confederate Chaplain William Gwaltney, a Baptist,
asked during a routine regimental service if any soldiers wanted to join the church. Out
of the three who said yes, one chose the Baptist church, and the other two became
Methodists.10 This did not offend Gwaltney, who felt building the Christian community
trumped any benefit from joining his specific church.

On the Union side, the evangelical-led United States Christian Commission
worked with representatives of different denominations to foster a nascent ecumenical
religious space. “Often in a company of Delegates there were as many Christian
denominations represented as there were men[,]” Lemuel Moss, Home Secretary to the
Commission, recalled, “yet they came together without knowing or caring to know their
several distinctive names . . . unanimous in their prayers, their aims, their labors[,]”11 In
the war’s second year, a mass communion held at Camp Douglass united regimental
chaplains of differing denominations preparing to leave under the banner of the
Christian Commission. Each of the three chaplains and delegates present served in a
different religious capacity, one offering thanksgiving, another exhorting to
communicants, and the third speaking of preparations for death. Together they created
a compelling ritual for the two hundred soldiers in attendance.12


10 William Robert Gwaltney, August 4 1863 diary entry, Folder 1, W.R. Gwaltney Papers, 1862-1948,
University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill.


12 United States Christian Commission, United States Christian Commission for the Army and Navy Work
years later, at a USCC station in Virginia, two delegates, a Presbyterian and a Congregationalist, jointly administered the Lord’s Supper to members of eight different denominations. These events demonstrate how an evangelical-only organization promoted non-sectarianism in the fluid, wartime environment. A delegate confirmed this aspect of the USCC’s mission when talking to Private Wilbur Fisk in April 1864: “No sectarianism or bigotry marred the harmony of the meetings. Nobody inquired of another if he was a Methodist, a Baptist, or an Episcopalian, and no one seemed to care for religious preferences. If a man was a Christian, it was enough.”

Although chaplains favored non-denominationalism within the camp, ingrained antebellum Protestant-Catholic hostility occasionally bubbled to the surface. Writing in the autumn of 1861 from near Williamsburg, Rev. Gache claimed that the more educated men preferred Catholicism over Protestantism. When one Catholic and one Protestant chaplain worked in the same camp, the Confederate chaplain argued that “the Catholic receives all the attention and respect and the poor Protestant is forgotten.” Of course, Gache’s observation should not be accepted at face value: as a Catholic, he sought to paint his church in a more favorable light. In another incident in the Union armies, Frederic Denison, a Baptist chaplain, invited a priest from St. Augustine, Florida to minister to Catholics at his Fort Pulaski post. Denison suffered

13 Smith, *Incidents Under Shot and Shell*, 201.


heavy criticism from fellow Protestant chaplains in the department. Although significant, these types of incidents remained rare. The overwhelming majority of Catholic and Protestant Civil War clergy worked together peacefully and did not let latent hostility ruin their wartime relationships.

In concert with this search for ecumenicalism, chaplains and missionaries created new wartime worship practices to fit the needs of different types of military units. While conventional worship techniques worked for the infantry, who were easily able to congregate in one specific place, clergy assigned to the artillery and cavalry encountered special difficulties. Assigned to a regiment of heavy artillery, Union Chaplain Henry White could never minister to his entire unit, since it was separated across numerous forts. Consequently, White decided to minister to individual detachments whenever he had the opportunity. This involved weekly visits to his soldiers’ tents to disseminate papers and tracts and speak comforting words. USCC delegates provided ministerial aid to Union artillery units without assigned chaplains. In February 1864, two delegates ministered to an artillery brigade encamped near Brandy Station, by organizing a Bible-class and holding chapel meetings. The USCC’s work helped increase religiosity during the winter months, according to Thomas A. Leete, a USCC station-master in the artillery brigade of the Second Corps. Constructed in front

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16 Denison, A Chaplain’s Experience in the Union Army, 32.


18 Smith, Incidents Under Shot and Shell, 196-197.
of the batteries, this USCC tent effected a wonderful change in the spiritual habits of the men.\textsuperscript{19}

While adapting to the spiritual needs of the artillery, clergy also utilized new worship tactics to reach the cavalry, the eyes and ears of the army. The difficulties clergy encountered in reaching these men tested their mobility and the dynamic space surrounding them. Constantly on the move, cavalry spent less time than infantry in winter quarters.\textsuperscript{20} However, this fact did not deter the USCC. In the late fall of 1862, the Rev. A. Read recalled how, “exposed to the cold autumn wind in the wild pine woods,” the men “listened to the exposition of God’s word.” “[W]hen an officer led in the closing prayer, supplicating with deep emotion that God would bless the special mercies of that day to them, protect their distant loved ones, and bring them all to the eternal Sabbath, never to part,” he opined “many hearts were touched.”\textsuperscript{21} The USCC took advantage of any opportunity to minister to the cavalry. During the last winter of the war, the USCC paid special attention to Sheridan’s cavalry in the Shenandoah Valley, while they remained in winter quarters for longer than normal. During this time, the USCC fostered interest in religious services by erecting a chapel in nearly every brigade. Only when the camps broke up in the Spring would this spiritual interest dissipate.\textsuperscript{22}

Active campaigning required clergy to provide a new, improvised worship space, distinct from the static space of the pre-war church, but in some ways quite similar to the space generated by antebellum revivals. Left without the services of a church tent

\textsuperscript{19} Moss, \textit{Annals of the United States Christian Commission}, 425.

\textsuperscript{20} Cavalry units could go seven months without hearing a sermon. (USCC, \textit{First Annual Report}, 62.)

\textsuperscript{21} USCC, \textit{First Annual Report}, 63.

\textsuperscript{22} USCC, \textit{Fourth Annual Report}, 92-93.
and on the march in the spring of 1862, Union Chaplain Alexander Stewart’s regiment found it necessary to establish a new Bethel. For four straight evenings, soldiers assembled in a grove of pine trees near the Chain Bridge in Northern Virginia. For up to two hours, they sang and prayed, “intermingled with words of exhortation, admonition and encouragement.” According to Stewart, “[o]ur condition, our place of worship, the overhanging trees, the surrounding darkness, dispelled for a circle by our camp-fire, all combined in giving a kind of unearthly charm, a peculiar interest and pleasure to our meetings.”

This Protestant space paralleled the Catholic sacred space improvised by Union Chaplain William Corby before the battle of Gettysburg. The brigade had come to the base of a hill one Saturday night and Corby wanted to celebrate mass the next day on its summit. The men enthusiastically agreed to help prepare the ground and after holding mass, marked the service with a cross.

As these two examples suggest, this dynamic, improvised space contained the same ritualistic power as the static space of the antebellum church.

In contrast with their pre-war experiences, clergy operating in wartime camps could not completely control worship practices. The pinnacle of the military hierarchy, the commander, could choose to extend his reach to religious activities. When considering whether or not to hold religious services in the field, Union Chaplain

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25 Soldier accounts, however, contest the chaplain’s role during active campaigning. “Mr. Chapman is very much liked here, but like all chaplains in an active campaign, he is of very little benefit,” Union soldier George F. Cram recalled. “We never get a chance to hear preaching on an average of more than once a month and then for only a few minutes and as for prayer meetings, they are indistinctly remembered as long ago occurrences. It’s bad I know and I do not wonder at so many young men being ruined by the army. None but minds entirely above camp vices can stand the current.” (Jennifer Cain Bohrnstedt, ed., *Soldiering with Sherman: Civil War Letters of George F. Cram* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 49).
Frederic Denison acknowledged, “much depended upon the disposition and will of the commander.” Upon taking command of Denison’s regiment, Colonel Alfred Duffie altered the worship practices in his unit. Urging Denison “to follow my convictions and methods in conducting the worship,” he ordered that services be held every Sabbath whenever possible. Denison complied, holding Christian services lacking ecclesiastical or denominational characteristics. In another example from November 1861, Chaplain Robert Browne’s regimental commander at Port Royal called for family worship. Browne complied with this request, holding in his tent twice daily prayer and scripture readings. Captain Samuel Fiske’s brigade commander in the Army of the Potomac even made Sabbath services compulsory, equivalent to any other military duty. To invite a regiment to a service at his headquarters, Fiske explained “he just drops a polite note to the commander requesting him to bring his command, officers and men, except the needful guard details and the sick, at such an hour, with their chaplain to conduct the exercise.” Enlisted men knew that their officers cared about their religious welfare. Midway through the war, one black soldier remarked how every camp officer received “the proffers of religious men willingly, who desire to make any remarks beneficial to the men.” However, the fact that occasionally officers needed to initiate religious worship disappointed Union surgeon John Bennitt. “[S]orry to see that it is necessary for the

26 Denison, A Chaplain’s Experience in the Union Army, 15.
27 Ibid., 17-18.
28 Robert Audley Browne to his wife, letter, Saturday November 30, 1861, Robert A. Browne Papers, U.S. Army Military Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA.
Chaplain to be requested by such a man as, Lt Col Shafter has hitherto appeared to be," Bennitt reported in a July 1863 letter to his wife, “to attend to what is manifest by his duty.”31

While not in control of all worship in the camp, clergy often focused on making wartime burial services inclusive sites of religiosity. Antebellum Americans generally had an intimate familiarity with death; loved ones commonly died at home rather than in hospitals or distant locations. Soldiers, far away from family and loved ones, built wartime bonds creating a strong sense of camaraderie.32 When one of their own members departed the earth, the entire unit often attended the funeral, fostering what historian James McPherson describes as a primary group cohesion.33 Union Chaplain Charles Humphreys recalled conducting a funeral service for an enlisted man, who had been killed in a skirmish with Confederate raider John Mosby. His entire company attended this event, held in the late summer of 1863, along with the regiment’s field and staff officers. “This recognition of valor always tells for good with the men and makes them more brave in danger and more faithful in every duty," Humphreys concluded.34 Union chaplain John Adams officiated at a burial near Barkersville, Maryland, in October 1862, held after sundown and in the rain. Although under less than favorable conditions,


33 For more on the primary group cohesion which emerged among Civil War soldiers see James M. McPherson, For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), especially chp. 6 “A Band of Brothers.”

34 Humphreys, Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison, 371.
Adams remarked, “[t]he men stood around the grave, solemn and still, having marched with muffled drum.”

In the Confederate armies, camp funerals also fostered small unit cohesion. On Sunday, February 1st 1863 Chaplain William Wiatt preached at the evening funeral of a soldier buried close to camp. The ceremony began with a sermon based on Job V: 6, which explores the punishments appropriate for the wicked. This verse must have appealed to Wiatt since it gave him the opportunity to warn soldiers struggling with camp vice to keep to the right path in order to avoid punishment. Afterwards soldiers fired three volleys over the grave, and Wiatt distributed religious papers. A little over a month later, Wiatt buried another soldier, accompanied by many enlisted men and every officer. At this ceremony, Wiatt spoke about Matthew XXIV, which explored the hope that would arise out of destruction.

While building cohesion among the soldiers, chaplain-led funeral services deviated from the familial pre-war burials. Despite their military bonds, soldiers could not substitute for the presence of actual blood relatives at a funeral. “There are seldom any mourners here to follow him to his grave, and no tears of sympathy and grief fall on his coffin,” Private Wilbur Fisk opined, “as it is lowered into the silent tomb. Stranger hands bear him to his long home, and stranger hands bury him from mortal view.” These soldiers’ friends were far way: “Somewhere among the wild hills of Vermont there are dear friends of this man, whose hearts will be pierced with sorrow when they see that name mentioned among the dead. And to know that he died among strangers, with no

36 Wiatt, Confederate Chaplain William Edward Wiatt, 30, 39. Job 5: 6 reads “For misery does not come from the earth, nor does trouble sprout from the ground.” Matthew 24 foretells the destruction of the Temple, describes signs of the end of the age, and details the coming of the Son of Man.
friendly hand to minister to his last wants, will be the keenest pang of all.”37 In practice, full funeral services were relatively uncommon, since the demands of campaigning often did not permit clergy the time or resources to devote to burials. Thus, these unifying activities were only effective at building cohesion among a minority of Civil War soldiers. While burials helped build cohesion among soldiers, unique wartime circumstances often complicated the chaplains’ efforts to follow familiar antebellum worship practices. First, clergy had to contend with the busy nature of the camp. “The consequent noise and bustle, the hauling and distribution of provisions, the coming and going of guards and outposts, the martial music, together with various other camp noises,” Union Chaplain Alexander Stewart recalled, “all combine to embarrass public services and drown the speaker’s voice.”38 Clergy faced a second difficulty: finding a suitable place for worship. Employing two carpenters to build benches, Union Chaplain Humphreys acquired a hospital tent to stage a religious meeting. However, before he could use this space for Sunday services, the army confiscated it for use in a court-martial.39 This case shows how dispensing military justice trumped religious services in the midst of war. A further difficulty involved distinguishing Sunday as sacred time, separate from any other day.40 Before coming to Vienna, Virginia in fall 1863, Humphreys observed that soldiers treated Sunday as an ordinary day, not respecting its religious significance.41 Confederate James Pickens confirmed Humphreys observation,

38 Stewart, *Camp, March and Battlefield*, 161.
39 Humphreys, *Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison*, 12.
40 Eliade’s sacred time equates to “the time of festivals” and differs from profane time of “ordinary temporal duration” containing acts devoid of religious meaning. (Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 68)
41 Humphreys, *Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison*, 375.
complaining late in the war that arms inspections were usually held on Sundays: “Why they choose Sunday for this, is singular; as any other day would do as well, & the men could employ themselves in profitable reading on this day instead of allowing an interruption of their thoughts by a handling of & attention to arms.” According to Pickens, “The Sabbath should be employed in religious reading & in serious & meditative contemplation of our selves & our actions, knowing, that of all these we must, at the last day, give a strict account to God our judge & the Supreme Overlooker of our thoughts & actions.” However, Humphreys’ and Pickens’ experiences were not uniform since armies often respected Sunday. Writing in 1862, Private Wilbur Fisk clearly stated “Sunday we had entirely to ourselves. No marches or fatigues are required of us on this day, unless absolutely necessary. Gen. McClellan respects the Lord's day, as do a large proportion of his men. Many of them respect it more because he does than from any other consideration.”

In addition to presenting particular challenges, the military camp also offered new worship sites, differing from antebellum norms. Clergy preferred, but did not absolutely need, a bounded religious space for prayer meetings; a multipurpose space that blended the sacred and the profane worked just as well. At the Potomac Creek Station the USCC maintained three large wall-tents. “On one side we kept our books, papers and hospital stores; the other was occupied as a parlor by day, a chapel in the evening, and a sleeping room at night,” one delegate recalled. “For our parlor chairs we had rows

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42 Hubbs, Voices from Company D, 237.

43 Rosenblatt, Hard Marching Every Day, 27. For Union Chaplain Orange V. Lemon other variables, such as the different seasons and constantly changing camps, also contributed to difficulties in holding regular Sabbath services. (Orange V. Lemon, undated diary entry, Orange V. Lemon, Chaplain, 36th Indiana Volunteer Infantry Diary, October 10, 1861 to January 14, 1862, folder four, Civil War Miscellaneous Collection Box 57, U.S. Army Military Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA.)
of planks, five deep, resting on empty boxes. These answered in the evening for chapel settees, and at night for spring beds.” 44 Other clergy improvised by holding worship in new sites. Midway through the war, delegate James Russell Miller helped men of the 7th Michigan organize a prayer meeting in a Northern Virginia cemetery. Every evening this group of around nine or ten, prayed together “to strengthen each other in faith and love.” “[A]ll around rested the lifeless remains of those who in years gone by, had lived and moved and thought,” Miller remembered. 45 The spirit of the dead contributed to the heightened sense of religious devotion in this space. These two examples demonstrate how clergy utilized available space in a wartime environment where they often lacked suitable accommodations for worship.

Beyond those occasions set aside for religious observance, dress and undress parade, special review, and inspection provided further prayer opportunities for Union soldiers. According to Chaplain John Robie of the 21st New York Volunteers, the services at dress parade were supposed to last only three minutes. 46 Due to military necessity, they were far shorter than antebellum services. Chaplain Charles Humphreys held prayer services at dress or undress parade on four separate occasions: once in May, once in June, and twice in November of 1864; because during these times he could best grab the soldiers' attention. 47 Chaplain Alexander Stewart officiated at a brief religious service for his entire division after a special review and general inspection of

44 Smith, Incidents Under Shot and Shell, 153.
45 Miller, “Two Civil War Notebooks of James Russell Miller Part I,” 86.
47 Humphreys, Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison, 400, 404, 416, 418.
the unit during Meade’s 1863 Virginia campaign. After the conclusion of the review and inspection, Stewart sat on horseback in the division’s center. Formed as a “solid mass, closely flanked by three batteries of artillery,” he recalled “[t] he soldiers all in their best attire, with burnished, glittering armor,-officers, also, all in holiday costume-a forest of bayonets, and a sea of faces.” From his position, Stewart hoped “to reach over the assembled thousands, while confessing our sins, and invoking the Lord's pardoning mercy and unmerited blessings.”

In the camp environment new wartime worship practices developed. During peacetime, clergy held worship practices in static buildings such as churches. In contrast, Union and Confederate spiritual leaders cultivated a dynamic sacred space focused on their person. The resulting non-denominational religious space allowed wartime clergy to work together to preach to Christian soldiers belonging to many different sects. Within this space, other types of camp worship also emerged which more resembled the pre-war religious world.

**Reproducing and Adapting Antebellum Worship Practices**

Civil War clergy tried to reproduce antebellum worship practices, adapted to wartime exigencies. Without women and lacking much of the apparatus of the church, chaplains and missionaries worked with limited resources. Even so, these eager clergy reproduced many worship practices by focusing on the needs of willing worshipers.

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49 The lack of female participation in wartime religious activities constituted a significant change from the antebellum era. On the eve of the conflict, women usually outnumbered men in congregations by a two to one margin. (Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 283.)
As in peacetime, Civil War clergy used ritual to transform ordinary space into sacred space.\footnote{Belden C. Lane, \textit{Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality} (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 21.} According to religious theorist Jonathan Z. Smith, “ritual is not an expression of or response to ‘the Sacred’; rather, something or someone is made sacred by ritual.”\footnote{Jonathan Z. Smith, \textit{To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 105. Religious theorist Kim Knott expresses a similar idea in her 2005 work, “Sacred space is not the stimulus for ritual; ritual, as sacred-making behavior, brings about ‘sacred’ space. Ritual takes place, and makes place in this sense.” (Kim Knott, \textit{The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis} (Oakville, Conn.: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2005), 43)} From the beginning of the war, baptism was one key ritual integral to the work of chaplains and missionaries.\footnote{Douglas Davies, “Christianity” in \textit{Sacred Place}, ed. Jean Holm (London: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), 43-44. According to Davies, baptism “was interpreted as a form of death to an individual’s old way of life and entry to the new life of faith.” (Davies, “Christianity”, 43-44)} In the camps chaplains baptized through immersion and sprinkling, two generally accepted antebellum practices. Baptist churches used immersion believing it to be the New Testament method, while other Protestant churches used sprinkling since it was easier to administer.\footnote{J. Paul Williams, \textit{What Americans Believe and How They Worship}, revised ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), 129.} Usually, a clergyman performed this ritual in a river close to the camp, an environment familiar to devout soldiers. In autumn 1863 Confederate Samuel Pickens saw a Baptist minister immerse sixteen men half a mile from camp.\footnote{Hubbs, \textit{Voices from Company D}, 197-198.} Private David Holt of the Army of Northern Virginia observed Chaplain Thomas Witherspoon leading a very intricate baptism ceremony. After preaching, Witherspoon told the assembled, “You have only to believe and show your sincerity by being baptized as our Lord commanded, and you will become a child of God,” before ending with the query “Who will follow me to the
river?" Once at the river, he baptized the first four exclaiming, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen" and then used them to assist him in baptizing the others while he provided directions. After directing his assistants how to hold the candidates, he said, "Are you ready?" The men said, "We are ready." Then he said, "Dip." And as each man dipped the candidate that he held, the parson said the words. Each time he would command the newly baptized to take their positions in the river and assist. While larger and more complex than most pre-war baptisms, this baptism ceremony would have been familiar to most wartime participants.

Neither the highest-ranking officer nor the lowliest private was spared the baptismal waters. Regardless of denomination, Civil War clergy aggressively sought to convert. In turn, many soldiers eagerly sought out baptism and some newly baptized manifested an evident zeal for Christianity. For example, during a December 1862 prayer meeting, Confederate Chaplain Wiatt noticed how the recently baptized Sergeant Jackson "bids fair to be useful[.]" Last night when the chaplain asked him to pray "he did so readily and very well[.]" In another example, Confederate Chaplain Charles Quintard requested that General Bragg accept baptism and confirmation. In response to Quintard, Bragg responded, "I have been waiting for twenty years to have someone say

55 Ballard and Cockrell, *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 236.
this to me, and I thank you from my heart." Quintard spoke several more times with Bragg before baptizing and confirming him.⁵⁹

In addition to baptism, soldiers often requested the blood and the body of Christ in an attempt to follow familiar antebellum practices. Both Catholics and Protestants participated in the rite of communion, although Catholics more commonly held communion during worship.⁶⁰ Drawing from a tradition rich in sacraments and liturgy, Catholic soldiers reproduced communion along with other peacetime rituals, such as mass, confession, and absolution. These Roman Catholic practices epitomized their church’s “highly sacramental approach to worship.”⁶¹ Although rare, Protestant communion services were often large affairs. For example, Private David Holt of the 16th Mississippi, observed a communion service requiring the participation of fifteen chaplains. The service concluded with the chaplains’ consecrating the elements before distributing them to the attendees. “The cracker crumbs [came around] on tin plates,” Holt observed, “and the wine in tin cups. They said, ‘The body of the Lord, and the blood of the Lord,’ and offered the elements.”⁶² In April 1864, Captain Samuel Fiske of the 14th Connecticut Volunteers, attended a soldier communion presided over by two regimental chaplains, where approximately eighty partook of the sacrament. At this

⁵⁹ Elliot, *Doctor Quintard, Chaplain C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee*, 70.

⁶⁰ Conkin, *The Uneasy Center*, 195. In taking the bread of communion, Catholics believe that they are ingesting the physical body of Jesus Christ, which has undergone a transformation according to the doctrine of transubstantiation. When Protestants take communion, they receive both the bread and wine, while Catholics only receive the bread and the wine is reserved for the priests. (Williams, *What Americans Believe and How They Worship*, 34-36, 127). According to Lane, Holy Communion serves a spatial function as well: “the impulse of Holy Communion, therefore, is to force the Church inward to the place where Christ is met spatially around the altar (in his own body and blood received by his people) and then outward to all places where the crucified Christ continues to suffer in the physical experience of the displaced and disinherited.” (Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, 178-179)

⁶¹ Conkin, *The Uneasy Center*, 194.

service, the officiants tried to reproduce antebellum customs as much as possible, with some adaptation due to wartime necessity: “We had just our usual soldiers’ bread, and the wine in two pewter cups, poured from a brown stone pitcher; and there was no white linen to represent that which was wrapped around the Savior’s body” Fiske recalled, “but every thing seemed decent and in order, and we all enjoyed the season as if it were the very institution of the ordinance in that upper room in Jerusalem.” Even more soldiers attended communion services held nearly a year later in each division of the Fourth Army Corps headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. “[H]undreds gladly embraced the precious privilege of commemorating the Saviour’s dying love[,]” T.R. Ewing, General Field Agent recalled. “It was touching to notice strong men, heroes of a score of battles, weeping like children as they heard and obeyed the command, ‘Do this in remembrance of me.’”

However, not all Protestants were so eager to attend communion services. In the winter of 1863-1864, Confederate officer William Thomas Poague of the Army of Northern Virginia, recalled that when an Episcopal missionary visited camp to hold communion, some Baptists did not attend. The reason for this stemmed from the fact that some Protestant denominations emphasized communion more than others. Only Lutherans and some Episcopalians believe that the bread and wine represent a physical miracle. Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists believe that during the

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63 Sears, *Mr. Dunn Browne’s Experiences in the Army*, 241. When Fiske mentioned the upper room in Jerusalem, he was referring to the Jewish Temple.


Communion Service Christ is represented spiritually in the elements, and the believer receives him as a spiritual blessing. Congregationalists and Baptists think of the Communion Service as a memorial to Jesus Christ’s life and death. By understanding these denominational differences, it makes sense that Baptists would be less likely to attend a communion service, while an Episcopalian missionary would favor holding one. In this sense, denominational differences persisted in the midst of war.

Alongside communion, mass was observed in the Union and Confederate armies throughout the conflict, wherever significant numbers of Roman Catholics congregated. Unlike Protestant services of the period, mass did not require audience participation. Confederate Chaplain Louis-Hippolyte Gache held weekday mass at 8 AM in the chaplain’s room with normally about four or five in attendance. On Sundays, Gache said mass at 10 AM, with the few who could fit inside his tent. Mass could be a much larger event, according to Union Chaplain William Corby. After a military signal was issued, soldiers and their officers marched to the “church tent.” At this nexus of religious activity, Corby explained, “the priests, vested in rich silk vestments embroidered with gold and artistic needle-work, begin Holy Mass, in presence of the several thousand men and officers on whose bright, neat uniforms the gold ornaments sparkle in the sunlight.” Not surprisingly, the time of day influenced attendance at mass. Confederate Chaplain Louis-Hippolyte Gache wrote how few men attended an early morning mass in May

66 Williams, What Americans Believe and How They Worship, 127-128.
68 Gache, A Frenchman, A Chaplain, A Rebel, 93.
69 Corby, Memoirs of Chaplain Life, 100.
1861 while the last mass at 10:30 drew a large crowd. By September of that same year, Gache could not contain his frustration at his regiment’s lack of attendance at Sunday morning mass, noting that two or three officers and forty men attended an early September service, when the regiment contained at least six hundred Catholics.\footnote{Gache, \textit{A Frenchman, A Chaplain, A Rebel}, 35-36, 48.}

As in the peacetime church, wartime mass required the construction of an altar, and the camp provided plenty of manpower for this task.\footnote{See figure of a rustic altar in Corby, \textit{Memoirs of Chaplain Life}, 264-265.} Union Chaplain William Corby supervised the construction of an altar in a camp in the dense woodlands of Virginia. Beginning with the shelter for the altar, constructed of pine branches fastened to a tree, the soldiers “drove four crotched sticks in the ground and put two short pieces, about two and a half feet in length, from one crotch across to the other . . . cut down a tree, and having cut off a length about six feet, split the log in two, and placed the pieces of split timber, flat side up, lengthwise, to form the table of the altar.” After the completion of the altar and before proceeding with mass, Corby dressed it with linens and lit two candles.\footnote{Corby, \textit{Memoirs of Chaplain Life}, 37-38.} When on the move, however, altar construction required more improvisation. During the Peninsular campaign, Corby utilized an altar built “not of carved walnut, or of costly cypress, or bird's-eye maple, but of cracker boxes, supported by a light frame-work, forming a quasi-table, with room enough to place on it the altar stone, cards, missal, etc.”\footnote{Ibid., 51.} Regardless of the materials used in its construction, the altar emerged as a pivotal part of Catholic sacred space, without which clergy could not hold mass.
Like their antebellum peers, Catholic spiritual leaders also eagerly listened to soldiers confess their mortal sins. From the middle of May 1861, Father Gache daily heard confessions and administered communion to eager Confederates. Union Chaplain Corby thought highly of the rite of confession, writing in his memoir, "There is no more consoling sacrament established by our Lord, than the Sacrament of Penance-confession. It seems to have for those who rarely find opportunity to receive it, an infinite charm when unexpectedly brought within their reach." In March 1862, less than a day before an anticipated battle, Corby sat down on the roots of a tree and courted soldiers who wished to confess. A few months later, Corby described hearing the confession of a soldier who had gone nearly an entire year in the army without seeing a priest. The soldier dropped to his knees while Corby sat on a cracker box. When finished, the soldier arose and cried out "O Father! I feel so light!" "From that moment on," Corby recalled, "he seemed to have new life and courage."

While Catholics relied on sacraments and liturgy, the recitation of hymns or other types of devotional music helped to define Protestant sacred space. In the antebellum era, hymns were essential to the participatory nature of Protestant services, especially

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74 Confession is one part of the Catholic Church’s four-fold Sacrament of Penance. The other acts include contrition, satisfaction, and absolution. During confession, the penitent discusses with the Priest his unconfessed mortal sins. Through these four acts of penance, a priest forgives the penitent’s sins, thus preventing him from going to hell. (Williams, What Americans Believe, 46-47).


76 Corby, Memoirs of Chaplain Life, 44.

77 Ibid., 34.

78 Ibid., 43.

those of Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians.80 This practice continued in Civil War camps. During prayer, soldiers often sang hymns which reminded them of “memories of home and loved ones, and of the dear old church far away.”81 According to a late 1863 letter by Confederate Chaplain William Banks, tone and rhythm mattered little to soldiers who sang “their tunes too low and . . . too slow making little or no difference between whole & half or quarter-notes.”82 At the beginning of an autumn 1862 prayer meeting, Confederate soldiers sang “How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!”83 Private David Holt of the 16th Mississippi Regiment noted this particular hymn’s power. “Everyone sang with a will. We could feel the Spiritual presence of our Lord as a kind of heart manifestation of His love. I never heard such singing in my life,” he recalled about a service held in the winter of 1863-1864. “I looked around at the glowing faces of these seasoned warriors who seemed to be receiving some kind of inspiration,” he continued, “and a new hope, and the impulse of a sublime courage.”84

Like their Confederate adversaries, Union soldiers enjoyed singing hymns which reminded them of churches. Only months into the conflict, Chaplain John Adams wrote about the nightly Psalm singing at the door of his tent, close to the camp-chest holding

80 Conkin, The Uneasy Center, 206. In the antebellum period, during Sunday free worship the congregation usually sang three to five hymns. (Conkin, The Uneasy Center, 206).

81 John William Jones, Christ in the Camp or Religion in the Confederate Army (Richmond: B.F. Johnson & Co., 1887), 250.

82 William Banks to Mary, November 1, 1863, William Banks Papers, 1853-1880, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

83 William W. Bennett, A Narrative of the Great Revival Which Prevailed in the Southern Armies During the Late Civil War Between the States of the Federal Union (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1876), 206.

84 Cockrell and Ballard, A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia, 233.
the hymn books.85 Charles Humphreys, the Unitarian chaplain of the Second Massachusetts Cavalry Volunteers, asked for volunteers to sing in an early autumn Sunday regimental service in 1863. Nineteen soldiers responded, and later sang accompanied by the twelve bass instruments belonging to the regimental band.86 In April 1863, Chaplain Louis Beaudry of the Fifth New York Cavalry elicited more interest among the men in attending the singing school than in normal religious meetings. Of the eighteen men who attended a prayer meeting, Chaplain Beaudry recalled a few months earlier, only four joined him in prayer, whereas all sang with heartfelt emotion.87

According to Chaplain John Robie of the 21st New York Volunteers, successful clergy needed singing ability. “[O] ne who can sing can call a congregation together on a hundred occasions,” Robie argued, “where one who cannot sing must forgo the pleasure of preaching.”88 More than just creating delightful music, the singing of these hymns helped soldiers identify together through their common Christian heritage.

Like antebellum missionaries, United States Christian Commission delegates actively promoted these joyous and hopeful songs. A delegate from Philadelphia, George Brinthurst, argued that the Gospel reached the soldiers through “the strains of music set to Psalms and Hymns” and “the sweet songs of Zion wooed many a prodigal


Brinhurst recalled that several USCC delegates, in the war’s first year, were enamored with the hymn, “Rock of Ages” singing it at Fortress Monroe and Yorktown. After the Wilderness battles in May 1864, another delegate sang the hymn “Rest for the weary” with a wounded soldier recuperating in Fredericksburg. A second wounded soldier, injured in the thigh by a shell, heard the hymn and was calmed by it. “O, how that hymn cheered me!” The soldier later remarked to Baker. “I forgot my painst whilst I listened to it; and I know it cheered many of the boys.”

Music and musical accompaniment also helped to enforce a religious order to the armies in camp. On any given Sunday, camp music signaled the time for church and accompanied men to the prayer site. From the country’s earliest days, music contributed to Christian worship in America. However, instead of the more conventional organ used in many antebellum churches, especially among Catholics, Lutherans, and Episcopalians, Civil War soldiers were more familiar with the bugler and the regimental band. The regimental bugler sounded the call for church at 9:45 AM. Forty-five minutes later the regimental band, playing a quickstep, accompanied the men as they marched to the prayer site, a barn behind the regimental colonel’s headquarters. Music continued during the services, except during active campaigning when music

90 Ibid.
92 Conkin, *The Uneasy Center*, 197, 206-207.
93 Humphreys, *Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison*, 380.
might betray the regimental position to the enemy. During a Thanksgiving service in November 1863, a black Union soldier wrote about the sounds from waves and the post band which substituted for the organ: “the waves on the sea-beat shore seemed to partake of the majesty of the hour, and in low and gentle ripples made music on the sands. Every head was bared as the Post Band commenced to play some of the good old Orthodox airs of home-no doubt reminding many there assembled, of the day as observed at home.” These sounds undoubtedly helped soldiers connect with their wives, sisters, and mothers worshipping on the home front.

Civil War and antebellum spiritual leaders often relied on physical elevation in preparing a formal space for prayer, while also signifying the clergyman’s own religious authority. By standing on a raised platform, a religious figure maintained distance from his congregants and promoted communication with the divine. Union Chaplain Thomas Kinnicut Beecher described the construction of a prayer space during chaplains’ drills, more commonly known as prayer meetings, which began with the assembly of just such an elevated position: “Chaplains’ drill opens with a box-drag by two, of a very greasy box on which hospital pork is cut by day, to a convenient site, whereon the Chaplain stands and swings his lantern. When enough gather around to say ‘We,’ the Chaplain begins to talk.”

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95 Adams, On the Altar of Freedom, 85.
96 Kilde, When Church Became Theatre, 19.
97 Kunin, God’s Place in the World, 30. A raised space engendered positive valence energy while a lowered space caused negative valence energy. (Kunin, God’s Place in the World, 34.)
98 Chaplain Thomas Kinnicut Beecher, 141st New York Volunteer Infantry, in The Spirit Divided Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: The Union, 77. This account is from an October 1862 letter written to the Elmira Weekly Advertiser and Chemung County Republican (Elmira, NY).
recounted his elevated position when conducting services. At an April 1863 mass near Fredericksburg, Sheeran explained how he “ascended a little platform erected for the occasion.”⁹⁹ A year later, at the nearby camp of Wilcox’s Alabama Brigade, he also preached from an elevated platform, which another chaplain called “the stand.”¹⁰⁰

Regardless of the space, like antebellum clergy, Civil War chaplains or missionaries ministered individually to men in the field. While in camp, most chaplains allowed soldiers or officers to reach them at any time for religious consolation and prayer. Even though he could not hold a public service, Union Chaplain John Ripley Adams explained in November 1862: “My tent is always open for prayer, singing, and conversation.”¹⁰¹ In March 1863 Union Chaplain Joseph Hopkins Twichell urged his flock “to come to my quarters without reserve and at any time . . . they need never fear interrupting me or delaying me in any engagement, for to receive such visits was not only my first pleasure but my first business also.”¹⁰² Union soldier George F. Cram provided a soldier’s view of his chaplain’s interactions with enlisted men: "He is a model man and well fitted for an army chaplain, very frequently he comes into our tent and spends the evening with us, always talking hopefully of the future."¹⁰³ Through these


¹⁰² Peter Messent and Steve Courtney, eds., *The Civil War Letters of Joseph Hopkins Twichell: A Chaplain’s Story* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), 219. Usually near the surgeon’s tent, the chaplain’s tent was located on the right side of the rectangular camp (Maryniak, "Ministry in the Camps" in *The Spirit Divided: The Union*, 38)

¹⁰³ Bohrnstedt, *Soldiering with Sherman: Civil War Letters of George F. Cram*, 78.
informal interactions with soldiers, Civil War clergy extended their spiritual reach beyond formal worship services.

Although open to conversations with all soldiers, the clergy in the field seemed to mirror the attitudes of their home denominations. Antebellum and wartime evangelical clergy sought a formal religious landscape free of hierarchies and status roles. In camp near Falmouth, Virginia, midway through the war, Union Chaplain John Stuckenberg, recalled two incidents of this egalitarian worship. General Howard, his staff, and orderlies, attended a routine Sunday night prayer meeting at his headquarters. Both privates and officers also gathered at a second prayer meeting held in the chaplain’s tent. Only a month before the end of the war, a USCC delegate presided over a chapel service at another Union general's headquarters. Preaching to a crowded house, the delegate ministered to officers (including the general) and enlisted men who sat together for three hours. Not limited to the Union armies, Confederate evangelicals also strove to provide a religious space free of hierarchy. Chaplain William Wiatt, a Baptist minister, addressed officers and men as equals. During the autumn of 1862 Wiatt talked to a soldier serving as a nurse at the hospital tent about salvation. The next week, Wiatt met several times with Lt. Berry in his tent to discuss Berry’s troubled religious state. By the end of their conversations, Berry “rejoiced in heart on

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104 Kunin, *God’s Place in the World*, 49. This religious egalitarianism practiced in the camp differed from the hierarchies of holiness in the Jewish Temple. (Kunin, *God’s Place in the World*, 51.)


account of the blessed dealings of God with him.”108 In the summer of 1863, a soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia heard Rev. Dr. Lacy deliver a fast day service to a motley crew: several generals, over a thousand soldiers, and the officers’ female relatives. Lacy’s address crossed class boundaries to illuminate a core precept of evangelical Christian theology: how faith makes one a better person.109

While evangelical clergy strove to create an egalitarian worship experience, non-evangelical chaplains did not always follow the same practices. Rank mattered most to Roman Catholic and Episcopalian clergy accustomed to pre-war church hierarchy. While also ministering to the rank and file, these chaplains, including William Corby and Charles Quintard, granted religious preference to officers and their staffs. After granting Corby permission to use the division’s large hall for religious services, General Coldwell attended the event, where officers were given priority seating. “The officers were seated in front, and back to the door and away out on the grounds,” Corby explained, while “the men of the brigade, and others, in devotional reverence, clustered to hear Mass.”110 Serving in the Army of the Tennessee, Confederate Chaplain Quintard, “often preached before distinguished congregations . . . when Generals Johnston, Polk, Cheatham and nearly all the general officers and staffs were present.”111 On the 3rd Sunday in Advent, in December 1864, Quintard administered a Litany and Holy Communion at Army...

108 Wiatt, Confederate Chaplain William Edward Wiatt, 8.
Headquarters. At another Advent observance a week later, Quintard, after administering Holy Communion to those gathered in General Polk’s parlor, went into a separate room to convert and administer the consecrated elements to two other high ranking officers.112 Once soldiers left the camp environment, however, this attention to hierarchy dissolved. While the Army of Northern Virginia traveled through Maryland before Gettysburg, Confederate Samuel Pickens attended a Catholic church in Hagerstown. Alongside other enlisted men and Generals Ewell and Rodes, Pickens heard the clergymen use verses from Matthew Chapter fifteen to reflect on the importance of prayer.113

Drawn by their Christian faith, military clergy built on antebellum techniques to provide innovative methods of face-to-face conversions in the camp. A devout Roman Catholic, Union chaplain William Corby, baptized a man a half hour before his execution by firing squad. "Now, you are a Christian[,]" he stated after dunking him in water, "offer your life to God in union with the sufferings of Christ on the cross." According to Corby the man’s disposition softened “as the light of faith, secured to him by the sacrament, seemed to show in his countenance."114 Other conversions were more difficult, since some soldiers resisted changing their old ways. In a March 1863 letter, Confederate Chaplain Pere Louis-Hippolyte Gache explained his difficulty in converting the members

112 Elliot, Doctor Quintard, Chaplain C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee, 193-194. On three different occasions in late 1864, Quintard ministered to only commissioned officers. At one of these sessions, he read a few verses and then prayed with General Carter, speaking about atonement and the savior. (Elliot, Doctor Quintard, Chaplain C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee, 170, 191, 193.)

113 Hubbs, Voices from Company D, 179.

114 Corby, Memoirs of Chaplain Life, 126.
of secret societies to Catholicism. One prospective convert changed his mind after hearing that the Church condemned Freemasonry. “Without telling me openly what his ultimate choice was to be,” Gache recalled, “he turned away sad, like the rich young man in the Gospel, and never came to see me again.”

Converted soldiers gained renewed religious awareness through wartime Bible classes, patterned after antebellum meetings and often taught by chaplains or missionaries. Lasting throughout the conflict, these classes attracted Union and Confederate soldiers interested in exploring scripture in an informal setting. Union surgeon John Bennitt of the 19th Michigan Infantry wrote that at his Bible class, “there seems to be an intelligent interest on the part of those attending which makes it pleasant to be there and I doubt not it will be profitable; for it leads us to more careful examination of the truth.” Private Wilbur Fisk concurred with this assessment, writing in March 1864, “a sort of Bible class is held every day in the Chapel, and where the boys that desire it may meet for studying the Scriptures, and for mutual improvement.” In May 1861, future Union Chaplain Benjamin Chidlaw spoke to a

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115 Active in the antebellum period, freemasons became more significant after the Civil War. For more information on freemasonry, see Mark C. Carnes, Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989) and Mary Ann Clawson, Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1989).


117 According to Chaplain Stewart, the members of the regimental Christian Association normally taught the bible classes in his regiment. (Alexander M. Stewart, Camp, March and Battle-field: or, Three Years and a Half with the Army of the Potomac (Philadelphia: James B. Rogers, Printer, 1865), 211)


Bible class of forty in the quarters of the ‘Oberlin Rifles’ in Camp Dennison.  

Midway through the war, on a late July afternoon, Union Chaplain Francis Springer held his first Bible class, among the 1st Arkansas Infantry.  

A month later, his regiment’s interest in these classes had not waned for Springer easily convinced the soldiers to attend another Bible class. “I went through our reg’t, from company to company saying there would be a bible class on yon shady hill,” he remarked “whoever had leisure & inclination might go there in five or ten minutes. Taking my position on that appointed time & place, I sung the "Star of Bethlehem." There was soon quite a good congregation about me.”  

Confederate soldiers also maintained a keen interest in these activities. For example, in February 1863, Confederate Chaplain Abner Crump Hopkins met with his Bible class of approximately thirty in the Brigade Court Martial house where they discussed the first chapter of Matthew.  

The informal format of these classes allowed clergy to gain great familiarity with their parishioners, just like in the antebellum era. To lead his Bible class, Union Chaplain Alexander Stewart simply squatted upon the ground surrounded by officers and enlisted men. He then read and commented on a chapter or two of the Bible, before

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120 Henrietta Chidlaw, “Sunset and evening star”: In Memoriam of Rev. Benjamin Williams Chidlaw (Utica, NY: T.J. Griffiths, 1894), 19-20. Benjamin Childlaw was elected chaplain of the 39th Ohio Volunteer Infantry on August 14, 1861. (Chidlaw, “Sunset and evening star”, 21)  


122 Ibid., 64-65.  

123 Abner Crump Hopkins, diary entry, February 15, 1863, Box 1, Folder 1, Abner Crump Hopkins Diary, 1862 April 28-1863 December 19, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond. The first chapter of Matthew describes the genealogy and birth of Jesus. See Matthew 1:1-25.
members of the class asked questions. By this method, soldiers and their spiritual leaders spent many an afternoon conversing about larger questions of religious faith.

These conversations often carried over to the individual tents of soldiers which emerged as sites of religiosity, decentralized sacred spaces under only the nominal supervision of clerical observers. This wartime religious space substituted for the antebellum home as a place for prayer. Writing during the first year of the war, an unknown soldier in the 19th Virginia explained how on any given night prayers could be heard in one or more of the regiment’s tents. Midway through the conflict, Union Chaplain Andrew Jackson Hartsock recalled congregated men singing hymns, asserting “nothing sounds so well as hymns sung in quarters and we do have a good deal of it.” Near the end of the war, soldiers only became more interested in these sites of religiosity, according to the observations of Chaplain William Eastman of the 72nd New York and a visiting New York pastor. To listen in on the prayers, Eastman and the pastor had to move behind the tent. “The language of [the] prayers betrayed a rather rude simplicity,” Eastman recalled, “but they fairly burned with a flame of blood earnestness and my companion said to me, “If I could hear my Fifth Avenue saints praying like that, I should know that a great revival was coming in New York.”

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124 Stewart, *Camp March and Battlefield*, 334.
125 Kunin, *God’s Place in the World*, 55.
126 Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 266.
127 Duram, *Soldier of the Cross*, 83.
Throughout the war both Union and Confederate soldiers congregated in areas reminiscent of antebellum revivals, the open air made sacred by the appearance of a clergyman or a community of believers worshipping together.129 According to Union Chaplain Henry Clay Trumbull, regimental chaplains in active service alternated between open air and closed meetings held in a building or tent: “It was sometimes one thing and sometimes another; and this very variety gave an added attractiveness and rest to the chaplain’s ministry and work, in the gatherings of his men for their instruction and influence.”130 Another Union chaplain, Frederic Denison, recalled that during the first two years of the war, services were normally held in either groves or in open fields. When Denison moved to the Department of the South in 1863, he held religious exercises in the open air in forts and entrenchments. They consisted of song, prayer, the reading of scripture, and a discourse, accompanied by regimental singing.131 While campaigning with Grant’s Army, in the Spring of 1864, Union Chaplain Henry Trumbull explained that open air meetings were so prevalent because there was no time to obtain chapel tents or to build chapel-booths. “The only way to gather the men for worship,” Trumbull declared, “was on the open field where we bivouacked-by the roadside as we halted on a march, or in a shady ravine within reach, if we had a few hours of rest in a


130 Henry Clay Trumbull, War Memories of an Army Chaplain (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1898), 15.

131 Frederic Denison, A Chaplain’s Experience in the Union Army (Providence, RI: The Society, 1893), 24 and 27.
wooded region." His enemy, James Pickens of the Army of Northern Virginia, confirmed this observation, recalling an April 1864 service: "At 11 o’clock we attended preaching which was held in open air on a hillside above our camp; services by Rev. Mr. Curry. Text, Galatians, IV Chap. 4th & 5th verses." These verses reminded the soldiers of the redemption expected by those who believed in Jesus.

Confederate chaplains Robert Bunting and Thomas Hart Law both saw these open-air meetings as essential for soldiers who might otherwise not be able to pray. A couple of years earlier, while actively campaigning from a base at Kentucky’s Camp Hardee, Bunting explained that circumstances permitting large numbers of soldiers would assemble in the groves for worship. Confederate soldiers serving in forts such as North Carolina’s Fort Caswell also worshipped outdoors. In July 1863, the fort’s Presbyterian chaplain, Thomas Hart Law, held a prayer meeting with soldiers detailed from Fort Caswell’s garrison. These services were held “in the woods, under the pines,” where Law had only “a barrel, to place my books, & the men sat around on stools, kegs, & planks attached from stool to stool.” Spartan arrangements did not prevent soldiers from worshiping together in outdoor spaces.

Far from a day of rest, the Christian Sabbath kept spiritual leaders busy from dawn to dusk, presiding over religious activities throughout the camps. Much like antebellum

132 Trumbull, War Memories of an Army Chaplain, 32-33.
133 Hubbs, Voices from Company D, 251. Galatians 4:4-5 reads “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”
135 Thomas Hart Law, July 24, 1863 journal entry, Thomas Hart Law Journal, 1860-1865, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.
clergy, wartime religious leaders worked harder and longer on the Sabbath, officiating over numerous regimental services, prayer meetings, and funerals. Union Chaplain Charles Humphreys explained his hectic schedule on any given Sunday: "Sometimes besides the morning service in the barn and the three services in the hospital there was a regimental service at dress parade in the afternoon, and frequently a soldier's funeral."\textsuperscript{136} Confederate Chaplain William Wiatt, also had more than enough work on Sundays. On November 30\textsuperscript{th} 1862 he preached during a morning service and in the evening held a baptism ceremony, before officiating over a prayer meeting. A month later, Wiatt spent his Sunday visiting the sick in the tent hospital, holding a prayer service in the morning, distributing tracts, and officiating at two prayer meetings, one in the afternoon and another in the evening.\textsuperscript{137} Soldier accounts confirm that they appreciated the clergy's hard work on Sundays. Union Captain Samuel Fiske explained in the autumn of 1862: "Who dare say that there is no Sabbath day to the soldier, no worship of God in the camp? Let him come and see a regiment of eager men gathered together under the rays of a burning sun at noonday, after a week's hard marching and drilling, to hear the word of God preached and join in prayer and praise; standing up too through a service of nearly an hour."\textsuperscript{138}

Like in the pre-war decades, wartime services proceeded in a uniform, ordered fashion. Union Chaplain Charles Humphreys began by repeating “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.” Next, came silent prayer before the singing of Watt’s hymn “From all that dwell below the skies” to the tune of “Old

\textsuperscript{136} Humphreys, \textit{Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison}, 14.

\textsuperscript{137} Wiatt, \textit{Confederate Chaplain William Edward Wiatt}, 15, 23.

\textsuperscript{138} Sears, \textit{Mr. Dunn Browne’s Experiences in the Army}, 16.
Hundred.” This was followed by scripture reading, prayer, and an “address on three things that abide—Truth, Goodness, God.” Immediately following was Wesley’s hymn “Love divine, all love excelling.” Lasting less than half an hour, the service ended with a benediction.¹³⁹

The soldiers understood the power of these massive Sabbath services, based on antebellum guidelines. Samuel Fiske remembered an August 1863 service he attended in which the whole division, including the drum corps, the chaplains, and three bands, participated in front of its headquarters. His description illustrated how the pre-war Sabbath became fused with civil religion during wartime. “Our pulpit was a platform of rails crossed by several endboards from our big wagons, our hymn books the admirable little collection, the "Soldiers Hymns," and the bands played us the "Star Spangled Banner" and "America," Fiske recalled, “and we remembered the conquest of Sumter and Wagner reported in the yesterday's papers, and mingled a little of secular patriotism with our religious services in a way that might seem somewhat incongruous at home perhaps[.]” According to Fiske, “Best of all was the good, earnest, religious and patriotic speech which our general, under the inspiration of the occasion, was "moved in spirit" to add unto the sermon, and which showed him as eloquent a speaker and earnest a Christian as he is a valiant soldier.”¹⁴⁰ In this case, both clergy and secular officers worked together to facilitate a wartime civil religion, which would reach its height in the general hospital and prison.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Humphreys, Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison, 13.

¹⁴⁰ Sears, Mr. Dunn Browne’s Experiences in the Army, 161.

¹⁴¹ Chapter seven will discuss how civil religion reached its height in the prison and general hospital.
Besides formal prayer services, spiritual leaders often held well-attended prayer meetings where soldiers communed with God. Although part of antebellum life, Civil War prayer meetings were more intense occasions. At these meetings, believers and seekers marked out a space for religion amidst the profaneness of camp life. According to Union soldier George F. Cram, at these regularly held meetings, both church members and non-members “make it a point and esteem it a privilege to attend.” Each site touched some participating soldiers. “There is many a Bethel scattered over the battle-fields and camping grounds of the present war,” USCC Delegate J. R. Miller explained, “each of them sacred to some soul who there held sweet communion with God.” Often these prayer meetings were held near army headquarters, close to the center of the military unit, adding to the sanctity of the space. For example, in September 1863, J. R. Miller recalled pitching the USCC tent, site of prayer meetings, only a few rods from General Meade’s headquarters in the Army of the Potomac. Delegate Rev. George E. Street described the normal order of the exercises held there. Singing before everyone was seated, followed by prayer, a reading of the Scriptures, and a twenty minute sermon, before the meeting was opened to all for an hour. During this period, soldiers narrated religious experiences and new converts or returning backsliders exhorted. Finally, the ceremony closed with a

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142 George C. Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 129.

143 Bohrnstedt, *Soldiering with Sherman*, 91.

144 Miller, “Two Civil War Notebooks of James Russell Miller Part I,” 86. Bethel is a Hebrew word which means house of God.

145 Sacred space is situated at the center. (Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 22)

146 Miller, “Two Civil War Notebooks of James Russell Miller Part I,” 75.
benediction, although often soldiers remained to converse or obtain religious reading material. Deleg. Rev. H. Q. Butterfield held numerous prayer-meetings in the tents of the wounded on an October weekend. On those two days, he held short, ten to fifteen minute services which touched those in attendance. “As I explain 2 Cor. 5:1, and contrast the torn and dissolving tent with the solid “house not made with hands,” showing the glorious privilege of passing from the one to the other,” Butterfield recalled, “the tears fill the soldier’s eyes to think how his poor tent lies torn and battered; and his soul is filled with longings to enter the house.”

Like the pre-war South, prayer meetings served as manifestations of the sacred within Confederate camps. Serving for the entire length of the war, Chaplain William Wiatt noted in his diary that prayer meetings were held nearly every day. Wiatt actively sought to hold these meetings, and found a substitute if he could not lead one due to illness. Often prayer meetings would be held in the afternoon or evening, and on Sunday evenings after the regular morning services. According to Chaplain William Banks soldiers offered up many earnest prayers at these meetings, with a special interest in praying “for their wives and children at home.” Thus, prayer meetings served to link soldiers with worship practices at home.

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148 Holding prayer meetings in tents of the wounded substantiates Thomas Tweed’s conception of dwelling. According to Tweed, “as clusters of dwelling practices, religions orient individuals and groups in time and space, transform the natural environment, and allow devotees to inhabit the worlds they construct.” (Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 82)


151 William Banks to Mary, letter, January 18, 1863, William Banks Papers, 1853-1880, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.
Antebellum and wartime missionary-led prayer meetings greatly affected the participants. William Reynolds, a USCC representative visiting the Army of the Mississippi in the Spring of 1863, recalled a confrontation with a soldier after a prayer meeting. Seeking help from the clergyman, the man articulated a desire to give up the profane influences which had been directing his life. “I want a discharge from the devil’s army,” he exclaimed. “I’ve been fighting and serving in his ranks for twenty-five years, and I’m tired and sick of the service. I want to leave his ranks and enlist under the banner of the cross, and fight for Jesus the balance of my life.”152 This type of response motivated clergy to minister in the camp environment.

No matter the skill of the preacher, as in the pre-war period, weather directly affected the attendance at prayer meetings.153 According to Delegate J. R. Miller, coming to religious meetings on stormy nights might jeopardize one’s health: “there is a sort of dangerous fatality about prayer meetings that renders it extremely deleterious to health to attend them in any but the mildest and most propitious weather.”154 Union and Confederate chaplains alike reported that chilly temperatures, snow, wind, and rain contributed to low attendance and cancellations of camp religious services.155 This evidence calls into question Confederate Chaplain John William Jones’ numerous

152 Smith, Incidents Under Shot and Shell, 108.


155 Humphreys, Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison, 385, 418; Robert Audley Browne to his wife, letter, January 10, 1862, Robert A. Browne Papers, U.S. Army Military Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA.; Wiatt, Confederate Chaplain William Edward Wiatt, 9.
accounts in *Christ in Camp* of Confederate soldiers coming to prayer meetings in even the most extreme weather.\(^{156}\)

Good news, however, transcended the effects of torrential downpours or driving snow on the religious environment. While encamped at Camp Franklin, Virginia in February 1862, Union Chaplain John Adams held services even with four inches of snow on the ground. Owing to recent news of Union victories and addressing the providential thinking of the era, Adams explained to the men that they should recognize God’s hand in the recent victories. The service only lasted about ten minutes, although it contained singing, a reading of the first eight verses of the Forty-fourth Psalm, and prayer. The scriptural reading reinforced Adams’ theme: trying to get the men to recognize God’s hand in victory, by explaining God’s role in helping the Israelites defeat their enemies. Even in this short time, the service provided “A good opportunity to show the men that, with all our exultation, it is not the "bow" or the "sword" that is to save us, but the arm of the Lord, who will not give his glory to another."\(^ {157}\)

Of course, good weather heightened religious sentiment in camp and brought men out to hear the gospel. Writing from a camp near Chattanooga, Tennessee in July 1862, Confederate Chaplain Robert Bunting noted good weather facilitated regular preaching. Summer’s warm days and cool nights allowed Bunting the ability to preach regularly.

\(^{156}\) See Jones, *Christ in Camp*, 249. This discrepancy can be attributed to the Lost Cause’s influence on Jones. Thus, Miller’s account is more likely to be accurate. For more on the Lost Cause, see especially Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980); Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South 1865 to 1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

during the Sabbath. Bunting hoped the Lord would bless his endeavors as he tried “to sow the seed” among his flock.158

Regardless of the weather, the observances of antebellum festival days, times of great jubilation, allowed religious leaders to hold special services in the camp. These holidays included: Thanksgiving, St. Patrick’s Day, Christmas, and Easter. Observed by Union Chaplain John Adams and the Fifth Maine in August 1863, the Thanksgiving service brought out the entire brigade, except those on picket, including the General and his staff.159 This service allowed soldiers in concert with clergy to practice a new form of civil religion. In October 1863, Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving a national holiday, and it was widely celebrated within the Union camp, beginning one month later. As described by an African American soldier, the first Thanksgiving in camp, even without “the odor of pumpkin pies, plum puddings, and wine sauce, nor the savory roasts, boils and "schews" familiar to the Yankee homes of New England” felt like a New England Thanksgiving day. “The famed cathedrals of the Old World never presented a scene more grand, majestic, and impressive,” the soldier explained “than the volunteer soldiers of a great and powerful Republic, gathered in a solid mass, with the arching dome of heaven for their temple, acknowledging their dependence on the mighty King of kings.”160 Catholics envisioned St. Patrick’s Day as “a day of devotion and thanksgiving to God for the gift of faith and means of salvation” with a required

158 Cutrer, Our Trust is in the God of Battles, 71.

159 Adams, Memorial and Letters of Rev. John R. Adams, 123. The November thanksgiving holiday as observed in twenty-first century America, was also celebrated in the camp. Only after Abraham Lincoln’s Thanksgiving Proclamation in October 1863 did Thanksgiving become an annual holiday. Since it was instituted by the Union during the war, Confederate soldiers did not observe this holiday.

To celebrate St. Patrick’s Day in March 1863, Union Chaplain William Corby, constructed a rustic church, containing an altar. Union Chaplain Robert Browne observed Christmas Eve in 1862 with an evening worship service. Confederate Chaplain Charles Quintard celebrated both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in 1864, with prayers at General Clayton’s headquarters. In addition, he led another round of Christmas Day prayers at General Lowry’s headquarters in Brown’s Division. Combined with religious activities, soldiers focused on holiday foods. In their accounts, soldiers emphasized the diverse foods available on Christmas. “Apple dumplings, equalling a young mortar shell in weight, with rye whiskey sauce, was the principal item on the bill of fare. So far as my observation went,” a black soldier wrote “apple dumplings formed the first and last course, but the boys enjoyed them notwithstanding the seeming lack of talent in the pastry cooks.” This confluence between food and religious activities helped link the soldiers in the field with the activities of their relatives at home.

In addition to other holiday celebrations, Confederate Catholics, like their antebellum forbearers, felt a particular need to celebrate Christ’s resurrection during Easter. These celebrations occurred with more frequency during the second half of

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161 Corby, Memoirs of Chaplain Life, 140.
162 Ibid., 140-142.
163 Robert Audley Browne to his wife, letter, December 24, 1862, Robert A. Browne Papers, U.S. Army Military Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA.
164 Elliot, Doctor Quintard, Chaplain C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee, 109, 206.
166 The personal papers and memoirs reviewed for this dissertation reveal ample evidence of Confederate army chaplains celebrating Christ’s resurrection, but no comparable Easter celebrations among their Union counterparts.
the war, when casualties started to mount ever higher, and soldiers eagerly hoped for a rebirth in Christ. Keenly feeling the religious power of the day, Chaplain James Sheeran provided Easter Sunday mass in April 1863, near Fredericksburg. “But if it was edifying to see them standing in the snow before Mass commenced,” he recalled “how much more so to see them on their bended knees and with uncovered heads defying as it were the angry elements during the offering of the Holy Sacrifice.” After this rite, most soldiers received Holy Communion before reciting the rosary of our Blessed Mother.\(^{167}\)

On the eve of battle at Columbus in 1865, Confederate soldiers received the Easter sacrament from Charles Quintard. Quintard celebrated Holy Communion for the first time at 5:30 AM to a packed house. At the second service at 10:30 AM, the litany was spoken and he celebrated Holy Communion again.\(^{168}\)

In addition to joyous holidays, Civil War clergy celebrated the fast day, a wartime incarnation of the New England jeremiad.\(^{169}\) Fast days provided an opportunity for Confederate and Union spiritual leaders to blend devotion to God with nationalistic fervor for their respective states. Confederate President Jefferson Davis proclaimed these holidays as time set aside for fasting and prayer. On a fast day observance in mid-June 1862, Chaplain Joseph Cross sermonized from Jeremiah 14:8-9 “O the Hope of Israel, and the Savior thereof in time of trouble! Why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst


\(^{168}\) Elliot, *Doctor Quintard, Chaplain C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee*, 120.

thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that can not save? Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name. Leave us not."  

These verses helped contextualize this fast day observance, since in them, the people acknowledge their sins, and ask God for deliverance. On another fast day, nearly a year later, Cross preached from Psalm XX:5 to the Third Alabama Battalion in camp near Knoxville. This verse must have struck a cord among the assembled, since it offered a prayer for victory in the face of an enemy’s army. Chaplain Charles Quintard recalled receiving a letter about a fast day observance held in Shelbyville. After a sermon preached by an Alabama regimental chaplain, Colonel Yeatman from Polk’s staff delivered a war prayer expressing his hope that the Union’s “moral sensibilities might be awakened by the roar of our cannon and the gleam of our bayonets and that the stars and bars might soon wave in triumph through these beleaguered states!” Quintard preached from Isaiah LX:12 on a March 1865 fast day. According to this verse, a nation’s success was determined by its service to God, a timely message for Confederate troops on the brink of defeat, knowing that only God could save them. On this final fast day, Confederate soldier Samuel Pickens observed, “Gen. Lee has ordered all duty as far as possible to be suspended & requests that all chaplains hold religious services & that all unite in a

171 Ibid., 23. This verse reads “May we shout for joy over your victory, and in the name of our God set up our banners. May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.”
172 Elliot, Doctor Quintard, Chaplain C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee, 65.
173 Ibid., 246. Isaiah 60:12 reads “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste.”
proper observance of the day.” Unfortunately, rainy weather prevented public worship.\textsuperscript{174}

Union fast days, as in Confederate ranks, also allowed soldiers to fuse their antebellum civil religiosity with the Union cause. Midway through the war, George Squier of the 44\textsuperscript{th} Indiana Volunteer Infantry wrote to his wife about a fast day observance in Tennessee. He told her about the afternoon sermon and evening prayer meeting while emphasizing the day’s special significance: ”Yesterday was the day set apart by the President for fasting (not feasting) and prayer.”\textsuperscript{175}

Like antebellum revivals, the changing seasons affected sacred time within the Confederate camp. During the antebellum era, winter allowed for more religious devotion. It was a time of protracted meetings, when agricultural laborers had few duties.\textsuperscript{176} Confederate Chaplain Louis-Hippolyte Gache explained how religiosity within the camp also varied according to the time of year. In an April 1862 letter, Gache explained that during a period of inactivity lasting from January to the middle of March poor weather, combined with the difficulties encountered on the march, made spiritual practices more difficult. With the beginning of Lent, however, a significant transformation occurred. A number of soldiers attended mass each morning, Gache recalled. Yet his activities continued through the night: “Every evening right after the seven o'clock roll-call, I conduct a service consisting of rosary, catechetical instruction, and night prayers, which is attended by thirty or forty persons. That’s about all that can fit into my little log

\textsuperscript{174} Hubbs, \textit{Voices from Company D}, 359.

\textsuperscript{175} Julie A. Doyle, John David Smith, and Richard M. McMurry, eds., \textit{This Wilderness of War: The Civil War Letters of George W. Squier, Hoosier Volunteer} (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 55.

\textsuperscript{176} Saum, \textit{The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America}, 71.
house. The number of confessions and Communions has picked up too; every day I have at least a few.”177

No matter the time of year wartime clergy often found that – much like their antebellum experience - diseased men fearing death turned to religion. The military camps soon became fertile grounds for private preaching, as approximately one eighth of all soldiers would die of disease spread in the cramped conditions of the wartime military camp.178 Even early in the war, not all clergy believed these were heartfelt professions of faith. In late 1862, Union Chaplain John Stuckenberg wrote in his diary that the sick professed religious convictions because they might die soon.179 Considering many soldiers accepted Jesus upon fear of death and the unknown while grasping for what historian Drew Gilpin Faust has described as the “Good” death, Stuckenberg’s brief remarks seem surprisingly apt.180

Just as in pre-war times, death entered the camp through formal Christian burial services. However, due to the high rate of wartime deaths camp burial services were more frequent than their antebellum predecessors. Union Chaplain Joseph Twichell described the need for these ceremonies, noting that "[n]othing is more repugnant to a civilized sense than the burial of a man as though he were a dog. This is the privilege of

177 Gache, A Frenchman, A Chaplain, A Rebel, 105.
179 Hedrick and Davis, I’m Surrounded by Methodists, 18. “Fear of death is so apt to be the strongest motive to become a professor during sickness[,]” Stuckenberg noted, “and the impressions made there are so apt to be but transitory.” (Hedrick and Davis, I’m Surrounded by Methodists, 18)
180 See Drew Gilpin Faust, This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 3-31. Stuckenberg’s point about wartime religious devotion is not unique to dying soldiers. Other soldiers turned to faith to cope with the high probability of death during war.
the Chaplain to prevent.” United States Christian Commission delegates presided over many of these camp burials. A delegate in the Army of the Cumberland after the battle of Chickamauga, Rev. H. Q. Butterfield buried a soldier, whom he had ministered to earlier. Seeing a burial party passing without an accompanying chaplain, Butterfield hurried to overtake them before they reached the grave. He offered a prayer before lowering the body to its final resting place. In another incident from Falmouth in 1862 Rev. B. B. Hotchkin of Pennsylvania saw a party of soldiers about to bury nine of their comrades together in a trench without any prayers. Hotchkin convinced the burial party to allow him to hold services and provide the dead with a proper Christian burial.

The angst and joy of soldiers engaged in prayer with their religious leaders filled the vast open spaces of the military camp. Frequent and intense, these prayer opportunities occurred at a moment’s notice, when spiritual leaders encountered soldiers who required religious ministrations and consolation. Although operating in a new physical environment, clergy relied on antebellum religious strategies to minister to the men. Through rituals, sacred music, bible classes, Sabbath worship, prayer meetings, and festivals, Civil War clergy successfully replicated pre-war relationships between themselves and their parishioners, adapted to the wartime environment. At the same time, peacetime differences between Northern and Southern worship practices diminished in the wartime camp.

181 Messent and Courtney, The Civil War Letters of Joseph Hopkins Twichell, 18. A chaplain could not always direct a burial service for soldiers who died on the march. Confederate Capt. Blackford recalled a February 1863 burial where “A burying detail was made, and, shrouded only in his uniform, without rite or coffin, we laid him to rest in the oozy ground, a martyr to duty, a priceless sacrifice to his country” (Charles Minor Blackford, ed., Letters from Lee’s Army or Memoirs of Life In and Out of The Army in Virginia During the War Between the States (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947), 168)


183 USCC, First Annual Report, 62.
Worship practices developed in the Civil War camp, some influenced by antebellum relationships and others entirely new. In coping with this new wartime environment, clergy carved out physical spaces for religiosity, where they interacted with soldiers. The next chapter continues to discuss the construction of sacred space in camp by examining the clerical role in church building, battles between the sacred and the profane, and cultivating the camp’s religious diversity. It illuminates both new religious practices, and shows how antebellum religious life was reproduced in the military camp.
CHAPTER 5
CONSTRUCTING SACRED SPACE IN CAMP: CHURCHES, BATTLES, AND DIVERSITY

Introduction

In the wartime camp, religious space was vibrant and ever changing - a veritable beehive of activity. With many diverse groups of people living together, chaplains often found it difficult to motivate them and focus soldiers' energies on spiritual pursuits. Still wartime clergy were able to adapt antebellum norms and create new religious practices in the camp. Specifically, this chapter examines three main facets of the camp experience: church-building in the Union and Confederate armies; battles that clergy waged between the sacred and the profane; and religious diversity in the camp environment. In these arenas, sectarian differences blurred and regional religious differences between the North and South diminished.

Building Churches in the Civil War Armies

The most static representation of pre-war religious space, churches became synonymous with wartime spirituality. During wartime, however, clergy and soldiers only built churches when in winter camp or at another stationary post. Even these modest physical shelters helped promote spiritual life in the Civil War armies.¹ Within the Union armies, the United States Christian Commission aided church construction projects, providing Union chaplains with the supplies to build worship facilities. Even without a comparable institution, the Confederate armies funded and built many regimental and brigade chapels, especially within the Army of Northern Virginia. While on the march or

¹ George C. Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 120.
on campaign, soldiers often relied on improvised, and open-air spaces, the type of transitory space emblematic of antebellum revivals.

As in peacetime, funding wartime chapels depended on charity. Chaplain William Wiatt of the 26th Virginia funded his winter 1863 chapel by collecting subscriptions from the companies in his regiment. Additional funds paid for expenses arising from public worship, including soldiers' reading material. In the autumn of 1864, the “Soldiers’ Chapel,” an Episcopal institution located in Beaufort, SC, solicited donations to fund reading material and the relief of the poor.

Like their antebellum predecessors, chapels were the most noticeable and easily recognizable sacred spaces in the Union and Confederate camp. They operated “as nodal points” in a network of sacred places that define some larger religious landscape. Furthermore, they served, Jeanne Halgren Kilde explains, as “dynamic agents in the construction, development, and persistence of Christianity itself.” Spiritual leaders constructed permanent structures where the army stayed for an extended

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3 “Soldiers’ Chapel” (Beaufort, S.C.) MS, Oct. 1864, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

4 According to Eliade, the door of the church/chapel acted as a threshold between the sacred and the profane. Upon entering, one accessed sacred space which “reproduces Paradise or the celestial world.” Through this conception, “the interior of the church is the universe. The altar is paradise, which lay in the East. The imperial door to the altar was also called the Door of Paradise.” (Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 32, 61.)


period of time, such as winter camp or in 1864 along the Petersburg lines. They also built temporary chapels where soldiers desired more prayer opportunities. For example, in late October 1864, at a USCC station in Louisiana, continuous prayer meetings and conversions convinced the soldiers nearby to build a chapel to better accommodate devout soldiers. While a Catholic chapel might consist of an altar in a tent, larger Protestant structures were constructed of clapboards or logs covered by tent canvas.

Wartime chapel building waxed and waned along with the fortunes of war. During the war’s first year, as both sides adjusted to the scale and duration of the conflict, units occasionally constructed chapels; however, chapel building reached its pinnacle during the last two years of the conflict. Chaplain William Eastman recalled the increase in chapel construction during the winter of 1863-1864, when the USCC provided a large canvas covering to the log chapels built there. At Brandy Station in Virginia, the several brigade chapels could each accommodate over a hundred soldiers. In addition, the works before Petersburg contained an impressive log church constructed by a New York regiment in 1864. Used primarily for religious services, these chapels also housed lectures and other entertainment. Confederate chapels contained literary societies,

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7 For example, during the winter of 1864-1865, the Union army constructed thirty chapels while encamped near Winchester. (Edward Parmeelee Smith, *Incidents Under Shot and Shell: The Only Authentic Work Extant Giving the Many Tragic and Touching Incidents that Came Under the Notice of the United States Christian Commission During the Long Years of the Civil War* (Philadelphia: Edgewood Publishing Company, 1868), 384) Building chapels had practical value, since worshippers needed warmer accommodations when armies were in winter quarters. (Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples*, 304)


9 Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples*, 120.

10 The spike in chapel building in the war’s later years illustrates historian Allan Nevins point about the transition from an “improvised War” to an “Organized War.” See Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union*, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1959).
Sunday schools, Young Men's Christian Association meetings, libraries, and daily prayer meetings. ¹¹ Alexander Betts’ chapel even held a writing school which off-duty soldiers attended. ¹² These sources indicate that construction of formal churches increased as the war wore on and both sides realized they were in for the long haul. Moreover, both the Union and the Confederacy were developing ways to build real chapels that could be put up and taken down quickly, a key wartime adjustment.

Whereas antebellum clergy had ample time to construct their religious edifices, wartime chaplain accounts commonly described chapel construction as a hasty affair, relying on the ample manpower available in the camps. Built in a mere ten days in January 1864, Chaplain Joseph Twichell’s chapel existed for a short time before his regiment had to move. ¹³ The chaplain thought that breaking the chapel into pieces and moving it with the regiment would be easier than rebuilding it with new materials. ¹⁴ That same month, Chaplain Beaudry built a chapel in only five days, utilizing the free covering and stove provided by the United States Christian Commission. ¹⁵ The following February, the regiment needed only two weeks to build an even more intricate chapel tent. ¹⁶


¹⁶ Ibid., 201-202.
While individual chaplains had limited time and resources to build chapels, USCC delegates drew on their vast resources to build chapels which rivaled any prewar church’s workmanship. Built in the winter of 1864-1865, near the front in Virginia, Meade Station’s chapel was an impressive “twenty-three by forty-three feet, having on the front a porch six by seven, mounted with a belfry and spire fifteen feet high, made of small pine poles, arranged in squares and triangles [.]” Rough pine board seats faced the pulpit, a five foot wide breastwork supported by several columns. “The columns and spaces between are richly ornamented with pine rods,” the USCC’s official description read, “so artistically arranged as to present one of the most novel and beautiful pulpits ever preached in.” A Union soldier who helped build this chapel explained its effect on his subsequent religious life: “I have been converted here. I’ve been home since, and united with the old church, Dr. Plummer’s, in Allegheny City, but I can never-never forget this chapel. It has been the gate of heaven to me.”

Unlike antebellum chapel building, not all wartime construction went as planned. Chapel construction begun in the Eastern Armies in January 1865, and finished a month later, met delays and numerous other problems. After waiting eight days for the post commander to deliver promised aid, the delegates started construction by digging a trench for the stockade themselves. This finally brought out the commander who supplied a troop detail. However, a failure to obtain boards and the approach of stormy weather necessitated the use of a makeshift canvas roof, delaying the dedication until

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mid-February. Captured bounty-jumpers helped complete the rest of the chapel. “[T]he building was fairly plastered and shingled with oaths[,]” a delegate admitted, “for never did a wickeder set of men build a House for the Lord.”

Although some wartime chapels were impressive feats of construction and design, others were far more modest. A surgeon in the Army of the Potomac recalled how the Christian Commission loaned a large canvas to cover a brigade chapel built of logs. Enclosed by this canvas, the structures held up to three hundred people. Interiors of these log chapels often contained fireplaces, so Chaplain John Ripley Adams noted, “we can have service in stormy weather.” Several of these brigade chapels were constructed near Brandy Station in the winter of 1863-1864 and in the works before Petersburg. The Cincinnati committee provided several wooden chapels instead of tents to a few army units. Easy to ship and assemble, a twenty by sixty foot chapel with seats cost eight hundred dollars.

While peacetime chapels only saw service as religious institutions, some of these wartime chapels were originally common or profane spaces converted into sacred areas. In 1863, the USCC took over the “Sumter House,” in Alexandria, Virginia

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21 Ibid.
26 This idea clearly works with religious scholar Jonathan Z. Smith’s theoretical conception of situational sacred space. According to Smith, nothing “is inherently sacred or profane. These are not substantive
previously “a den of iniquity,” transforming that profane space into a spiritual haven. They held religious meetings there several times a week where previously only “the harsh jargon of rioting and excess” was heard.\(^27\) That same year, in another USCC station which served the Army of the Potomac, the delegates converted an old tobacco warehouse into a prayer space, while its church served as a barracks. The warehouse was cleared, the windows and ceiling covered over, and a table served as the pulpit. Men filled the daily weekday and Sabbath afternoon meetings, where “the preaching of the truth was made salvation to many erring souls.”\(^28\)

Like pre-war times, an official dedication affirmed the importance of religious space to both spiritual leaders and their flocks. In February 1862, Union Chaplain Alexander Morrison Stewart of the 102\(^{nd}\) Pennsylvania began one such service by delivering a sermon on the importance of this space before nearly all the regimental officers and many enlisted men. Preaching from Exodus XL: 17-19, a passage which describes how Moses set up the tabernacle, Stewart noted how “Worshippers of all nations and times have endeavored to satisfy a want within them to have a settled locality, a definite place, a grave, a mountain-top, a cave, a tabernacle, a church,—more sacred than all other spots,—where to pay their devotions to whatever god they chanced to worship.”\(^29\) This newly formed Bethel was to act “as a place for praise, for

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\(^28\) Ibid., 38.

\(^29\) Exodus XL: 17-19 states “In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was set up. Moses set up the tabernacle; he laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised its pillars; and he spread the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent over it; as the Lord had commanded Moses.”
thanksgiving, for instruction—here to be fed, to grow in grace, to hold sweet fellowship with each other and with God—here to have many seasons of precious enjoyment—and here, also, to induce others to come and share with us like enriching blessings." After Stewart concluded, the colonel of the 93rd Pennsylvania Volunteers spoke briefly before formally dedicating this space to the worship of Jesus Christ. Samuel Fiske, a captain in the Army of the Potomac, attended another dedication in February of 1864 of a church which could easily hold one hundred and fifty people. "It seemed actually like "going to meeting" again," he enthusiastically described "for we had a dozen ladies in the audience and good singing and a good sermon and good worship every way."

Although this dedication ceremony differed from King Solomon’s held in Jerusalem over two millennia before, the assembled worshippers had great faith in their endeavor. According to Fiske, "if the spirit of the Lord filled with a cloud of glory that temple built of fragrant cedar overlaid with shining gold, perhaps He was equally present with us in our temple of riven pine overlaid with Virginia mud."

All completed chapels helped convince those “hoping in Christ” to continue their devotion. After the completion of the USCC chapel at Bristow Station, a regimental chaplain stated “God’s Spirit descended at once.” Within four weeks of the chapel’s opening in March 1864, the seven hoping in Christ multiplied to sixty-one. Tally Simpson wrote in April 1863 of the baptism pool located under the pulpit where twelve

30 Stewart, *Camp, March and Battlefield: or, Three Years and a Half With the Army of the Potomac*, 106.
31 Ibid.
men were converted to the Baptist faith. “The evening was very cold, and it went very hard with the poor fellows,” he remembered. “It was a touching sight, and I could not help thinking of the account given in the New Testament when Jesus was baptized by John.”34 Once the chapel was built at the newly established USCC station at Warrenton Junction, Va. that same month services remained crowded and frequent conversions occurred. During the first four weeks of the station’s existence, approximately one hundred converted or were reclaimed, out of the several hundred engaged in serious reflection.35

By the same token, the loss of a chapel could prove disastrous for a spiritual leader’s religious agenda. Though rare in peacetime, the realities of war made this situation common. In the early spring of 1865, Union Chaplain Thomas Scott Johnson’s regiment encountered some difficulties after their chapel moved to a different camp. Without a regular regimental school, the men were encouraged to study in their quarters. However, the lack of systematic instruction and the interruptions caused by camp and fatigue duties disrupted their studies.36 In spite of these problems, the companies’ religious worship continued. Accompanied by a small contingent of religious soldiers, Johnson held Sabbath services in the open air and prayer meetings in the company streets. As a result, Johnson concluded, “a good state of religious freedom prevails among the men.”37


37 Ibid., 76.
Like in the antebellum period, chapels served as the center of religious life for many Civil War soldiers, especially in the later stages of the conflict. Under the watchful eye of their spiritual leaders, in these spaces soldiers learned about the teachings of Jesus Christ. As a result, when religious awakenings occurred in camps, chapel construction became a high priority.

**The Sacred and the Profane**

Integral to antebellum religious life, chapels served as nodal points in the landscape of wartime sacred space. Yet they could not prevent vice. Even though the devoted Christian soldier could participate in a myriad of religious activities, the camp remained a battleground between the sacred and the profane.\(^{38}\) Consistent with antebellum crusades against vice, these struggles became exaggerated due to wartime pressures, including the lack of women in a male dominated, military environment where sinners vastly outnumbered clergy, the guardians of virtue.\(^{39}\) Moreover, men enjoyed ample free time in camp, with little to do except engage in profane activities. Even so, clergy, soldiers, and even women, through letters to their sons from the homefront, together battled the bewildering array of vices in the army. In wartime, both Northerners and Southerners adopted the antebellum Northern evangelical philosophy that Christians had a responsibility for improving societal morals. These so-called religious “wars” raged throughout the conflict, with few clear victors.

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\(^{38}\) In contrast to sacred space, profane space also existed within the Union and Confederate camp. According to Eliade, profane space “represents complete nonhomogeneity and nonbeing[,]” and is “homogeneous and neutral; no break qualitatively differentiates the various parts of its mass.” (Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 22.)

\(^{39}\) In the antebellum period, two thirds of Protestant church members were women. (Bederman, “*The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough*: The Men and Religion Forward Movement of 1911-1912 and the Masculinization of Middle-Class Protestantism,” 111.)
Unlike the antebellum environment where women kept vice in check, the military camp served as the epicenter of vice and profaneness.40 Young men left to their own devices behaved differently than men around women and around their elders. According to an October 1861 diary entry penned by Union Chaplain Alexander Stewart, “A fearful amount of wickedness centers here. Every camp is a place where Satan's seat is. Drunkenness, profanity, gambling, all the devices of the evil one.”41 A little over a year later, Stewart’s view worsened. The majority of those serving in the armies, Stewart opined, practiced “daily more wickedness than a hundred of the worst Hindoos in India . . . profanity is the vulgar tongue of our camps. How a righteous God can give success, in arms, to such masses of pollution seems difficult to comprehend.”42 By January 1865, not much had changed in the Union army’s camp, according to missionary Rev. J. K. McLean and his traveling partner. During a visit to City Point, Virginia, they discovered the camp “reeking with profanity and fetid with vulgarity and obscenity.” These two men found themselves “drawn up before this stronghold of Satan, with, so far as we knew, not a single Christian in it; sin rampant; blasphemy stalking unrebuked; our only arms the little tracts and books we held,—light artillery indeed against such walls of sin.”43

This universal problem affected the Confederate camp as well. In June 1862, a Confederate soldier wrote how his chaplain constantly told soldiers to abstain from “the

40 Most Americans thought Civil War military camps were dens of iniquity. (Rable, God’s Almost Chosen Peoples, 92) At the same time that profane man distanced himself from the sacred, Eliade argues, he could not help but access the religious world, “preserving some vestiges of the behavior of religious man, though they are emptied of religious meaning.” (Eliade, The Sacred and Profane, 204.)

41 Stewart, Camp, March and Battlefield, 50.

42 Ibid., 257.

43 Smith, Incidents Under Shot and Shell, 338.
use of Ardent Spirits & profane swearing, two of the worst habits in an army—particularly the latter as an oath is always on the end of the tongue of at least three fourths.”

Chaplain Joseph Cross of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Tennessee explained some of the reasons why. Most importantly, “The soldier is exiled from the house of God, and in a great measure deprived of his blessed Sabbath.” Also, many soldiers belonged to regiments lacking chaplains and enough Bibles. “[F]ar removed from the conservative influences of home, and exposed to new and strange temptations,” Cross surmised, men became enticed by sinners in the camp environment.

Although present in peacetime America, vulgar speech flourished in a camp environment which lacked the infrastructure to police moral codes. Apparent from the beginning of the conflict, profanity remained a problem for both sides throughout the war. Clergy struggled to fight this omnipresent vice. According to the spiritual teachings of the era, blasphemy, in particular, would anger God and soldiers could expect him to punish them for this action. Approximately a week after his October 1861 commissioning, Union Chaplain Orange V. Lemon noted in his diary the profanity pervasive in Camp Murphy. “Never before had I heard such vulgar and obscene language,” he wrote. In a separate entry, Lemon railed against the evils of profanity and how it served no purpose in the army: “Like the foolish fish who bites at the naked hook he gets no “bait.” He only gets “caught upon a hook” from which through the

\textsuperscript{44} G. Ward Hubbs, ed., \textit{Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia} (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 91.


\textsuperscript{46} Rable, \textit{God’s Almost Chosen Peoples}, 98-99.

\textsuperscript{47} Orange V. Lemon, Saturday October 19, 1861, diary entry, Orange V. Lemon, Chaplain, 36\textsuperscript{th} Indiana Volunteer Infantry Diary, October 10, 1861 to January 14, 1862, folder four, Civil War Miscellaneous Box 57, U.S. Army Military Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA.
corruption of his own nature strengthened by constructed habit . . . he will find it difficult to escape."\textsuperscript{48} The 14\textsuperscript{th} Wisconsin's chaplain and the chaplain of the 145\textsuperscript{th} regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers both argued that the responsibility for soldiers' profanity rested with their officers.\textsuperscript{49} The Pennsylvania chaplain even composed a letter in the late autumn of 1862, to General Hancock, his divisional commander, reprimanding him for his profane language and urging him to stop swearing since it was against God's commandments.\textsuperscript{50} In the face of chaplain protest, only rarely did officers issue orders to fight blasphemous speech.\textsuperscript{51}

Deviating from antebellum moral norms, the Confederate camp was no less a cauldron of blasphemous and profane speech. Railing against the evils of profanity in his memoirs, Chaplain Joseph Cross of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Tennessee spent an entire chapter on profane influences, especially the evils of vulgar speech. He despaired at how common swearing was in the service and how easily a young man, unexposed to this type of speech in the civilian realm, learned to talk in this manner. "Some love to display their genius in the invention of new and startling forms of blasphemy," he contended. "It seems to be considered manly, heroic, almost virtuous, to insult Almighty God to his face, and grieve the hearts of those who revere his name."\textsuperscript{52} Continuing his tirade,

\textsuperscript{48} Orange V. Lemon, undated discourse on profanity, Orange V. Lemon, Chaplain, 36\textsuperscript{th} Indiana Volunteer Infantry Diary, October 10, 1861 to January 14, 1862, folder four, Civil War Miscellaneous Box 57, U.S. Army Military Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA.


\textsuperscript{50} Hedrick and Davis, I'm Surrounded by Methodists, 30-31. This letter was never sent. (Hedrick and Davis, I'm Surrounded by Methodists, 31.)

\textsuperscript{51} Rable, \textit{God's Almost Chosen Peoples}, 99.

Cross argued that among the gallant Confederate soldiers “I have heard more cursing and swearing in twenty-four hours, than in all my life before . . . The air, indeed, is so filled with profanity, that it seems to swear without a tongue.”\textsuperscript{53} Even though the Confederate camp was so immersed in this wicked speech, Cross felt almost naively confident that almighty God would distinguish between the honorable cause for which the Confederacy fought and the depraved character of its soldiery, “that he would bless the former for its righteousness, though he send the latter to hell for their wickedness.”\textsuperscript{54}

In addition to profanity, Civil War clergy waged wars against the drunkenness all too prevalent in the camp. During the antebellum era, temperance reformers mainly promoted abstinence, although some worked towards allowing moderate consumption.\textsuperscript{55} Drunkenness became more problematic when soldiers were posted close to cities where alcohol flowed freely. Union soldier John Quincy Adams Campbell wrote midway through the war, “Our proximity to Memphis is taken advantage of by many to indulge in the grossest and lowest dissipation. Men whom I had before considered men of principle and mind, have given way to their passions and sunk the man into a mere animal, disgracing themselves, their company, their regiment, their friends, and their race.”\textsuperscript{56}

Although the contrast between the sacred and profane in the army was marked, unlike pre-war America, where these activities remained separate, the camp provided


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 139.

\textsuperscript{55} Rable, \textit{God’s Almost Chosen Peoples}, 100.

\textsuperscript{56} Mark Grimsley and Todd D. Miller, eds., \textit{The Union Must Stand: The Civil War Diary of John Quincy Adams Campbell, Fifth Iowa Volunteer Infantry} (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 77.
an opportunity to observe them operating simultaneously. In the Union armies, United States Christian Commission delegates routinely encountered contested space. Rev. Alfred Emerson and Rev. E.P. Smith, General Field Agent of the USCC in the Army of the Cumberland, aptly described the situation in 1864: “strange contrasts are seen in the army, of gaming and psalm-singing, of prevailing sin and abounding grace, of prayer and profaneness-such profaneness as we never hear at home, such prayer as the churches know nothing of.” In ministering to a soldier after the battle of Chickamauga, a delegate recalled his close proximity to profane influences: “I kneel at his side;—there may be card-playing in the opposite corner,—no matter, God’s Spirit is with us, and prayer ascends, and God hears us, for I leave the soldier with a trembling hope in Jesus.”

Although solid boundaries separated the sacred and the profane in peacetime, in the camp these walls were more permeable. A St. Patrick’s day celebration demonstrates how contested space developed. During the winter of 1862, the Methodist chaplain of the 127th Pennsylvania, noted how during this festival, Irish Catholic soldiers would attend services in the morning, followed by a bought of indulgence. “Drunkenness, horse-racing, and fist-fighting became the order—or rather the disorder of the afternoon,” he recalled “and the day closed in a regular “Tipperary” fashion.” Away from their

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57 As scholars Edward Linenthal and David Chidester suggest, the sacred was not “necessarily the opposite of the profane or absolutely separate from the profane.” David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, “Introduction,” in American Sacred Space, eds. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 17.


59 Smith, Incidents Under Shot and Shell, 226.

families and living in a mostly all male environment, this type of behavior seemed normal and expected, therefore many soldiers fell into these sinful habits.

In the Southern armies, further examples of this contested terrain appear. A soldier in the 16th Mississippi Regiment claimed that he could only tell it was Sunday when he and his comrades, “heard the band play hymns on some hill near camp. We would lay down the cards, even in a game of euchre, and go over to the band.”\(^6^1\) During the Summer of 1863, Captain Blackford of the Army of Northern Virginia, heard an engaging sermon from a General who was also a preacher. This man’s dress blurred the boundaries between the sacred and profane realms: “[t]he gown covered up his uniform entirely except for the wreath and stars of a general on his collar which peeped out to mildly protest against too much “peace on earth” and the boots and spurs clanked around the chancel with but little sympathy with the doctrine of “good will towards men.” Blackford’s assessment of the incident reflected his own ambiguous thoughts on the subject of religion in the camp: “I do not approve of mixing the two professions, except for the duties of a chaplain.”\(^6^2\)

Much like pre-war clergy, chaplains and missionaries occupied much of their waking hours combatting these profane influences and promoting religiosity among all soldiers. According to one Union chaplain, the presence of a chaplain in the unit helped restrain the profaneness of the soldiers.\(^6^3\) In addition, spiritual leaders actively battled profane influences by forming bands of Christian brotherhood and presiding over daily

\(^{6^1}\) Cockrell and Ballard, *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 231.

\(^{6^2}\) Charles Minor Blackford, ed., *Letters from Lee’s Army or Memoirs of Life In and Out of The Army in Virginia During the War Between the States* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947), 176.

\(^{6^3}\) Rogers, *War Pictures*, 79-80.
prayer meetings. Employing this dual strategy, USCC delegates fought gambling and prostitution in the last year of the conflict.64 Through several weekly prayer meetings in the Spring of 1864, George Cram’s chaplain felt that he had improved morality, by decreasing card playing and swearing. “Considering the morality of most of the army,” Cram wrote, “I am really proud to belong to Company F/105th Ill.”65 A month after the war’s end, when Sherman’s army was stationed around Washington D.C., Rev. A. K. Moulton and Brother Libby found a group of four men playing a game of cards, and convinced them to exchange them for religious reading. This event “attracted considerable attention, and by the time we got the cards,” Moulton explained, “we had a pretty good congregation, with whom we sang and prayed and preached for forty minutes.”66 In an earlier incident in Alexandria, Virginia, among Union soldiers imprisoned in the slave pen, Rev. Mr. Flint interrupted a card game, offering the men Scripture cards to play with instead. The soldiers found these substitute cards highly entertaining and religiously stimulating for all complied when Mr. Flint requested a group prayer. “Every hand was lifted, and then every knee was bowed upon the brick floor[,]” he recounted, “and the slave-pen prison became a house of God,—as perchance it had been many times before, when filled with the human chattels of the slave-driver.”67 Although these clergy might have overstated their successes to prove their worth in the

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66 USCC, Fourth Annual Report, 194.
wartime environment, it is undeniable that chaplains achieved some success while fighting wartime vice.

Against daunting odds, some Northern spiritual leaders were as successful as their pre-war colleagues at fighting alcohol consumption in the camp. Upon assuming command of the Army of the Potomac, General Joseph Hooker issued an order allowing whisky rations. Upon hearing of this order, Chaplain J. Chandler Gregg convinced his regimental Colonel not to allow these rations, explaining “this course would demoralize the men, and awaken in them such an appetite for strong drink as would be highly dangerous, and might lead some of them to ruin.”68 In April 1862, Chaplain Joseph Hopkins Twichell utilized a soldier’s death from alcohol poisoning as an example to the rest of the men. After having the entire regiment parade and then stand beside the soldier’s coffin, Twichell spoke about the evils of drink, recalling later “I have good reason to believe that by God’s help, my words were not in vain.”69

An extension of antebellum voluntary societies, the formation of Christian associations in Northern and Southern armies served mainly to undergird Christian soldiers’ struggle against profane influences. In a November 1862 diary entry, Union Chaplain Andrew Jackson Hartsock explained how he actively sought out Christian soldiers for membership in the Regimental Christian Union. By appointing a soldier in each company to report on those living as Christians, Hartsock involved enlisted men in

68 Gregg, Life in the Army, in the Departments of Virginia, and the Gulf, 85. At a later date, the commanding general ordered the distribution of another round of whisky rations to the entire army. Gregg successfully appealed to the commanding officer of the regiment, who stood firm against the policy. Called to headquarters for resisting an order, the regimental commander did not lose his commission. (Gregg, Life in the Army, in the Departments of Virginia, and the Gulf, 95)

this process.\textsuperscript{70} A Union surgeon recalled forming a Christian association in the summer of 1863 which sought to hold regular religious worship. He hoped “this measure may prove for the everlasting good of all who may be engaged in it and may shed an influence upon those with whom they are associated that may be as seed sown in good ground-bringing forth an hundred fold to the glory of the redeemer.”\textsuperscript{71} These complex organizations maintained constitutions, like the one passed by the Christian Association of the Thirteenth regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers. As a condition of membership, everyone took the following pledge laid out in the constitution: “Adoring the grace of the Triune God, and hoping for salvation through the blood of Christ, I promise to endeavor, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to live according to the rule of the Bible, and to be faithful to all the duties of a member of the association.”\textsuperscript{72} Although more prevalent in the Union armies, at least one Confederate Christian association existed. Meeting in the Army of Northern Virginia in December 1863, it asked Chaplain Abner Crump Hopkins to inquire into publishing its Constitution and By-laws.\textsuperscript{73} Based on a common faith, these interdenominational unions of Christians were not unusual in the army, for despite the profaneness of many, pious soldiers served in every regiment.\textsuperscript{74}

Taking advantage of the presence of devout soldiers, spiritual leaders actively promoted the temperance cause in the Northern armies, an extension of pre-war temperance work. As early as January 1862 a temperance group arose in Camp

\textsuperscript{70} Duram, \textit{Soldier of the Cross}, 26.

\textsuperscript{71} Beasecker, “\textit{I Hope to Do My Country Service}”, 145.

\textsuperscript{72} Stewart, \textit{Camp, March and Battlefield}, 98.

\textsuperscript{73} Abner Crump Hopkins, diary entry, December 19, 1863, Box 1, Folder 1, Abner Crump Hopkins Diary, 1862 April 28-1863 December 19, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

\textsuperscript{74} Rogers, \textit{War Pictures}, 78-79.
McDowell, Virginia to counteract excessive drinking. "Before payday there is little drinking but since, it is visible by the bloated faces and bloodshot eyes, foolish stares, demeaning and brutish acts of degradation," wrote Union soldier Seymour Dexter to his sweetheart. "To counteract this, a division of the Sons of Temperance has been organized with about 50 members among whom some have formerly been the most abject subject of this foul fiend and serpentine charmer. I sincerely trust it may prove a blessing to the regiment but I have little faith in the pledge of him who has so lost the dignity of man as to wallow in the slough of intemperance."\textsuperscript{75} Seymour Dexter’s letter to his wife is an example of women communicating with soldiers on the front concerning religion and morality, a wartime extension of their antebellum role as guardians of morality. Women wrote many letters to their husbands and sons urging them to keep their moral codes intact. “Do not let the dutyes you own to your God bee neglected,” Elizabeth Stevens reminded her husband. “Remember they are more binding than military dutyes.”\textsuperscript{76} Ann Cotton spelled out her objections to her husband in no uncertain terms: “You know that the greatest objection I had to you entering the army, was the fear that you would not lead a truly Christian life while there, & I know you will find it hard to do so . . . I would a thousand times rather hear of your death, than have you live dishonored & disgraced.”\textsuperscript{77}


\textsuperscript{76} Elizabeth Stevens of Oskaloosa, Iowa, to her husband Simeon as cited in Sean A. Scott, \textit{A Visitation of God: Northern Civilians Interpret the Civil War} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 90-91

\textsuperscript{77} Ann Cotton to her husband Dexter as cited in Scott, \textit{A Visitation of God}, 91.
The temperance crusade grew in importance as the war progressed. In April 1862, temperance meetings were being held in Camp Smith located seven miles from Fortress Monroe and two from Newport News.\textsuperscript{78} In a March 1864 letter to his wife, Chaplain John Adams of the 5\textsuperscript{th} Maine recounted an increased interest in temperance, noting that most of the officers and many of the enlisted men had signed the regimental pledge. Over the next month, this interest only increased.\textsuperscript{79} Meanwhile in the 5\textsuperscript{th} New York Cavalry, Chaplain Louis Beaudry noted a similar interest in temperance during two specific periods, which incidentally paralleled periods of revivalism in the Union armies: February-April 1864 and also February-March 1865. During these periods, temperance meetings were held and many new recruits joined the Temperance crusade by pledging to abstain from alcohol and help banish it from the camp.\textsuperscript{80}

Following peacetime practices, chaplain associations formed during the war held regular meetings in the Northern and Southern armies. Union army chaplains congregated in the chapel tents of the United States Christian Commission and at army headquarters. For example, Thomas Scott Johnson attended a weekly meeting of the Chaplain Association of the 25\textsuperscript{th} Corps, held in the USCC’s chapel tent at the Headquarters of the Army of the James in January 1865.\textsuperscript{81} Stationed at the Army of the Potomac’s headquarters, USCC delegate James Russell Miller recounted that in

\textsuperscript{78} Stewart, \textit{Camp, March and Battlefield}, 140.

\textsuperscript{79} Adams, \textit{Memorial and Letters of Rev. John R. Adams}, 143-145. Antebellum moral reform focused on the temperance pledge. (Rable, \textit{God’s Almost Chosen Peoples}, 101.)

\textsuperscript{80} Beaudry, \textit{War Journal of Louis N. Beaudry}, 94, 96-97, 99-101, 106, 109, 205, 208. Overall, according to Beaudry, the temperance movement affected the soldiers in two profound ways: primarily, it acted as a moral influence on the men, thereby inculcating a degree of respect in some and in others a conversion experience. Secondarily, it helped improve regimental discipline. (Beaudry, \textit{War Journal of Louis N. Beaudry}, 109.)

\textsuperscript{81} Kaliebe, “The Letters of Thomas Scott Johnson.” 59.
September 1863 twenty seven chaplains gathered at the USCC chapel tent for camaraderie and to discuss issues they faced in their respective commands.\textsuperscript{82} That same month, Chaplain Alexander Stewart noted that in the chaplain meetings held in the Sixth Corps, from twelve to twenty chaplains met every Monday for prayer. They also brainstormed how to promote religiosity and fight profane influences in their respective commands. According to Stewart, by this time, “All seem to believe we are approaching a great crisis in the army. God and Satan are contending for the mastery; yet no despondency, but hopefulness for the ultimate triumph of righteousness.”\textsuperscript{83}

Wartime spiritual leaders were particularly willing to use these meetings to air grievances. Two meetings attended by Chaplain John Stuckenberg and held in the Union camp near Bealton, Virginia in August and September of 1863, highlight this fact. To Stuckenberg’s dismay, at the first meeting attended by approximately thirty chaplains, participants complained that they lacked adequate transportation, received insufficient respect, and received no pay when not on duty.\textsuperscript{84} Frustrated about the second meeting, Stuckenberg wrote in his diary: “I am tired of such meetings of chaplains, and wish they would discuss subjects that would benefit us spiritually and prepare us for our work or else give up the meetings altogether.”\textsuperscript{85} In Stuckenberg’s eyes, the exigencies of war had produced an unfortunate blurring of logistics and spirituality.

\textsuperscript{82} Miller, “Two Civil War Notebooks of James Russell Miller Part I,” 73.
\textsuperscript{83} Stewart, \textit{Camp, March and Battlefield}, 347.
\textsuperscript{84} Hedrick and Davis, \textit{I'm Surrounded by Methodists}, 105.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 110.
In the Southern armies, these meetings followed traditional paths in helping motivate chaplains to continue their spiritual crusades. In November 1862, Chaplain Joseph Cross noted how chaplains stationed around Murfreesboro, Tennessee held meetings “for mutual counsel and encouragement.” During one meeting these chaplains collectively wrote to General Bragg requesting the enactment of measures to provide more time for Sabbath worship. Bragg responded by ordering a cessation of all unnecessary military maneuvers on the Sabbath and encouraging officers to tell their commands to observe the sanctity of the Sabbath in camp.86 In the Army of Northern Virginia, Chaplain Abner Crump Hopkins of the 2nd Virginia, organized and attended a chaplain meeting of his corps in March 1863.87 Here, he gained new resolve and inspiration from his fellow chaplains, while gaining new confidence in their merits.88 By September 1863, Hopkins reported the chaplains of the 2nd and 3rd Corps were holding weekly meetings at Orange Court House.89

Yet, even with numerous meetings and the best of intentions, chaplains and missionaries, like antebellum clergy, could not completely dispel the devil from the camp. Many concluded that much of the fault lay with the officers who set a bad example for men under their command. While participating in the Gettysburg campaign of June 1863, Captain Samuel Fiske documented the problem of intemperance among

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88 Abner Crump Hopkins, diary entries, March 11, 1863 and March 16, 1863, Box 1, Folder 1, Abner Crump Hopkins Diary, 1862 April 28-1863 December 19, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

89 Abner Crump Hopkins, diary entry, September 1863, Box 1, Folder 1, Abner Crump Hopkins Diary, 1862 April 28-1863 December 19, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.
the officers. “Until the higher officers of the army begin to change their habits and set a
different example to their subordinates it will be difficult to effect a reformation,” he
argued. “As a king is so is his court,” Fiske continued “and every general is a sort of
king, and the satellites revolving around him reflect his habits and opinions in the main.
If the general swears, you may expect his staff and subordinate officers to swear also,
and his orderlies and servants to fill their mouths with profanity and the whole
atmosphere about him to be blue with cursing and oaths.”

Several months later, Fiske reported on the same problem again showing that not much progress had been made:
"In short, the army is getting badly demoralized as to habits of temperance, and
hundreds of young men who came out with fair characters and most correct habits will
go home, if they go at all, poor bloated inebriates, and led into their evil habits, I am
sorry to say too often, by the bad example of those who are older and of higher rank
than they.”

In a March 1864 diary entry another Union soldier remarked how officers
would participate in drunken debauchery, behaving “with all the simpleness,
foolishness, and disgust that drunk men generally do.”

This, in spite of earlier
punishing their men for drinking and causing a disturbance.

Beyond the officers, individual soldiers presented a poor example for the rest of
the men in their units. When distributing testaments to the soldiers in March 1863,
Union Chaplain Louis Beaudry, saw an enlisted man desecrate the book by “t[aking] a
huge quid of tobacco from his mouth, plac[ing] it in the center of the book, [and then]

90 Sears, Mr. Dunn Browne’s Experiences in the Army, 97.
91 Ibid., 177-178.
92 Grimsley and Miller, The Union Must Stand, 152.
93 Ibid., 152.
contemptuously clos[ing] it with force, that as much of the book might be destroyed as possible by the saturation of the filthy spittle in the weed."\textsuperscript{94} In a May 1865 letter to his wife, written from Petersburg, Chaplain Hallock Armstrong of a Pennsylvania regiment, complained about the impossibility of keeping whiskey out of the military camp.\textsuperscript{95}

Wayward soldiers even tried to imitate clergy. During the early months of the war in the Army of Northern Virginia, Captain Blackford explained how, a member of his company falsely represented himself as a Methodist preacher in order to obtain food from a lady near camp. Invited to stay at the woman’s house, he would read the Bible and pray each night, in order to earn his keep. On learning of this story, Captain Blackford exposed the man.\textsuperscript{96}

Despite numerous temptations, religious soldiers, like the devout of the prewar era, agreed with chaplains that their was no excuse for partaking in vice. Writing to his mother in February 1864, Union soldier George Cram, explained "There is much demoralization in the army and thousands of young men here are ruined. Still there is no excuse for it, I do not think I have depreciated in the least," he continued, "and it is my boast now that I can return home as much a gentleman as when I left. I have never been tempted to follow the vices of camp and cannot see how one who has any respect for himself or his friends at home can so degrade themselves as many do."\textsuperscript{97} Clearly trying to placate a woman distressed over her son’s moral predicament in the army,

\textsuperscript{96} Blackford, \textit{Letters from Lee’s Army}, 66.
\textsuperscript{97} Bohrnstedt, \textit{Soldiering with Sherman}, 73.
Cram’s comment represented the opinion of many in the Union army and demonstrated how women on the homefront tried to regulate morality at the front.

Unlike the pre-war period where they generally interacted with willing worshippers occasionally wartime clergy demanded prayer from unwilling soldiers. For example, Union Chaplain Thomas Kinnicut Beecher, Lyman Beecher’s son, described the compulsory nature of services, when combined with parade maneuvers. “At quarter of ten, our Adjutant forms parade,” Beecher explained, “while the Chaplain fixed a box pulpit out in a neighboring meadow. Then the battalion marches out and forms in front of the Chaplain-close, compact and attentive.” At that point, Beecher recollected, the Protestant preacher would deliver “A short prayer of invocation-a hymn-a passage or two from the articles of war-a short lesson from Scripture, with very few words of explanation or reminder.” A Catholic regimental service also included both “a prayer-and the sung doxology.”\(^98\) Even so, many men resented these compulsory services and the officers and ministers involved.\(^99\)

Army movements and military maneuvers disrupted the development of religious space in unfamiliar ways, and such irregular movements routinely became a form of Sabbath desecration, producing one of the most challenging practices to combat in the camp.\(^100\) Even devout soldiers might involuntarily desecrate the Sabbath, finding “little

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\(^{100}\) Sabbath desecration refers to not observing the Sabbath as a day set off from the other days of the week for rest. Christians observed the Sabbath on Sunday, while Jews observed it on Saturday.
opportunity to commune with God amid so much hubbub and confusion.”

Early in the war, Union Chaplain Frederic Denison of the First Rhode Island Cavalry noted the impossibility of holding regular Sabbath services with his regiment occupied at the front serving reconnaissance, scout, and skirmish duty. After the 1862 Cedar Run campaign, Louis-Hippolyte Gache, the Roman Catholic chaplain of the 10th Louisiana, felt worn out after a twelve day march. He lamented the fact that during this entire time, he could not offer any spiritual consolation in the form of mass, not even on August 15th, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Active campaigning took precedence at the end of the war as well. During Grant’s final push towards Richmond in the Spring of 1865, Chaplain Thomas Scott Johnson wrote how “Sundays were used as common days and there was no time for religious worship.” Johnson could not hold a service until his regiment had returned from pursing General Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia in late April.

Besides movements, other military actions complicated the wartime spiritual leader’s efforts, making his job more difficult than his antebellum predecessors. These acts included distributing pay, reviewing and inspecting troops and their equipment, as well as participating in parades. While stationed at Fort Smith, Arkansas, in October 1863 Union Chaplain Francis Springer complained about the Army Paymaster’s decision to distribute wages on a Sunday without thinking of the religious

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101 Rable, God’s Almost Chosen Peoples, 95.

102 Denison, A Chaplain’s Experience in the Union Army, 15.

103 Gache, A Frenchman, A Chaplain, A Rebel, 137-138. The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrates both her death and her body's assumption into heaven.


105 Ibid.
consequences. He accused the paymaster of only contemplating how “to satisfy the claims of the sutlers & return borrowed money to their friends.”106 That same month, the army held a Sunday review and inspection. Without regard for the Christian soldiers who wanted to observe the sanctity of the Sabbath, the troops were marched “to the noise of drums & fifes, in front of the church where a few of the disciples of Christ were devoutly bending in presence of Jehovah for his blessing on the national cause & the brave men jeopardizing their lives in its defense.”107 Reflecting in the late autumn of 1863 on the sad state of the Lord’s Day at Fort Smith, Arkansas, Springer noted the common soldier treated Sunday like any other day. He had no notion of sacred time: “Not one soldier in ten is sure why the Sabbath dawns, nor when it departs. To him all days appear the same, being all alike occupied with drill, indolence, toil, gossip, gambling, marching, or fighting.”108 Confederate soldiers fared no better. In a February 1864 letter to his wife, Chaplain William Banks described religious services being pushed back until after noon on Sunday, on account of a morning inspection of the troops.109

Of course, as in peacetime, Sabbath desecration occurred even without army movements or other military functions, since soldiers kept partaking in vice. “This is Sunday, but there is no quiet Sabbath rest for me,” wrote George A. Remley to his brother in the autumn of 1863. “We have no Chaplain, no preaching nor any thing of the

106 Springer, The Preacher’s Tale, 90.
107 Ibid., 91.
108 Ibid., 96.
109 William Banks to Mary Pocotaligo, letter, February 22, 1864, William Banks Papers, 1853-1880, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.
kind,” he lamented. “The noise and confusion of camp is as great as ever and there is no outward circumstance to show that it is Sunday. Card playing, profanity and blasphemy seems to be on the increase in the regiment. Gambling has been carried on very extensively since we were paid off last time.”¹¹⁰

Over the course of the war, conflict waged within the military camp over sacred and profane space. Eliciting the help of Christian officers, soldiers, and women on the homefront Union and Confederate spiritual leaders attempted to continue their antebellum roles as crusaders against vice by policing the camp environment. They specifically targeted gambling, profanity, and alcoholism through the use of active temperance organizations, regimental Christian associations, and chaplain groups. These religious “wars” displayed the contested nature of wartime space and highlighted religion’s importance for both Union and Confederate soldiers.

**Diversity in the Camps**

Conflicts between the sacred and profane permeated the wartime camp. Although in many senses the sacred space constructed by chaplains and missionaries remained a relatively homogenous world of white, native—born, Christian male soldiers, these spiritual leaders also periodically welcomed the participation of women, civilians, non-native speakers, and African Americans. Spiritual leaders strove to reach the same groups in the Civil War camp as in antebellum America with some adaptations due to wartime circumstances. For example, in the Union armies, the United States Christian Commission aided by military chaplains, ministered to native German speakers and African Americans. Overall, the religious space of the Union armies was more diverse.

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than their Confederate counterparts, a reflection of the more varied population which resided in the Civil War North.

Like their peacetime counterparts, Union chaplains strove to reach populations of non-English speakers, immigrants not fully assimilated into Northern society. Foreign-born soldiers accounted for approximately a quarter of all Union troops, including two hundred thousand Germans. Like their peacetime counterparts, Union chaplains strove to reach populations of non-English speakers, immigrants not fully assimilated into Northern society. Foreign-born soldiers accounted for approximately a quarter of all Union troops, including two hundred thousand Germans. When camped near Falmouth, Virginia in mid-April 1863, Chaplain Stuckenber

112 Hedrick and Davis, I’m Surrounded by Methodists, 56.  
113 Duram, Soldier of the Cross, 93.  
push toward Richmond, clergy held German language chapel meetings, consisting of a sermon followed by a soldier prayer meeting.\footnote{USCC, \textit{Fourth Annual Report}, 113, 103.}

Unlike pre-war times when northern missionaries mainly ignored African Americans, blacks received ample USCC aid and attention, a reflection of the Commission's work to create a racially diverse sacred space. These northern missionaries strove to, as historian George Rable aptly explains, "pour the light of education and a pure Gospel into the former slaves."\footnote{Rable, \textit{God's Almost Chosen Peoples}, 293.} Thus, the USCC had religious dealings with civilian blacks, not associated with the army from the beginning of its existence. One delegate’s 1862 report mentioned the presence of black contrabands at a young soldier’s burial.\footnote{USCC, \textit{First Annual Report}, 19.} A year later, in the Army of the Tennessee, a delegate invited two black white-washers to participate in a daily prayer meeting. “[T]he simple and hearty union with us, who had made an agreement with Israel's God to maintain a daily service,” the delegate later remarked, “was truly most touching, most gratifying.”\footnote{USCC, \textit{Second Annual Report}, 131.} Another report from the Western theatre dated January 1, 1864 discussed the prayer meeting Rev. B. W. Chidlaw held with former slaves. “[Q]uite a number of “freedmen” gathered around me, and on the sill of the door,” he recounted, “I preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection; and on the sod in front we knelt in prayer with these sable sons of Ethiopia, commending them to the God of all grace and consolation.”\footnote{Ibid., 198.}
By 1865 a distinct shift becomes apparent in the USCC’s work, with a new focus on educating blacks in the army. The USCC’s activity among African Americans was an extension of the antebellum evangelical Sunday school movement, where schools taught cognitive skills and the need for a personal conversion experience.120 In order for these soldiers to receive the Commission’s evangelical message, black troops first needed to learn how to read. In the twenty-fifth corps, the Commission provided teachers, educational supplies, and necessary chapel equipment.121 The USCC’s educational mission succeeded. “[T] hose taught in our schools were more obedient and respectful to their officers; discipline was improved; habits of vice were checked,” a delegate explained, “and in many cases genuine religious interest was excited.”122

The USCC directly affected the beginning of Reconstruction through its delegates’ religious and educational activities in 1865. These missionaries, along with those belonging to the American Missionary Association, composed the vanguard of Northern missionary efforts to educate Southern blacks.123 At the end of the war, delegates complemented their ordinary work by teaching in Freedmen’s Schools, distributing numerous copies of Testaments and “The Freedman,” in addition to often preaching in

120 Boylan, Sunday School, 10.


122 Ibid., 453.

black churches. Delegate George C. Bancroft was even asked by blacks in the hospital to help organize a church. Southern blacks and whites saw the Commission very differently. “The whites liked our “rations” but hated our gospel,” a USCC Agent recalled. “The blacks worked for their own food, while they sought the gospel from us.”

Like some of their antebellum predecessors, a few Union and Confederate army chaplains purposely created a sacred space for black civilians in the camp. While stationed near Falmouth, Virginia in December 1862, Union Chaplain John Stuckenberg preached at the funeral of a two-year-old slave child. When stationed near Petersburg, Union Chaplain Henry Trumbull observed his “contraband” servant’s interest in religion. Noticing him at a regimental prayer-meeting one evening, Trumbull “spoke to him, and was pleased at the hearty way in which he expressed his trust in Jesus as his Saviour.” “Although he could not read nor write,” Trumbull believed his

124 USCC, Fourth Annual Report, 135.


126 USCC, Fourth Annual Report, 135.

127 Union army chaplains were fascinated by African American religious practices, traveling to black churches to view them. On Sunday, March 19, 1865 Chaplain Beaudry, attended services at the African Church led by an octoroon, Rev. Mr. Orrick. The next Sunday, Beaudry attended another black prayer meeting. “It was a season of peculiar interest to me-the first of the kind I ever witnessed,” he recalled “the manifestations of feeling and deep religious emotion and experience in words, gesticulations, tears and songs, was at times laughable, yet deeply impressive generally.” (Beaudry, War Journal of Louis N. Beaudry, 210-211.)

128 Hedrick and Davis, I’m Surrounded by Methodists, 36.

129 Trumbull, War Memories of a Chaplain, 397.
servant “got more comfort out of the Bible truths learned from others’ “chat” than many have gained from their study of books.”

Modeled after peacetime clergy like Charles Colcock Jones, who ministered to slaves, some Confederate chaplains also included black civilians in their prayer meetings. On a Sunday in 1862, Chaplain Alexander D. Betts delivered communion to a racially mixed audience. Included among the three men who had missed morning services, were two white doctors and a black servant. Chaplain Charles J. Oliver officiated at a burial of another black servant. According to his journal, he invited all “the negroes of the battalion together” and addressed them hoping that “God grant it may not be without effect.” In a frank assessment of this religious gathering, Oliver lamented the fact that more was not done for blacks in the army, stating “[w]e are so apt to neglect this part of the work.”

Union chaplains operating in the Department of the South, a region heavily populated by African-Americans, aided black civilians throughout the conflict. While encamped at Hilton Head, South Carolina in November 1861 Robert Browne read from Matthew, and then knelt in prayer on the tent’s floor with a black contraband in his employ named Tony. About six months later, Browne, now stationed in Beaufort, ministered to a group of civilian blacks, who had come to hear him preach. After the

130 Trumbull, War Memories of a Chaplain, 398.
131 Betts diary entry, 16 Nov. 1862, Experience of a Confederate Chaplain, 22.
133 Late in the conflict part of this aid might be tied to recruitment efforts. Black chaplains were often assigned to recruit new black soldiers. (Redkey, “Black Chaplains in the Union Army,” 344)
134 Robert Audley Browne to his wife, letter, November 12, 1861, Robert A. Browne Papers, U.S. Army Military Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA.
service, he went back with them to “their “praise house,” a miserable little den fitted up with a deck and seats.” There, after dispensing some religious advice, Browne joined them in prayer and song.\textsuperscript{135} Chaplain Frederic Denison used to sometimes preach for African Americans who had constructed a rude chapel within the entrenchments on Hilton Head Island. When stationed at Fort Pulaski later in the war, Denison would hold special religious meetings among the blacks, explaining Scriptural passages in detail. Among their favorites, according to Denison, was the story of Daniel in the lions’ den.\textsuperscript{136}

While black civilians benefited from the attention of Union chaplains, most of the chaplains’ energy was devoted to providing for the spiritual welfare of black soldiers. Foremost among them were the fourteen African American chaplains who served all black regiments which formed during the last half of the conflict.\textsuperscript{137} In both prayers and sermons, these men stressed to black soldiers that through their bravery they would ensure the future of the black race in America.\textsuperscript{138} Like their white counterparts, black chaplains warned enlisted men about the evils of profanity. “The poor oppressed negro of this land needs the most wholesome example set before him to elevate him,” one black chaplain asserted “but this is one bad example, set by those whom he looks up to for example, and one which confirms him in his degredation. Would that for humanity’s

\begin{footnotes}
\item[135] Robert Audley Browne to his wife, letter, Wednesday, March 19, 1862, Robert A. Browne Papers, U.S. Army Military Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA.
\item[136] Denison, \textit{A Chaplain’s Experience in the Union Army}, 28-29, 32-33. See Daniel chapter six for the story of Daniel in the Lions’ den.
\item[138] Redkey, “Black Chaplains in the Union Army,” 339.
\end{footnotes}
sake it could be stoped!" While warning their charges about the evils of vice, chaplains encouraged an evangelistic fervor among these black soldiers. “We now have some 20 or more converts to be baptized before admitting them in the church as full members,” Chaplain White wrote shortly after reporting for duty. “We have a glorious revival of religion now going among us. I have already baptized forty persons in my regt. since reaching here.” A black chaplains’ religious work was validated when he could observe the spiritual awareness displayed during a soldiers’ prayer meeting. “I have repeatedly stood and looked at my soldiers, when holding their prayer-meeting,” Chaplain Turner recalled, “until I cried like a child, standing out under heaven’s broad canopy singing and praying, in the most inclement weather.” USCC delegates aided these African American regimental chaplains, enabling both to act in concert as purveyors of religion. For example, in December 1864 in Virginia’s Army of the James, black regimental chaplains met with Commission delegates to arrange for schoolhouses to educate the men and chapel tents for both prayer meetings and Sabbath services. These types of arrangements would become more widespread near the end of the conflict.

Even without the help of chaplains or missionaries, some black soldiers participated in prayer meetings, a mixture of the new wartime camp and antebellum meetings held in the slave quarters. In December of 1863, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson of the 1st Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers, a regiment of ex-slaves,

139 Redkey, “Black Chaplains in the Union Army,” 340.
140 As quoted in Redkey, “Black Chaplains in the Union Army,” 339.
141 As quoted in Redkey, “Black Chaplains in the Union Army,” 342.
heard odd sounds from a nearby camp fire where African American soldiers were worshipping. According to Higginson, “These fires are often enclosed in a sort of little booth made neatly of palm leaves & covered in at top, a native African hut in short.” In this space men sang either the John Brown war song or “incomprehensible Negro Methodist, meaningless, monotonous, endless chants, with obscure syllables recurring constantly & slight variations interwoven, all accompanied with a regular drumming of the feet & clapping of the hands, like castanets[.]” In response, outside the enclosed space, “men begin to quiver & dance, others join, a circle forms, winding monotonously round some one in the centre-some heel & toe tumultuously, others merely tremble & stagger on, others stoop & rise, others whirl, others caper sidewise, all keep steadily circling like dervishes.” The circle then becomes bigger “louder grows the singing about Jesus & Heaven, & the ceaseless drumming & clapping go steadily on. At last seems to come a snap and the spell breaks amid general sighs & laughter.”

Like their predecessors, Civil War clergy expanded their ministry by including civilians. In the Confederate armies, Catholic chaplains like Louis-Hippolyte Gache ministered more to civilians than their Protestant colleagues. On a Sunday in the fall of 1861, Gache at the request of a Norfolk, Virginia family, preached in French, to over


thirty French Catholics.\textsuperscript{145} While in Williamsburg a short time later, Gache said mass in
the parlor of the family with whom he was staying. Although he thought the service was
just for himself, the family members showed up as well. “I don’t know what they did
during the Holy Sacrifice,” Gache recalled, “but I didn’t hear the slightest movement or
whisper until I had finished.”\textsuperscript{146} While at Bigler’s Mill to administer the Last Sacraments
to a sick soldier in December 1861, nine Irish Catholic civilians who had not seen a
priest in three or four years asked Gache to say mass the next day. He complied,
observing mass in the bedroom of his host, who responded, “Father, after having had
the blessing of a mass said in my room, I’ll sleep sound tonight.”\textsuperscript{147} Also, while in
Williamsburg, Gache offered mass to women and convalescents within the lunatic
asylum’s chapel. In December 1864, upon arriving at Mrs. Ballentine’s home in Pulaski,
Tennessee Chaplain Charles Quintard baptized six people and later in the day baptized
four children of Thomas Jones, whose house General Hood had made his
headquarters.\textsuperscript{148}

Regardless of the groups’ involved, antebellum religious distinctions dissolved in
the camp, including boundaries between soldier and civilian religious space. In February
1864, at the Army of the Cumberland’s winter quarters in Lookout Valley, USCC
delegates with the help and approval of General Howard established a Sabbath school
for soldiers and citizens.\textsuperscript{149} Delegate William Salter, attended or held several different

\textsuperscript{145} Gache, \textit{A Frenchman, A Chaplain, A Rebel}, 63.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 93-94.
\textsuperscript{148} Elliot, \textit{Doctor Quintard, Chaplain C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee}, 108.
\textsuperscript{149} USCC, \textit{Fourth Annual Report}, 207.
services at Murfreesboro on Sunday, July 10\textsuperscript{th} 1864 in the presence of women and other civilians. The first service which he attended held approximately two hundred and forty people, half of them soldiers, a quarter women, and another quarter other citizens. When he preached at 6:30 PM, he noted that of the two hundred in attendance four ladies performed alongside five soldiers in the choir.\footnote{William Salter, “Forty Days with the Christian Commission: A Diary by William Salter,” \textit{Iowa Journal of History and Politics} 33 (April 1935): 129.}

While women only periodically appeared in Union and Confederate religious space, they did assert their peacetime authority as guardians of virtue through wartime correspondence with their loved ones at the front. Union Chaplain Charles Humphreys presided over a February 1864 service attended by Colonel and Mrs. Lowell and Miss Shaw. Three months later, Colonel Lowell’s mother attended another service.\footnote{Humphreys, \textit{Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison}, 391, 398.} A little over a year earlier, Chaplain Francis Springer presided over the burial of a female matron of one of the hospitals at the Union army post in Springfield, Missouri. This woman received a full military burial, complete with several companies of infantry and a full fife and drum band. At the grave, a selection of scriptures was read before remarks, prayer, and three volleys fired by the escort.\footnote{Springer, \textit{The Preacher’s Tale}, 39-40.} In the Southern armies, Chaplain Louis-Hippolyte Gache delivered holy mass to the Ursuline nuns upon his August 1863 arrival in Columbia, South Carolina.\footnote{Gache, \textit{A Frenchman, A Chaplain, A Rebel}, 197.} A few months earlier, Chaplain William Wiatt preached from 1 Corinthians XV: 51 at the funeral of a Mrs. DeShazer, who had dropped dead
due to heart palpitations, while combing her hair.154 While in Berryville in November 1862, Captain Blackford watched the reaction of a wife sitting next to her husband, a colonel, “called out of church from her side. As he left her,” Blackford recalled, “her head sunk over the back of the pew in front and I saw her shiver in agony of prayers and tears. War was brought very close to her and she felt all its horrors.”155

This mix of civilians and soldiers affected religious behavior. The Army of the Potomac included higher numbers of civilians and women in its sacred space, presumably due to its proximity to the nation’s capital. When the army was on the front lines near Washington D.C. in March 1863, Chaplain Louis Beaudry presided over a service attended by only one woman, probably the wife of the commanding officer, Major Hammond. In a service held later that same month, eight or nine civilians, including two women attended.156 In May and June of that same year, the army continued to entertain increasing amounts of civilians and females as long as they stayed near Washington.157 The presence of civilians, especially women, in the military camp during religious exercises helps to show the merging of the military and civilian worlds, thus highlighting the complexity of religious experience in the camp environment. Historians tend to ignore the role of women and other civilians in the military camp, although a close reading of the primary sources demonstrates that the

154 Wiatt, Confederate Chaplain William Edward Wiatt, 30. First Corinthians XV:51 states “Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed.” This verse refers to Paul’s belief that he along with a few other Christians will survive to see Christ’s return.

155 Charles Minor Blackford, ed., Letters from Lee’s Army or Memoirs of Life In and Out of the Army in Virginia During the War Between the States (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947), 134.


157 See Beaudry’s account of the services held on the following Sundays: May 3, 1863, May 17, 1863, May 24, 1863, May 31, 1863, June 7, 1863 and June 14, 1863.
boundaries between the civilian and military worlds remained quite fluid during the war. However, the more important role for women can be seen in their letters to loved ones at the front where they constantly ask for information on morality and religion in the wartime camp.

Camps near major cities also allowed for further blurring of the worlds of civilians and soldiers. This was especially difficult for Union soldiers who interacted religiously with Southern civilians in cities like Memphis, Tennessee. While attending a Sabbath service at a Presbyterian church in August 1862, Union soldier William T. Shepherd found Southern civilians inhospitable. “Praying for the success of their armies their officers their nation and to be delivered from the oppression now upon them,” Shepard noted, “The girls flirt and stick up their noses at us and the women carry a very haughty air, while the little ragged boys of Poplar St. hurrah for Jeff Davis. As for me I carry a stiff upper lip before all of them.”158 A year later Shepard had a more favorable experience at the Union Church: “I feel as though I had some friends and am treated with a little courtesy. But when among the other congregations I imagine myself among a crowd of bitter enemies, and am not altogether mistaken!”159 Next year, while stationed in Memphis before moving to Huntsville, Alabama, Shepherd regularly attended Sabbath school with other civilians. While at this school, he received a generally good reception. At the Methodist Church in Memphis in January 1863, William received an invitation from the Superintendent of the Sabbath School to come every

159 Ibid., 282-283.
Sabbath, although denied the privilege of teaching since he was a soldier. 160 While in Huntsville, Alabama the next year, William was flattered by an invitation to pray with local civilians. "I went rather late and took a seat in a class of soldiers," William wrote, "and was examining the lesson, when some lady sent the secretary to me with an invitation to join a citizens class. A Mr. Tratman being the teacher. He expressed a wish to have me become a permanent member of his class and invited me to come every Sabbath, which I was pleased to accept." 161

Helping blur the boundary between the civilian sphere and the military world, military clergy continued their traditional roles by helping celebrate holy matrimony near the camp. On Christmas Eve in 1863, Union chaplain Charles Humphreys, guarded by three soldiers traveled beyond the Union picket line to marry two rebels. Being the first wedding Humphreys had ever officiated at, he worked hard to prepare for a solemn service in the quiet confines of the bride’s home. 162 Although the ceremony went well, the wartime mood was palpable since "there were no neighbors to join in the celebration, no flowers to adorn the bride, no ring to pledge in marriage, no cake to give the guests." 163 A few months later, in a house outside the camp, Humphreys married the adjutant and his sweetheart. 164 These marriages occurred in the Confederate camp as well. For example, in April 1865, Confederate Chaplain Charles Quintard presided

160 Hackemer, To Rescue My Native Land, 254-255.
161 Ibid., 303.
162 Humphreys, Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison, 382-384. Humphreys had graduated from Harvard Divinity School only a few months earlier.
163 Humphreys, Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison, 384.
164 Ibid., 395.
over the marriage of General Hood’s aide de camp, Captain John S. Smith, and Sallie C. Hawks.\textsuperscript{165}

The religious environment of the military camp was diverse. Using pre-war spiritual methods, chaplains and missionaries embraced this diversity, spreading the Christian gospel to African Americans, women, and other civilians. Within the Union armies, the United States Christian Commission aided African Americans and proved instrumental in the beginnings of “religious reconstruction.”

The diversity of the Civil War military camp necessitated the adaptation of pre-war religious practices to a more chaotic environment. The next chapter examines how chaplains and missionaries ministered to soldiers during combat and to the sick, wounded, and dying in the hospital. It shows how many clerical experiences, while building off antebellum norms, needed to be drastically changed to fit the new wartime world.

\textsuperscript{165} Elliot, \textit{Doctor Quintard, Chaplain C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee}, 250.
CHAPTER 6
FIGHTING, DYING, SICK, AND WOUNDED

Introduction

Religious fervor always seems most heightened among those whose very lives are at stake. During the American Civil War, those individuals were fighting, dying, sick, and wounded soldiers. When their very existence was in the balance, these men called to those who they knew would steer them toward glory in the afterlife, chaplains and missionaries.

This chapter focuses on clerical experiences during combat and in hospitals.¹ Scholars usually discuss these topics separately, but this analysis brings them together, as distinct religious spaces sharing the particular religious fervor experienced by the most downtrodden soldiers in the war: the sick and wounded.² Within the wartime hospitals, Civil War clergy both adapted antebellum norms and created new wartime practices. Both in the hospitals and on the battlefields, soldiers and clergy also framed new responses to death and dying.³ The clergy constructed make-shift religious space on the battlefield even as soldiers fought and died around them. In the immediate aftermath of battle and in hospitals, the clergy created religious space amidst medical personnel. These discussions lead to larger insights about the battlefield and hospital as

¹ This chapter builds upon the fundamentals of sacred space discussed in chapters four and five.

² As in other chapters, the United States Christian Commission plays a large role in this religious work. No comparable records exist for Confederate missionaries, thus they receive little mention here.

new environments where antebellum religious practices were put to the test and expanded.  

Religiosity During Combat: Navigating the Boundaries of Life and Death

The nineteenth-century conception of Providence allowed for the fusion of religion and combat. Belief in God’s Providence helped structure the worldview of Civil War soldiers, and nineteenth-century Americans more generally. Soldiers firmly believed God would determine the outcome of the battle, the war, and their lives. Moreover, the fear of death encouraged combat-ready soldiers to achieve salvation through conversion before heading into battle.

The providential God of the antebellum era gained new powers as the wartime God of Battles. In a January 1863 letter to his wife, Union officer John White Geary wrote about the God of Battles who sustained the battle-hardened veterans: "We will go forward under a firm and relying trust that God will bless the arms of my command with victory as always heretofore . . . I have never been deceived in my reliance and faith upon Him. I feel a joyful confidence that so long as I implore His aid, I will be ever victorious, even upon the field of battle." Several months later Geary could not contain his thanks to God for shielding him during battle: "I am here still, the monument of God's mercy," he reported. “He not only shielded me then, notwithstanding my wounds, but He

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4 These two spaces are clear manifestations of decentralized sacred space which developed out of a place of self-sacrificial service to one’s neighbor. (Douglas Davies, “Christianity,” in Sacred Place, ed. Jean Holm (London: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), 56.)

5 For more information on this providential worldview see David Rolfs, No Peace for the Wicked: Northern Protestant Soldiers and the American Civil War (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2009), esp. chapter six “God’s Will,” 103-124 and Lewis O. Saum, The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), esp. chapter one “Providence.”

has stood by me where ten thousand deaths were on every side of me, and with the
hollow of his hand He has shielded me from every danger." This God of Battles was
also recognized by Confederates such as Ted Barclay of the Stonewall Brigade, who
commented on God’s mercy in the wake of a recent battle in February 1864. “Though it
was not a severe fight, it requires only one ball to end our lives and many a one passed
harmlessly by,” recalled Barclay. “That is the time it is to feel how sweet it is to be a
Christian. When the balls are flying thick around you and dealing death all around, to
commit yourself into His care, that He has power to hurl by harmless the missiles of
death.”

Peacetime clergy adapted to wartime exigency by trying to meet soldiers’ religious
needs at all times including during mortal combat. Although not officially required, many
chaplains ventured on to the front lines. The majority of chaplains, however, remained
non-combatants, ministering to soldiers before battle, aiding at the hospital during
battle, and taking care of the casualties once hostilities ceased. In July 1861,
Confederate Chaplain Robert L. Dabney, writing to his wife, compared his role to the
surgeons who attended to men on the field of battle, yet did not expose themselves to
danger. Calming his wife’s fears, he described how safe he was: “You know it is the
rarest thing in the world to hear of a surgeon attacked; in civilized warfare. They and

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7 Blair, A Politician Goes to War, 108.

8 For more on the Confederate God of Battles see Jason Phillips, Diehard Rebels: The Confederate
Culture of Invincibility (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2007), chapter one “The Smile of
Providence: Confederate Religion and Invincibility.”

9 Charles W. Turner, Ted Barclay, Liberty Hall Volunteers: Letters from the Stonewall Brigade (1861-

10 Benedict R. Maryniak and John Wesley Brinsfield, Jr., eds., The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War
Chaplains The Union (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 99. Anecdotal evidence exists of
chaplains who participated in the actual fighting.
their benevolent work are considered as sacred from interruption."¹¹ Three days later he clarified his situation further, writing “I do not consider it my duty” to expose my life to danger.¹²

Both Union and Confederate chaplains expanded their pre-war clerical roles by assisting the wounded and dying on the battlefield, creating a sacred space within the carnage and chaos of battle. David Holt of the 16th Mississippi recalled that his chaplain, Alexander Lomax, always went in with the line of battle prepared with tourniquets and bandages.¹³ If he encountered a dead soldier he would note his name and offer “a prayer commending his soul to God.” Upon encountering a wounded man, Lomax, after providing first aid, told the soldier “of God’s love and the forgiveness of sin and how courage was one of His gifts. And that God was our Father who wanted us to have enough confidence in Him and ask Him for those things necessary for us.”¹⁴ Confederate Chaplain Alexander Betts even aided Yankee wounded. When on the battlefield, Betts saw a Union soldier’s undressed wounds and offered spiritual comfort, consoling him by saying “Brother, Jesus loves you. You came down here to kill my


brothers, but I love you."15 Pere Louis-Hippolyte Gache, the Catholic chaplain of the 10th Louisiana Infantry, expertly explained the reasons for aiding fallen enemy soldiers in his remarks to a fellow Confederate officer during the Cedar Run campaign: "When an enemy is vanquished and can no longer do you any harm, he is no longer an enemy; he is simply an unfortunate human being who has a right to Christian charity. Besides, I'm a Catholic priest and my work here doesn't allow me to make any distinction between Yankees and boys from the South. I see all men as redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ." Due to these beliefs, Gache concluded he had to "show sympathy to all and animosity to none."16

While antebellum missionary groups focused nearly all their energies on the living, United States Christian Commission delegates found fulfillment in ministering to the dying on the battlefield. Delegate Archibald Beatty recalled resting among the wounded at Antietam before being awakened and asked to visit a dying soldier. To this nearly deceased individual, anxious for salvation, Beatty "spoke of Jesus, His death, His love" before offering prayers. "Every moan and groan of the sufferers who could hear was hushed" Beatty recalled, "and in the solemn stillness I prayed for him, so soon to meet the Judge, and for his comrades about us."17 These delegates also normally failed to differentiate between Confederate and Union wounded, according to Delegate Andrew B. Cross who wrote about the USCC's work after the battle of Gettysburg. Due to


17 Edward Parmelee Smith, Incidents among shot and shell: the only authentic work extant giving the many tragic and touching incidents that came under the notice of the United States Christian Commission during the long years of the Civil War (Philadelphia: Edgewood Pub. Co., 1868), 42.
patriotic motives, or a belief that they should not help their enemies, Cross recalled, some delegates would not aid the rebels. However, most, without any reserve, “adopted the principle of the Gospel, which says: ‘If thine enemy hunger, feed him.’ Other delegates at Gettysburg ministered to wounded rebels in a barn connected to the hospital of the Third Corps. The USCC’s Second Annual Report explains that doctors, serving as delegates, “bound up wounds, amputated limbs, and gave them nourishing soups and stimulating drinks, while they never forgot the religious wants of their patients.” “Interesting conversions here took place,” the report continued “and we cannot doubt that it will appear at the last day that many laid the foundation of their new life in this old barn.”

A strong connection developed between the USCC delegate and the wounded soldier on the battlefield, the wartime iteration of the empathy antebellum clergy felt for members of their flock. When on a visit in May 1864, Bishop McIlvaine of Ohio observed the labors of USCC delegates at Fredericksburg: “What particularly struck me in the work was the individuality and personality of the connection between the commission agent and the wounded sufferers. There was nothing between them to make the application of aid circuitous or doubtful.” From McIlvaine’s perspective Commission delegates supplemented the work of army surgeons, supplying “deficiencies in special emergencies, which no government could be ready for [.]” At Fredericksburg, for example, USCC delegates greeted the wounded on the battlefield and the nearby town

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18 Andrew Cross, *Battle of Gettysburg and the Christian Commission* (Baltimore, n.p., 1865), 19. This verse, from Romans 12:20, states “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.”

“long before the appliances of a very overworked corps of excellent army surgeons and nurses could get to them.”

Like their Confederate counterparts, Union chaplains continued to subscribe to the tenets of their prewar ministry by viewing everyone as children of God. In wartime, this meant not differentiating between rebels and Union men. After the Battle of Fair Oaks in June 1862, an officer of the Irish Brigade recalled, Catholic chaplains Fathers Ouellet, Dillon, and Corby helped the doctors “to console the mind and heal the body” regardless of affiliation. Only two months later, after the Second Battle of Manassas, Chaplain Twichell explained how he cared for both Union and Confederate wounded “as long as he could see.” Yet occasionally, the chaplain felt unease about this duty. After the Battle of Antietam, Chaplain Alexander Morrison Stewart felt powerless when he could not provide more aid to a Confederate soldier doomed to die a sad and lonely death: “War-cruel, unfeeling, relentless, bloody war! I inquired not for his name, his home, nor his mother-having no desire to know them. Little doubt, he would there die, unsoothed, unaided, unwept. No comforting incident in the case to write to his mother, if one were living; no cheerful memory for me to cherish concerning him.”

Care for rebels by Union chaplains extended to the conclusion of the war, indicating that mounting casualties did not alter the chaplain’s mission, unchanged from peacetime. In a battle days before Lee’s surrender, Father Egan of the 9th

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23 Alexander M. Stewart, *Camp, March and Battle-field: or, Three Years and a Half with the Army of the Potomac* (Philadelphia: James B. Rogers, Printer, 1865), 236.
Massachusetts tended to a spiritually and physically distraught Confederate soldier found behind Union lines. Learning that the man had never been baptized, he immediately performed that sacrament explaining the necessity of baptism “in order to go to heaven.” Egan stayed with the man for as long as he could, sorry that he would not be there when the soldier left his earthly torment. Scenes such as this occurred frequently.

As in the camp, during the chaos of battle, chaplains or missionaries also declined to differentiate between Catholics and Protestants, a reflection of a new wartime ecumenicalism. During the antebellum era, Catholic and Protestant clergy kept to their own denominations. Not so during the war. Father Ouellent, while ministering to the wounded on the front line at Malvern Hill, asked them two simple questions before serving them, “Are you a Catholic? And do you wish absolution?” When one wounded soldier, responded “No, but I would like to die in the faith of any man who has the courage to come and see me in such a place as this,” Father Ouellent gave the poor man conditional baptism. He then went on with his merciful work, absolving the wounded, and exhorting them to have courage, while placing their trust in Christ.

Other clerical accounts suggest that aid to the wounded also sometimes bridged racial divides in nineteenth-century America. For example, United States Christian Commission delegates ministered to wounded Indians after the Wilderness battles. Delegate Isaac Baker remembered his response to four wounded Native Americans from Wisconsin with strong Union loyalties. “I lay down close to one,” Baker recalled,


“and spoke of Jesus and his salvation. His eye brightened. He had heard that blessed
name before, and in his broken way said, “I love him; I love him.” In response, Baker
“commended his spirit to God,” before the soldier perished while he attempted to sing
him to sleep. For the other three Native Americans, too wounded to speak, Baker could
only provide refreshments.\textsuperscript{26}

Throughout the war, chaplains and missionaries facilitated the creation of sacred
space in anticipation of the blood and gore of battle. This new wartime duty pushed
them to expand their ministry beyond more narrowly defined traditional church roles.
They re-enacted prewar worship techniques in a constantly changing and fluid
environment which unlike the antebellum church service, they could not control. For
example, a Portsmouth preacher celebrated the sacrament with the officers of the
C.S.S. Virginia before an early 1862 battle.\textsuperscript{27} In the midst of the Peninsular campaign
that year, Union Chaplain Corby routinely took confession and provided Holy
Communion for all in need. The men “gathered around the altars, assisted at Mass; and
as they watched the priest lift the Sacred Host on high, many a one said in his heart:
“Perhaps this is the last time I will see Jesus till I meet Him in the life to come.”\textsuperscript{28} Before
his men formed in line of battle at South Mountain, the 11\textsuperscript{th} Ohio’s Presbyterian

\textsuperscript{26} Lemuel Moss, \textit{Annals of the United States Christian Commission} (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co.,
1869), 595. This same incident is repeated in Edward Parmelee Smith, \textit{Incidents Among Shot and Shell:
The Only Authentic Work Extant Giving the Many Tragic and Touching Incidents that Came Under the
Notice of the United States Christian Commission During the Long Years of the Civil War} (Philadelphia:

\textsuperscript{27} Sam Davis Elliot, ed., \textit{Doctor Quintard, Chaplain C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee: The Memoir
and Civil War Diary of Charles Todd Quintard} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 42.

\textsuperscript{28} Corby, \textit{Memoirs of Chaplain Life}, 54.
Chaplain led devotional exercises, where he read verses from the 86th Psalm.\textsuperscript{29} Private Wilbur Fisk of the Second Vermont Regiment recalled a service led by a USCC delegate in late November 1863, who “act[ed] the part of the Good Samaritan to the suffering, -as a great many belonging to that Commission have done, to the everlasting gratitude of those who have been wounded in action,-and to preach the gospel and distribute religious reading where such services are needed.”\textsuperscript{30} Before Grant’s Overland Campaign in the war’s last year, United States Christian Commission delegates in Culpepper on the last Sabbath in April “preached twenty-three times to the regiments in and about the town. Everywhere the men listened as if they were anticipating the baptism of blood which awaited them, and were anxious to prepare for the march to death which so many were to make.”\textsuperscript{31}

Some wartime battles caused clergy to adapt specific pre-war mass worship techniques to the pre-combat experience. At Fredericksburg, Union chaplain John Ripley Adams recalled ministering to a group of soldiers ready to fight at a moment’s notice. The narrow space of the ravine where the troops massed ready to relieve their comrades on the front lines, seemed to magnify the religiosity present there. Adams described this space as “long, narrow, and deep, the walls in some places being fifty feet high.” However, the space proved amenable to religious services. The singing

\textsuperscript{29} William W. Lyle, \textit{Lights and Shadows of Army Life: or Pen Pictures from the Battlefield, the Camp, and the Hospital} (Cincinnati, OH: R. W. Carroll & Co. Publishers, 1865), 125. According to Lyle’s account, he read verses one to seven “Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy. Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.”


\textsuperscript{31} Smith, \textit{Incidents Among Shot and Shell}, 244.
“reverberated in the lengthened cells of our temple,” Adams explained, “while the solemn attitude of the men, and the audible responses of some of them, awakened thoughts of Waldenses and Convenanters, who had often worshipped God in such places.”

During the battle of Gettysburg, the war’s crucial turning point, several chaplains reported directing prayer before combat. Prayer intensified since both clergy and soldiers understood that this battle’s outcome might decide the war. Chaplain John Ripley Adams remembered the atmosphere as he spoke to his troops at Little Round Top. From his position on the top of a flat rock, Adams recalled, “It was a scene for a painter. Groups of men lying amid the rocks on rough ground, in battle line ready for action, hushed to silence after the thunders of the day’s fight had ceased, and yet imploring God’s blessing, and thanking Him for the success of our arms.”

Catholic clergy took pains to offer the rite of absolution to the troops who braved the travails of combat. The most famous example was Father Corby’s absolution of the Irish Brigade during the second day at Gettysburg. During absolution, the sins of Catholics are forgiven and they are brought to a state of grace. Dying in a state of grace allows one to escape hell, thus explaining the clerical imperative to grant absolution to soldiers before a battle. In his memoirs, Major General Mulholland described Corby’s absolution as a religious ceremony “performed that, in the sublime magnificence and


33 Ibid., 117.

34 Corby also gave his men a hasty absolution right before they were engaged at the battle of Antietam. (Corby, *Memoirs of Chaplain Life*, 112)

grandeur of its surroundings, was never equaled on the continent.”36 Mulholland recalled Father Corby “standing in front of the brigade, which was drawn up in a column of regiments.” According to Mulholland, Corby next “made a fervent and passionate appeal to the men to remember in the hour of battle the great Captain of all, Jesus Christ, and to have contrition for all their sins, that they might be prepared to die for the cause for which they fought.” After Corby’s simple request, Mulholland explained, “Every man fell upon his knees, the flags were dropped, and Father Corby, looking up to heaven, called down the blessing of the Almighty upon the men. Stretching out his right hand (as the lips of the soldiers moved in silent prayer) he pronounced the words of absolution [in latin].”37 After witnessing Corby’s actions, Chaplain John H. W. Stuckenberg of the 145th Pennsylvania asked his commanding officer if he too could worship with the troops before battle. The colonel granted permission and called the troops to attention. “The occasion was a very solemn one,” Stuckenberg recalled, “it was the last prayer in which some of our regt joined.”38

In addition to absolution, priests held mass, the fundamental act of pre-war Catholic worship, before combat. Union chaplain William Corby describes celebrating pre-combat mass on two occasions, before the battle of Chancellorsville in 1863 and the first battle of the Wilderness a year later. At Chancellorsville, Corby “prepared to

36 At Gettysburg, Mulholland served as colonel of the 116th Pennsylvania Volunteers, one of the units attached to Meagher’s Irish Brigade.

37 Maj. Gen. Mulholland, “The Irish Brigade in the War for the Union” in Memoirs of Chaplain Life, 385. Corby’s memoirs also contain his extended account of the same event. See Corby, Memoirs of Chaplain Life, 181-184. An account of Corby’s absolution is repeated in Chaplain Henry Trumbull’s memoir, War Memories of an Army Chaplain, although it is unclear if Trumbull witnessed the event. (See Trumbull, War Memories of an Army Chaplain, 6-8.)

celebrate Mass on the slope of a hill facing the brigade . . . A rustic altar, constructed the night previous with a few boards which we found in the vicinity of the mill, stood under a spreading beech tree, and looked very picturesque.” Shortly after Corby commenced with mass, the battle began. Corby’s unit received orders to advance right after mass. After the first day of the battle of the Wilderness, and during preparations for the next day’s conflict, Corby said mass with another priest. During this service, the seriously wounded received Holy Communion early because the priest had already heard their confessions the previous evening.

One Protestant chaplain staged a mass prayer service similar in scope to Corby’s absolution before the battle of Chickamauga. Rivaling a Second Great Awakening era camp meeting, this particular service augmented peacetime worship practices by focusing on civil religion, including calling upon the flag, and patriotic fervor. From the center of the formation, Presbyterian Rev. W. W. Lyle of the 11th Ohio addressed the troops assembled in two divisions: “He spoke about the holy cause for which they were to fight that day; that it was not for territory or revenge or military glory; but for home and country, for liberty and truth, for God and Humanity!” Lyle continued with prayer, specifically focused on the battlefield circumstances. After telling the soldiers of God’s love for them, he added “I pray God to cover your heads to-day in the battle-storm. I pray that he may give you brave hearts and strong hands to-day. Be brave-be manly! Remember the dear old flag, and what it covers. And if any of you feel uncertain as to your future, O look to the Savior who died for you[.]”

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40 Ibid., 231.
Lyle concluded, “may you not only die as brave soldiers for your country, but die as soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ!”

The services held before an anticipated battle might coincide with a familiar peacetime religious celebration, such as Easter, heightening their impact. On Easter Sunday in April 1865, the last month of the war, Confederate chaplain Charles Quintard described the elevated sense of anxiety evident among his troops. When the service began everyone except for a handful of men had gone to the trenches. A couple of soldiers came late, in order to receive communion. One soldier in particular affected Quintard. Hoping that God would protect him, Quintard observed the devout officer “kneel at the chancel and hasten away equipped for the battle, clasping his wife by her hand, as he tore himself away.”

Contested sacred space often emerged under chaotic combat conditions, foreign to antebellum clergy accustomed to total control of their religious environment, where chaplains risked injury or death. Under such precarious circumstances, determined clergy remained committed to their vocation. At Antietam in September 1862, Father Corby delivered confessions under lethal Confederate small arms fire, when “every instant bullets whizzed past my head.” Near Atlanta, in the Summer of 1864, Surgeon John Bennitt listened to a chaplain’s sermon, happy that he could spend a sabbath “in a semi-Christian manner, notwithstanding the picket firing and canonading going on


44 This space was in fact “contested,” for the profaneness of battle interacted alongside the sacred words of biblical ministrations.

almost incessantly, within a half mile of us.” “Shells from the enemy’s guns have not fallen directly among us but have on each side,” he recalled. “We are becoming so accustomed to them that but little notice is taken of them, unless firing becomes more brisk, or ceased altogether.”

During the siege of Petersburg, scene of almost continuous battles between 1864 and 1865, chaplains and missionaries ministered to men exposed to a deadly onslaught of lead. This environment pressed clergy to speed up their familiar pre-war ritual practices to accommodate the battle-ready soldiers’ needs. In October 1864, Chaplain Trumbull buried his regiment’s dead “while the skirmish line was still engaged and every moment a renewal of the attack was expected.” The contested nature of this space was apparent as “the sound of prayer mingled with the echoes of artillery and musketry and the crash of falling pines for hastily constructed breast-works.” In the middle of administering mass, Father Egan explained, “I heard some sharp rattling of musketry, followed by loud cannonading. I hurried through Mass and the administering of Communion to about sixty soldiers, then, getting my vestments together and placing them in my saddle bags, mounted my horse and rode out of the fort, just as the gunners were ordered to mount the parapets.” The Methodist chaplain of the 54th North Carolina, recalled preaching at Petersburg in March 1865, only days before the Union army forced the Confederates to withdraw from that position. While holding an eleven

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48 Corby, Memoirs of Chaplain Life, 335.
o’clock service behind the breastworks, he kept the attention of the congregation
“although the Minnie balls from the enemy were flying over our heads harmlessly.”

Only days earlier, a Union chaplain on the other side of the Petersburg lines
remembered the chaos which ensued at his chapel at the front, in response to a
Confederate charge. Right before the benediction, a yell was heard. "A charge! A
charge! ran through the chapel," the chaplain recalled, “and in one half minute the
chapel was cleared. The boys rushed to arms. Voleys of muskettry long and loud
pealed forth from our picket line. In less time than I have been writing this every man
was at the breast work.”

During wartime, missionaries - like the military clergy - shed their antebellum
security by ministering to soldiers while the battle raged hotly around them. Knowing
that this would be the last chance to reach some of these men, United States Christian
Commission delegates saw their duty to evangelize at any cost. According to B. F.
Jacobs, during the battle of Nashville the guns ceased firing so there could be prayer:
“the soldiers knelt upon the ground, and the officers, taking off their caps, bowed their
heads” before articulating the Divine blessing. During the same battle, Jacobs
participated in a combat burial where “Just as we had all bowed round the grave, the
hastening hoofs of the aids’ horses called the men to the charge. The prayer was brief,”
Jacobs remembered, “but ere it was over the bullets had begun to sing, the men were

49 John Paris, diary entry, Sunday, March 19 1865, Box 1, Folder 4, Volume 3 Diary 1865, John Paris Papers, 1828-1905, Southern Historical Collection, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.
51 Smith, Incidents Among Shot and Shell, 426.
back in their places, and the line was sweeping on in triumph towards the doomed works of the enemy."\(^52\)

Even if clergy worked outside the range of rifle fire, they could fall victim to a new wartime danger, long range shelling. On May Day 1863, while two miles below Fredericksburg, Union Chaplain Stewart recalled the large and deeply religious meetings held in the front lines over the past few evenings. In full view of the enemy, Stewart remembered "the booming of their cannon rolling over the hills and through the valleys, their shells occasionally screaming over or bursting near us." The nearby shelling did not excite or distract the worshippers and the meeting continued as usual. Emblematic of the occasion, Stewart preached on the text, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."\(^53\) While in Grant’s army in 1865, S. E. Fitz, Agent of the Twenty-fourth Army Corps, noted how delegates continued their service to soldiers, even while exposed to shelling. He recalled how their heartfelt dedication received approbation from their flock: “Twice when the enemy shelled the line for several hours, and “New-Market” and “Henry” shared the danger of the camp in general, our delegates gained approval by proceeding undisturbed in their work at home and on the lines.”\(^54\)

Confederate clergy shared these dangers. For example, Chaplain Louis-Hippolyte Gache, had just begun to pray during the Cedar Run campaign when “a shell exploded against a tree scarce twenty-five feet away.”\(^55\)

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\(^52\) Smith, *Incidents Among Shot and Shell*, 430.

\(^53\) Stewart, *Camp, March and Battlefield*, 310.


In contrast with their pre-war roles, where they only rarely had contact with injured people, chaplains often tended to the mortally wounded during combat, serving as *de facto* battlefield nurses. According to Union chaplain William Eastman, all day and into the night, “As the rows of wounded men grew longer, chaplains went from man to man to see what could be done to relieve their pain, perhaps to take a message or write a letter.”

Union chaplain William Corby recalled how at the battle of Fair Oaks, a recently wounded soldier would first see the priest, who would immediately hear his confession if the wound was fatal. During the Seven Days’ fight, Corby noted that his work among the wounded “gave great security to the minds of the Catholic soldiers.”

In the wake of bloody combat, the wounded might see a chaplain or missionary even before a surgeon. In contrast with their peacetime roles when they were often last to see the wounded, wartime clergy usually were first on the scene. Catholic clergy needed to provide Holy Communion to those laying on the field in case they perished before being moved. “I was obliged to carry it to them,” Father Corby explained, “as they lay here and there on the straw, unable to move-stepping over some, and walking around others.” If they had not made a sign for themselves previously, a soldier pointed

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58 Ibid., 87.

59 Battlefield experiences contributed to revivalism, providing specific evidence to support the arguments of earlier historians that fear of death caused soldiers to turn to God in increased numbers. After the Battle of Williamsburg (May 5, 1862) and the Battle of Fair Oaks (May 31 thru June 1, 1862), Stewart saw an increase in interest during prayer meetings. Approximately a week after Williamsburg, Stewart asserted “the hearts of God’s children have been evidently drawn nearer Himself on account of the protection granted in the hour of imminent danger. Not a few intelligent Christian members have related in our meetings their religious feelings and impressions in the hour of impending death.” (Alexander M. Stewart, *Camp, March and Battlefield: or, Three Years and a Half With the Army of the Potomac* (Philadelphia: James B. Rogers, Printer, 1865), 161-162.)
out the wounded ready to receive the sacrament. Protestant chaplains such as W. W. Lyle, also worked very hard to minister to the dying. Lyle explained to one dying soldier on the South Mountain battlefield, that even though he might be a sinner he should look to Jesus for salvation. “I told him that, sinful and unworthy as he might be,” Lyle recollected in his memoirs “he was precious in the sight of God; that the Savior had suffered and died for him, and that salvation was freely offered, on condition of trusting in Christ as his all-sufficient Savior.”

Despite the arrival of clergy immediately after combat, the religious infrastructure remained wholly inadequate to relieve the true cost of war, the suffering of the masses of wounded men. For the first time in their careers, many clergy could not successfully complete a central ministerial task. Union chaplain John Stuckenberg’s experience was typical. Stuckenberg’s inability to relieve all in need pained him: "It made my heart ache to see so much intense suffering, crowded in a small compass, and the means to relieve it totally inadequate. I could not minister to all who desired it, and often had to turn a deaf ear to the most earnest cries for help.”

Those clergy who did succeed in reaching the wounded found the battlefield an environment where antebellum sectarian difference dissolved in favor of trans-denominational Christian harmony. In ministering to Union wounded on the battlefield in the wake of combat, Confederate Catholic chaplain Gache recalled how most non-Catholics showed great respect for the Catholic faith, and appreciation for Gache’s spiritual advice. According to Gache, these soldiers repeated his suggested short

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60 Corby, Memoirs of Chaplain Life, 113-114.
61 Lyle, Lights and Shadows of Army Life, 134.
62 Hedrick and Davis, Jr., I'm Surrounded by Methodists, 46.
aspirations and prayers. His account followed with a telling example of the chaplain’s effect on the men. When talking to an old colonel who had been wounded in the chest, Gache explained that he should ask God’s pardon for his sins. The soldier’s response was telling: “I have already done that, but I’ll do it again. And I do thank you for your advice. I also pray that God will bless you for the kind words you have said to me and for the sympathy you have shown me. I really have no right to this at all.”

Battlefield conditions forced clergy to adapt pre-war worship techniques to the chaotic atmosphere of the battlefield. For the first time, many clergy could not control their environment. Once the battle ended, wounded and dying soldiers were moved to hospitals where they also received aid from chaplains and missionaries. This was a new wartime space with which most clergy had no previous antebellum experience.

**Aiding the Dispossessed: Ministering to the Sick, Wounded, and Dying in the Hospitals**

Throughout the conflict, Civil War hospitals served vast numbers of sick, wounded, and dying soldiers. Wounded soldiers were rushed to the field hospitals surrounding the battlefield for immediate medical attention, while those who would benefit from more extensive care for longer periods of time were sent to general hospitals on the homefront. Dedicated clergy braved all kinds of difficulties and privations to aid the soldiers in these institutions. Here, they often enjoyed a captive and engaged audience eager to receive prayer and heartfelt ministrations. Nothing like the wartime

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64 For specific Union hospital chaplain duties see Warren B. Armstrong, *For Courageous Fighting and Confident Dying: Union Chaplains in the Civil War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 36-41. For the role of chaplains in Confederate hospitals see Nancy Schurr, “Inside the Confederate Hospital: Community and Conflict during the Civil War” (PhD diss, University of Tennessee at Knoxville, 2004), esp. chapter three.
hospital existed in antebellum America, so clergy who worked in this arena were trailblazers, figuring out effective worship techniques through trial and error.65

In a November 1862 report, Chaplain Thomas G. Carver noted that "A hospital is a sacred place and especially so when the building used is a church consecrated to God’s worship."66 For Carver and other chaplains, the wartime hospital served as the epicenter of religiosity.67 Hermann Bokum, Union chaplain of Philadelphia’s Turner’s Lane Hospital, explained the hospital’s peculiar religious environment and its effect on the chaplain. According to Bokum, the chaplain derives encouragement when he preaches “surrounded by a congregation many of whom are hanging upon his lips with strange intenseness, since perchance, for months past they have not heard the Gospel, and others, because the scenes through which they have passed have given them a new power of understanding it[.].”68 In Union general hospitals, commissioned chaplains tried eagerly to accommodate this need, and felt privileged to do so. “Is it not a glorious privilege that we can preach Christ to the sick and afflicted?” Union chaplain John Ripley Adams wrote to his wife in a July 1861 letter.69 His colleague, Chaplain James B.

65 Antebellum hospitals mainly served the insane, poor, or travelers. By the mid-nineteenth century the pavilion ward was coming into use. This was “an open ward, but of limited extent; ventilated on both long sides by windows, on both short sides by doors; connected to a corridor that serves similar pavilions, but self-contained with its own service rooms.” (John D. Thompson and Grace Goldin, The Hospital: A Social and Architectural History (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), 118.) The pavilion ward would be the dominate form used in Civil War hospitals.


67 Here I am referring to general hospitals, located safely away from combat. In these institutions, the infrastructure developed for an organized hospital chaplaincy. In the more temporary or makeshift field hospitals there was little time for religious ministrations.

68 Hermann Bokum, Wanderings North and South (Philadelphia: King & Baird, Printers, 1864), 65.

Rogers, noted the specific interests of his patients, mostly ambulatory convalescents, who could attend services: “They appeared exceedingly anxious to receive the Gospel. Very many were Christians and seemed happy and joyful, even in the midst of sorrow. It is easy preaching, when men hang upon the lips of the speaker, rejoicing in the "glad tidings."” Another Union chaplain, Andrew Jackson Hartsock agreed, declaring in December 1862 “the Gospel is sweet to the sick and dying.” Later that month, Hartsock explained why he enjoyed preaching in the hospitals: “Here it seems men like [the] Sabbath.” These reflections confirm the privilege of preaching to the sick, wounded, and dying.

Unlike the prewar era when clergy were rarely seen at hospitals, wartime chaplains served as integral members of the hospital staff. “Although many of the boys welcomed hospital chaplains,” historian George Rable suggests that “some nurses and patients considered them feckless busybodies wandering among the sufferers to no great purpose.” Union chaplain B. H. Crever thought of the soldiers in his flock as

70 Rogers, War Pictures, 80-81.

71 James C. Duram and Eleanor A. Duram, eds. Soldier of the Cross: The Civil War Diary and Correspondence of Rev. Andrew Jackson Hartsock (Manhattan, Kansas: Military Affairs/Aerospace Historian Publishing for the American Military Institute, 1979), 35.

72 Ibid., 49.

73 The sick might have ulterior, non-faith based, motives to seek Christianity. Union chaplain John W. Stuckenberg explains why: “Fear of death is so apt to be the strongest motive to become a professor during sickness; and the impressions made there are so apt to be but transitory.” (Hedrick and Davis, Jr., I’m Surrounded by Methodists, 18.)

74 More than two hundred Union chaplains served in hospitals, not including regimental chaplains who worked temporarily in hospitals while on campaign. (Maryniak and Brinsfield, Jr., The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains The Union, 184). According to a May 1862 act, one chaplain was assigned to each permanent Union army hospital. (Armstrong, For Courageous Fighting and Confident Dying Union Chaplains in the Civil War, 7.) See Armstrong, chp. 1 “Defining the Charge,” for more background information concerning the Union hospital chaplaincy.

75 George C. Rable, God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 173.
“representing peaceful but distant homes endeared to them by a thousand memories” and “as an exponent of the terrible energy of a great nation smiting her foes.” Crever maintained “an unutterable desire that those who wear the livery of the republic should be got with the panoply of Christ.” In an earlier report, Crever described how he inculcated a civil religion among the hospital patients: “It has been my constant aim by every mode of public utterance to set forth the religious basis of our national struggle and create a patriotic sentiment sustained by the consciousness of Heaven’s approval.” Union chaplain John F. Wright believed his role extended to comforting the depressed, moving them toward a stronger belief in Jesus Christ: “if the digested one has no knowledge of Salvation by the remission of sins, I do not fail to urge him to repent, and cast himself on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ that he may have unbounded mercy for his refuge and omnipotence for his defense.” As Union chaplain W. H. D. Hatton explained in a report, religion served to awaken in the minds of hospital patients “serious thoughts which frequently result in moral and physical improvement.”

Taking advantage of the surroundings, chaplains could more easily reach parishioners in the hospital than in the camp. According to Union chaplain Rogers, in the camp the chaplain could only retain hearers by being short and direct. While in the

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76 B. H. Crever Hospital Chaplain U.S.A. USA Gen Hospital Frederick Md March 1 1864 Monthly Report of Official Duties to Surgeon J.V.G. Blaney Medical Director Department West Va Cumberland Md, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

77 B. H. Crever Hospital Chaplain U.S.A. General Hospital Frederick MD February 1 1864 to Surgeon J.V.G. Blaney U.S. Vols. Medical Director Department West Va Cumberland Md, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.


hospital, “men are at leisure, and their minds have been in a measure prepared for the contemplation of serious things by the tedious discipline of sickness, or wounds.”

According to at least one Union chaplain, B. H. Crever, a hospital chaplain’s duty extended to restoring the spirituality of men who lost it while serving in the army. “It is also a matter of frequent occurrence and I will add, a cause, with me of devout gratitude,” he noted “that persons who had suffered spiritual declension in the field or camp, if not the entire loss of spiritual life, have here been happily restored to the divine favor.”

Adopting familiar worship techniques to this new wartime setting, chaplains developed a specific procedure when visiting a hospital ward. A. S. Billingsley provides some insight into this topic in a December 1864 report to the Surgeon General. Visiting several wards daily, Billingsley directed patients toward Christ and repentance. In the course of these ministrations, Billingsley prayed, sang, exhorted, and read the Bible with them. The patients responded with tears, appreciation, and frequent conversions. As a result, “many of the soldiers die happy, triumphant deaths.”

Later in his memoirs, Billingsley described his larger plan to reach those in the wards. “Seeing so many brave heroes lying upon the verge of eternity, and others, perhaps, just passing the crisis of the soul,” he noted “and all anxiously inquiring what to do to be saved, and not being able to reach them all in due time in personal conversation,” Billingsley adopted a

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81 B. H. Crever Hospital Chaplain U.S.A. General Hospital Frederick MD February 1 1864 to Surgeon J.V.G. Blaney U.S. Vols. Medical Director Department West Va Cumberland Md, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

These innovative worship techniques helped intensify the bond between the chaplain and the hospital patient. Union chaplain John Ripley Adams explained this connection in a letter he wrote from a Washington D.C. hospital, only days after the First Battle of Bull Run. After visiting and praying with the wounded in the Washington hospitals, Adams remarked "They are men, they are soldiers, and they have souls. What I saw there I shall not describe, but I do say that I admired the fortitude of the sufferers. It was good to see the grateful response that came up from lips and hearts that were not unmoved by the story of the Great Physician sympathizing with the sick and with the stranger in the distant land." Adams’ sentiments were reflected in the writings of other civil war clergy.

This new wartime bond influenced the type of interactions common between a chaplain and a wounded soldier in the hospital. After learning of the bullet which had traveled through his patient’s right lung, Union chaplain Hermann Bokum of the Turner’s Lane Hospital met with Corporal Charles Crary, telling him how faith in Jesus can provide comfort. In response, Crary acknowledged his already strong faith in Christ, and enjoined Bokum to visit him often and read to him Biblical passages, especially from the New Testament and Psalms. According to Bokum, during Crary’s last days in the hospital before his death, the singing of hymns during evening prayer meetings

83 Maryniak and Brinsfield, Jr., The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains The Union, 215.
85 Bokum, Wanderings North and South, 45.
reminded him of his home in Detroit. Bokum argues that Crary’s spiritual journey in the hospital “has its counterpart in every part of the country, and in every relation of life.”

By relying on pre-war techniques like group prayer and one-on-one communication, clerical workers were able to reach two types of men who populated the hospital ward: the “Christian” and the “inquirer.” USCC Delegate Rev. F. P. Monfort, who worked in Washington’s permanent hospitals offered an excellent depiction of the two. The Christian, he explained “served the Saviour five years, nearly half that period in the Union army” and “considered his position in it the best he had ever known, for a sense of personal religious responsibility, for nearness to God, growth in grace, and usefulness to others in the practice of piety[.]” On the other hand, the inquirer had “a fond remembrance of home, the family altar, the Sabbath-school, and the sanctuary,-a stranger as yet to saving grace, but under deep conviction of sin, and longing to “know the love of God in Christ Jesus” and the joys of his salvation.” Either character, according to surgeon John Bennitt would be receptive to the chaplain: “Indeed there seems to be much of interest on the subject of religion among the sick and wounded, and it seems to be a good time and place to make an impression upon men in this respect.”

Active prayer, combined with ample free time in hospitals, allowed clergy relying on peacetime conversion techniques to easily convert and spread the desire among

86 Bokum, Wanderings North and South, 49 and 54.
87 Ibid., 55.
soldiers for salvation. For example, USCC delegates frequently converted the patients at Alexandria, Virginia hospitals in 1865. In this place, “some of the delegates were cheered by being permitted to report ten, and, in one instance fifteen definite cases of hopeful conversion during their six weeks’ labor.” In summer 1864, James Campbell Bates of the 9th Texas Regiment informed his mother and sister about his religious conversion in an Atlanta hospital: "[N] ow through the mercy of the great & good God I feel that "my sins are forgiven me," and although we may never meet here again, I will meet you in Heaven where partings are not known. Oh I would not exchange the peace & happiness that this "blessed hope" gives me, for the wealth of all the world. God grant me strength ever to "keep the faith." Delegate Thos. Atkinson’s post-Chickamauga ministry in the Nashville hospitals illustrates many soldiers’ desire for salvation. After gathering together and preaching to a group of about sixty convalescents in mourning over their recently deceased comrade, Atkinson asked them if any wished to attain salvation by attending the daily prayer meeting. The response was overwhelming: “Hands went up all round; here and there a stump was raised; one man had neither

90 A spiritual awakening could be centered at relatively stationary hospitals. In July 1864 Virginia’s Huguenot Springs Hospital experienced several conversions and an ensuing wave of revivalism. William Banks, the Presbyterian chaplain of the 4th South Carolina, in a July 22nd letter, described the religious excitement in this hospital and his “fine opportunities to do good for the spiritual welfare of our soldiers, among whom the remarkable work of grace is still progressing.” Although conversions occurred at a rapid pace, he only accepted applications for baptism on request. A little over a week later, Banks reconsidered his decision to minister to the troops, and inquired of his wife whether he should stay in the chaplaincy or resign his commission. He asserted that if he could withstand the demands of active service, “there is so much encouragement among the soldiers-so many anxiously inquiring what they must do to be saved-so many hopeful conversions.” In the end, he concluded, that he needed to go home, and if then he found himself unfit for service, he would resign and leave the military. (William Banks to Mary, Letter, July 22, 1864 and July 30, 1864, William Banks Papers, 1853-1880, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.)

91 USCC, Fourth Annual Report, 68.

hand remaining, so he raised two poor stumps in token of his desire for Christ; another had no stumps even to raise,-he could only turn his head and say with difficult earnestness, “Me-me.”

Yet these antebellum missionary techniques did not work on everyone. Some patients would still not accept religion even while knocking at death’s door. Delegate Chas. Cutler, working at a cavalry hospital at City Point, Virginia in September 1864 recalled the stubbornness of a soldier who, try as he might, would not listen. “I’ve got no religion, and I don’t want any,” he told Cutler, “I won’t burn out my candle now, and throw the snuff in God Almighty’s face. I’ll die as I’ve lived. It’s honester.” In another incident from the last two years of the war, Rev. E. P. Smith, failed to reach the soldier he was ministering to in a St. Louis hospital. “See there, stranger, do you think I am going to give that withered, dried-up hand to God, after I have given all its strength to the devil?” the soldier told Smith. “Do you think I’m going to drink the devil’s wine all my life up to this last day in hospital, and then offer the settlings to Jesus?” Soon after speaking with Smith, the soldier lapsed into a partially conscious state and died.

93 USCC, Fourth Annual Report, 224. Official United States Christian Commission sources posit that hospital patients neglected their spiritual development before the Commission’s arrival and thus proved one of the organization’s most fruitful fields of labor. Yet the overwhelming number of reports from Union hospital chaplains indicates that the Christian Commission might have exaggerated their influence in these official records. Writing in the early summer of 1864, Delegate David Weston of Washington’s Judiciary Square Hospital described the patients’ aggressiveness when religious reading was provided, stating they “snatched at it as a hungry man would snatch at food.” Moreover, they appeared overjoyed when the opportunity for religious conversation and counsel arose. One soldier remarked quite enthusiastically, “I have been here many weeks,” and “you are the first one whom I have heard mention religion.” David Weston, Among the Wounded: U.S. Christian Commission: Experiences of a Delegate (Philadelphia: Rodgers, 1864), 11.

94 Smith, Incidents Among Shot and Shell, 324.

95 Ibid., 463.

96 Ibid.
Even some hospital staff did not support the chaplain’s mission. Confederate Chaplain Beauchelle slept in the same tent as one of the regimental surgeons, Dr. Tyler. According to another surgeon, the wicked and profane Dr. Tyler, and the chaplain argued nightly about Scripture.97 Union chaplain Joseph Anderson encountered opposition from the chief surgeon at the barracks hospital in Detroit, who stated that “wards are improper places for such services.” In response, the chaplain quipped that if wards were actually improper places for prayer most hospitals would be unable to hold religious services, having no other space for group prayer.98 The chief surgeon at a field hospital in 1865, noted a degree of ambiguity, telling United States Christian Commission delegates to hold religious services at a place outside the hospital tents but still convenient for convalescents.99 Agent Rev. John F. Loyd explained how the delegates satisfied this request. They usually held services “near some of the tents, so that the patients in them could hear. After preaching, we would pass from tent to tent, talking and praying with the boys, as prudence dictated.”100 If surgeons did not encourage convalescents to attend services, the chaplain’s personal influence on the patients was counteracted.101

100 Ibid.
While some surgeons acted as if the work of chaplains interfered with the well-being of patients, other doctors, following standard antebellum practice, actively supported their chaplain's initiatives. Surgeons usually favored religious services for they might calm the patients as well as engage them in productive activities. Dr. Davis, the Post Surgeon at a town near Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, issued an order that urged all convalescents to attend a Sunday service in April 1862. The resulting attendance caused Union Chaplain Rogers to reflect on the scene: "As the service went on, the moistened eyes and marked attention of all afforded evidence of their readiness to receive the truth. "These men," thought I, "are now in circumstances to be benefited, and as this wide door of usefulness is opened, let me improve it. May I not even expect that souls will be gathered as the result of even this one effort?" Rodney Gage, chaplain at a general hospital in Alexandria, Virginia stated that the supervising surgeon along with his family attended worship services unless special duties interfered. A March 1864 order by the chief surgeon at a New Orleans hospital actually forced able-bodied patients to attend services. This parallels evidence of compulsory services held in the camp. For example, Surgeon Samuel Kneeland directed all ambulatory patients and off-duty attendants to attend a Sabbath afternoon service held by the hospital chaplain. Only those excused by the Medical Officer of the Day could remain in their wards, but they could not receive visitors unless given special permission.


104 Special Order No.1 University Hospt New Orleans March 17 1864 by order of Saml Kneeland Surgeon U.S.V. in charge, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. It is not apparent whether this surgeon’s actions were an exception or the norm in the hospital since I have not found other evidence of surgeons forcing patients to attend services. However, patients still followed orders while in
As opposed to pre-war clergy, who rarely worked in hospitals, Civil War chaplains and missionaries devoted much of their time to caring for soldiers, who survived the trials of combat but ended up among the forsaken in hospitals. \(^{105}\) Union Chaplain Joseph Twichell described his dual role in a field hospital near Falmouth, Virginia in December 1862. Serving as both a nurse and minister, he happily worked toward some larger purpose. He tended to the mortally wounded including a man paralyzed by a bullet which went through his back and lungs. \(^{106}\) Following the Battle of Chancellorsville, Confederate priest James B. Sheeran went to the hospital surrounding the Confederate camp and administered the sacraments to many wounded Yankee soldiers. \(^{107}\) Sheeran also helped the hospitalized wounded in the wake of the Second Battle of the Wilderness, spending “from morning till late at night in hearing confessions, administering Extreme Unction, baptizing, and in washing and dressing wounds.” \(^{108}\) In the autumn of 1864, Union soldier Private Wilbur Fisk recalled how a chaplain presided over a service of both Confederate and Union soldiers in a church used as a makeshift hospital. “The Chaplain had friends and foes for his audience, but the wounded rebels appeared to enjoy the discourse very much, as did also the well Union boys,” Fisk remembered. “The attendance was not large however. The regiments were drawing

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\(^{105}\) For an excellent description of ministrations to a sick and dying man in camp see Rogers, *War Pictures*, 68-70.


\(^{108}\) Ibid., 87.
beef just at that time, and you know soldiers, just like all the rest of the world, love the meat which perisheth, a great deal better than they do the bread of life.”

Sometimes peacetime missionary techniques would not work in the wartime hospital environment. At other times the hospital environment inhibited attempts to create a sacred space. To conduct services, hold prayer meetings and otherwise minister to the men, required a degree of well-being among the sick and wounded. Feverish soldiers sometimes could not handle the activity, especially the noise, and thus surgeons occasionally barred the religious work of chaplains and delegates. In late March of 1863 Reverend Andrew Jackson Hartsock recalled how the surgeon forbade hospital services due to a soldier’s fever. Hartsock, however, could still minister to this soldier who “professed a hope in God” and “seemed willing to trust in the mercy of God thro Christ our redeemer.”

In addition to coping with sick soldiers, Civil War clergy stationed in hospitals dealt with another unfamiliar problem: limited space. Clergy could usually only pray in individual wards if not declared off limits by the supervising surgeons. A chapel might be more advantageous, but that would exclude non-ambulatory hospital patients from attending. In an April 1864 report, Union chaplain John V. Dodge described how spatial concerns affected his preaching. Many patients in large two hundred foot long

111 Limited space remained a greater concern within the hospital than in the more open atmosphere of the camp.
112 Union chaplain Joseph Anderson explained the need for a chapel to conduct orderly worship and to serve as a reading room and library. (Joseph Anderson Chaplain U.S.A. Monthly Report of the hospitals of this city Detroit, Michigan 31 December 1864 to the Surgeon General U.S.A. Washington D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.)
wards first seemed aloof, according to Dodge, but became more attracted to his message as the service continued.\textsuperscript{113} Moreover, in the same report, Dodge opined that preaching in the wards offered some advantages over the chapel. “By varying the place of preaching,” Dodge explained “I find that Gospel truth is brought to bear upon a much larger number and especially upon many who could not be apt to hear it at all unless it was thus brought to them.”\textsuperscript{114} However, regardless of their other advantages, wards could not accommodate officers' families.\textsuperscript{115}

As opposed to the rigid established space of antebellum churches, Civil War clergy rearranged hospital space so the soldiers could enjoy their religious ministrations. A prayer meeting in the Union Army’s Ninth Corps in July of 1864 permitted everyone to participate. “[T]he tents of the sick ward are arranged around an opening somewhat oval in shape,” Rev. J. H. Edwards explained. “Three or four of us took our stand under a tree, near the tents which contained the worst cases,-men unable to walk.”\textsuperscript{116} The significance of the event was not lost on Edwards, reminding him of “one of the groups we may imagine to have frequently surrounded the Saviour,-the lame, halt, and blind.”\textsuperscript{117} Surgeon John Bennitt wrote about the tent flies used by hospital chaplains:

"Two days [ago] we put up two tent "flies" covering a place about 18 X 28 ft.-& in it put

\textsuperscript{113} John V. Dodge Chaplain U.S.A. U.S.A. Genl Hospital Evansville, Indiana April 30 1864 Monthly Report of Station and Duty for the Month of April 1864 to Surgeon General's Office Washington City D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

\textsuperscript{114} John V. Dodge Chaplain U.S.A. U.S.A. Genl Hospital Evansville, Indiana April 30 1864 Monthly Report of Station and Duty for the Month of April 1864 to Surgeon General's Office Washington City D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.


\textsuperscript{116} Moss, \textit{Annals of the United States Christian Commission}, 435.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
two large tables for reading and writing for the use of the convalescents. Seats constructed as many as the rooms can hold furnish a resting place in the cool shade.”

The minister preached, according to Bennitt, “by the side of this and between it and the tents where the sick are lying so that a large proportion can hear.”

118 With generous monetary contributions, a simple hospital ward could be appropriated, and converted into a chapel. Union Chaplain J. Ploudfort used a private contribution of one thousand dollars to convert his religious space at Fort Wood in New York Harbor.

119 Only a few months later, Ploudfort improved this space further by installing an organ, an addition which attracted many new attendees.

120 Although both chaplains and patients expressed great enthusiasm for chapels, the primary site of religiosity in peacetime, most hospitals did not contain these separate spiritual places. This led to the creation of contested spaces, profane areas which were also used for religious purposes.

121 Since Union chaplain Joseph Anderson worked at a hospital which lacked a chapel, he held services in the dining room, a space crowded by

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120 J. Ploudfort Chaplain U.S.A. At Fort Wood Bedlois Island NY Harbor Report for January 1865 January 31 1865 to General Joseph K. Barnes Surgeon Gen U.S.A. Union chaplain John Poucher of the US General Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee also noted that the recently installed organ helped make his chapel more attractive. (John Poucher Chaplain 38th Ohio V.I. U.S. Genl Hospital No. 1 Nashville Tenn. March 31 1865 Report Station and Duty during the month of March 1865 to Surgeon General U.S.A. Washington D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.)
121 This idea clearly works with religious scholar Jonathan Z. Smith’s theoretical conception of situational sacred space. According to Smith, “there is nothing that is inherently sacred or profane. These are not substantive categories, but rather situational ones. Sacrality is, above all, a category of emplacement.” (Jonathan Z. Smith, To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 104)
five rows of tables. Nor was Anderson the only chaplain to make a dining room into a prayer space. Working in a Philadelphia hospital, Chaplain John Long tried using the dining room as a chapel but found it unsuitable since it also served as “the passage way to the wards.” Serving in New Orleans in December 1864, Union chaplain C. B. Thomas co-opted a lecture room to conduct Sunday services. That same month, William Vaux, a hospital chaplain in Washington D.C., converted a vacant mess-room into a worship space. During the week it served other purposes, however, the building’s full capacity was reached during Sunday worship.

Wartime contested spaces also emerged when former churches became profane hospitals. For example, after the Battle of South Mountain, every church in Middletown, a town only a couple miles from the battlefield, became a hospital. In the Methodist Church where Union chaplain William Lyle worked, on “the night after the battle-the audience-room, and lecture-room below, were filled from end to end, and even the aisles and pulpit and platform were crowded with the wounded and the dying.” “Like pitying angels from the better world, intent only on fulfilling some mission of love and gentleness,” women assisted Lyle in his ministrations. “[T] hey moved amid those dread

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123 John Long Chaplain USA U.S.A. Genl Hospital South St Philadelphia Pennsyl April 4 1865 to Brig Genl Thomas Adjutant Genl USA, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.


126 Lyle, Lights and Shadows of Army Life, 144.
scenes of mortal anguish,” Lyle later recounted “literally dealing bread to the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, soothing the suffering, and speaking peace to the dying.”

Unlike pre-war religious spaces which always retained the same function, when patients occupied the chapel the spiritual work there could be superseded. This happened to at least two hospital chaplains who ministered to soldiers far from the battlefield, during the last year of the conflict when casualties soared in the Union armies. In a July 1864 report, hospital chaplain Nathaniel Callender noted how the temporary occupation of his Denison, Ohio chapel with sick and wounded men, suspended the regular public religious services held there. In his New Haven, Connecticut chapel, hospital chaplain James B. Crane described in reports covering July-September of 1864, some of the war's bloodiest months, his problems finding prayer space. Due to space constraints, religious services in the chapel were uncertain. “Service is contingent and uncertain,” he recalled. “No place whatever is afforded for religious assemblages day or evening. A want deeply felt and to be deplored.” By the end of September the chapel space had been restored, and many soldiers now attended.

Wartime religious space allowed USCC delegates to combine temporal and spiritual work, while in the antebellum period these spheres had been separate. After

128 Nathaniel Callender Chaplain U.S.A. Personal Report Dennison USA Genl Hospital Camp Dennison Ohio July 31 1864 to Surgeon Genl U.S.A. Washington City D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
130 James B. Crane Knight U.S. Gen Hospital New Haven Conn September 30 1864 to Brig Genl J.K. Barnes Surg Gen USA, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
the battle of Perryville, Benjamin Chidlaw, a former chaplain turned USCC delegate, provided tea and toast to several men while ministering to them in a hospital located in a church. "As a matter of course the preacher hung his banner on the outer wall," his account read "as an Ambassador of the Prince of Peace, and preached Christ to these men who had been so delightfully regaled with tea and toast that the friends of the soldier had sent to them."\(^{131}\) Later, while ministering in a deserted tavern turned hospital, Chidlaw explained to the seventeen soldiers lying on the floor "the gospel of clean clothes, and of something good to eat." The next day, he "labored in the gospel of Christ among them."\(^{132}\) Among the wounded there, Childlaw found a former Sunday School boy from Ohio who had been converted but never professed his faith in Jesus Christ. "As a recruiting officer of the Captain of Salvation, I was ready to muster in this new recruit," Chidlaw recalled. "I talked to him about the articles of war, tried to tell him what it was to be a faithful soldier-that he must not "break ranks" and run to the enemy-and then, on the avowal of his faith in Christ, I baptized this Christian soldier, and welcomed him into the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ."\(^{133}\) In the summer of 1864, Surgeon John Bennitt of the 19\(^{th}\) Michigan Infantry, writing from a hospital near Marietta, Georgia explained how the USCC along with its sister organization, the USSC, contributed to his present good health. "I have no doubt but that my present freedom from Scurvy is in a great measure due to the fruits that have come to my table from those societies," he said. "The government grants them privileges of transportation that

\(^{131}\) Henrietta Chidlaw, "Sunset and evening star": In Memoriam of Rev. Benjamin Williams Chidlaw (Utica, NY: T.J. Griffiths, 1894), 141.

\(^{132}\) Ibid., 142.

\(^{133}\) Ibid., 142-143.
cannot be obtained by private individuals & hence these things can be had in this manner that could not come any other way."\(^{134}\)

Wartime clergy used ritual in different ways than their prewar comrades, to actually deconsecrate certain spaces. Here they followed rituals to prepare the space to receive wounded men.\(^{135}\) For example, the USCC built chapels or town churches already constructed before the war served periods as makeshift hospitals for wounded soldiers after mortal combat. These contested spaces multiplied in the wake of increased bloodshed in the second half of the war. In September 1863, Delegate James Russell Miller serving in the Army of the Potomac at Culpeper, Virginia described the establishment of a station in the Vestry of the Mt. Pony Baptist Church. This particular station was first appropriated for living quarters, before becoming a hospital later that week.\(^{136}\) The atmosphere inside one of these former churches was quite depressing. As explained in a report describing a Fredericksburg church in the early Summer of 1864, the former sacred space no longer held that status: “In the Episcopal church, a nurse is bolstering up a wounded officer in the area behind the altar. Men are lying in the pews, on the seats, on the floor, on boards on top of the pews.”\(^{137}\) Even Meade Station, one of the most beautiful USCC sites, after an unexpected enemy attack in 1865, became occupied for a brief time as a hospital. The “chapel, which only the evening before had

\(^{134}\) Beasecker, “I Hope to Do My Country Service”, 293.

\(^{135}\) Jane Hubert maintains that in the Christian religion one may deconsecrate a sacred site. “A church, for example, can be deconsecrated,” she notes “by the carrying out of rituals, so that it becomes a secular site, an ordinary building that can be used for any purpose. Thus the sacredness of the church is not something that is inherent in the place itself. Ritual leaders can create a sacred place, and uncreate it.” (Hubert, “Sacred Beliefs and Beliefs of Sacredness,” 13-14.)


\(^{137}\) Smith, Incidents Among Shot and Shell, 250.
been occupied by quiet worshippers, was now filled with bleeding and dying men, some of them the same who, but a few hours before, had left that room in perfect health and vigor.”¹³⁸

While certainly difficult, wartime clergy could also use ritual to reconsecrate a building. In at least one case, USCC delegates converted a former church which had earlier been used as a rebel hospital back to its original form as a religious edifice. On a Sabbath day in Kingston in 1864, the General Field Agent transformed the pre-war Baptist church back into a religious center: “I took off my ministerial coat,” the General Field Agent recalled, “and for one hour, with the mercury at ninety degrees, worked with might and main. When I had swept out the straw, cleared the rubbish from the pulpit, thrown the bunks out the window, pitched the old seats down from the loft, arranged them in order on the floor, and dusted the whole house over twice, it was time for service.”¹³⁹

Union chaplains created a strong ecumenical atmosphere in the hospitals. These actions would have been virtually unheard of in antebellum times where sectarian strife was the norm. A dying Catholic soldier specifically requested the services of Joseph Hopkins Twichell, the Congregationalist chaplain of the 71st New York who prayed with him “using the Episcopal form of “Visitation of the Sick.””¹⁴⁰ At Malvern Hill, a Catholic priest, Father Ouellent of the Irish Brigade, ministered to a badly wounded soldier. When asked if he were a Catholic, the soldier asserted, “No, but I would like to die in

¹³⁹ Smith, *Incidents Among Shot and Shell*, 286.
the faith of any man who has the courage to come and see me in such a place as this.”141 At Spotsylvania in 1864, Father Corby of the Irish brigade commissioned Chaplain William Eastman, a Congregationalist minister, to hear a dying soldier’s confession. “Tell him to confess to you,” Corby told Eastman “tell him that I said so and that whatever you say to him or do for him is right.” With Corby’s approval, Eastman “kneeled upon the grass beside the dying boy, listened to what he had to say, offered such comfort and hope as was given me, and commended him in prayer into the keeping of our gracious Lord.” Seemingly satisfied, the boy died.142

In line with nineteenth-century conceptions of separate spheres, women played a role in ministering to those in the wartime hospital environment.143 In his memoir, Union chaplain William Lyle provides a more specific assessment: “If even a cup of cold water given in the name of Christ shall in no wise lose its reward, then those noble women, who ministered to our brave soldiers on that trying and terrible occasion, will not be forgotten by the ever-living and ever-loving Redeemer.”144 Female nurses displayed the


144 Lyle, Lights and Shadows of Army Life, 146.
practical value of Christian faith and thus inculcated religiosity in soldiers. Harriett Eaton described her service in the following manner: "I think I have been led more into the depths of Christian experience than any hitherto . . . my own will swallowed up, and I purified, this poor sinful body made a meet temple for the Master’s use."145 "When duty calls and so much can be done for the Master," another female nurse maintained, "I must not waiver."146 Roman Catholic nuns worked especially hard to aid the sick and wounded. According to Union soldier Charles Mattocks, "[T]he Sisters of Mercy" and the "Sisters of Charity" with their black bonnets and white bonnets are everywhere personally attending to the trials and sufferings of sick and wounded soldiers. It matters not to which army the soldier belongs. That he needs help is enough for these noble women to know."147 Confederate chaplain Louis-Hippolyte Gache explained this phenomenon well in a November 1862 letter. In his opinion, the care and attention which the nuns bestow on the sick "is a constant sermon which, if it does not enlighten the understanding of men, touches at any rate and wins their hearts, and disposes them in a wonderous way to be receptive to the priest’s instruction and to receive the faith."
The sick just need “to see these saintly women at work for a period of three or four days . . . to believe in the "sisters’ church. For these men the proof of the Catholic church is in the life of the sisters.”148 Maryland’s Sister Camilla O’Keefe utilized her position to help


146 Mary Shelton as cited in Schultz, *Women at the Front*, 76.


convert errant souls. “To witness the change in those men,” she recalled, “was evidently the mercy of God over His redeemed creatures.”

Moving beyond their established antebellum roles as nurturers, women also aided in religious development by serving in the choir. Union chaplain Amos Billingsley remembered how another chaplain named Roe led a female choir which sang in the wards on the Sabbath. “The chaplain, accompanied by the choir,” Billingley recalled, “would enter a ward, read a suitable passage of Scripture, followed by the enlivening music. After singing two or three pieces, they would go to the next ward.” As in the camp, occasionally women participated in religious services. In late October 1864, Confederate Chaplain Charles Todd Quintard held a morning service attended by surgeons, convalescents, and ladies from town. Another Catholic Confederate chaplain, Louis-Hippolyte Gache offered mass to women and convalescents in Williamsburg within the lunatic asylum’s chapel in the late autumn of 1861.

As in the camp, prewar racial differences diminished in light of the shared hospital experience. When preaching to those convalescing outside the front lines at a General Hospital in Fort Monroe, Virginia in 1865, Union hospital Chaplain Amos Stevens Billingsley preached to both black and white soldiers. “A colored soldier said to me,” Billingsley recalled, “I liked to jump out of bed while you was preaching, last night, I felt

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149 Sister Camilla O’Keefe as cited in Schultz, Women at the Front, 77.
150 Amos S. Billingsley, From the Flag to the Cross: Or, Scenes and Incidents of Christianity in the War (Burlington IA: R. T. Root, 1872), 121.
152 Gache, A Frenchman, A Chaplain, A Rebel, 73.
so happy; my very heart seemed to leap with joy.”153 For this chaplain and many of his colleagues, wounded men deserved religious attention regardless of race.

Catholic hospital chaplains continued some of their pre-war missionary activity by caring for the needy members of their beleaguered sect. This entailed voluntary ministry to Catholics in nearby institutions. In a November 1864 report, Chaplain F. E. Boyle of Washington D.C.’s Stono General Hospital recalled visiting the Catholic soldiers in four other nearby hospitals, who appreciated being able to receive the sacraments.154 The Rev. B. S. Widget, a chaplain at a Washington D.C. hospital, ministered when necessary to French and German Catholics, in the surrounding hospitals. Widget earned the distinction of being the only Washington D.C.-based chaplain in 1865 who could communicate with German-speaking soldiers in their native tongue.155

Like in peacetime, some chaplains specifically ministered to German soldiers in their own language. Stationed in Nashville, Union hospital chaplain Herman Eggers preached in German for German soldiers in the city, and cared for the German sick from April 1864 through June 1865.156 In the immediate post-war period, Eggers’

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156 Herman Eggers Hospital Chaplain Cumberland Hospital Nashville Tenn April 30 1864 Monthly Report of Station and Duty for Month of April to Col J.K. Barnes Acting Surgeon Gen U.S.A. and other monthly reports thru June 1865, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Herman Eggers Hospital Chaplain Cumberland Hospital Nashville Tenn June 30 1865 Monthly Report of Station and Duty
responsibility toward his German brethren expanded. In addition to ministering weekly to those in the hospital in Nashville, Eggers also preached on Sunday to those soldiers in the city, as well as alternately every week to two German regiments without chaplains. Eggers noted their positive response to his efforts: "Our sick and convalescent Germans are generally willing, often glad and sometimes anxious to receive religious instruction and consolation in their mother tongue." Wartime clergy adapted antebellum missionary tactics to the hospital environment in order to reach the sick, wounded, and dying there. They also established new religious precedents to reach those in this wartime environment. When interacting with the dying, clergy tried to utilize the antebellum concept of the Good Death.

The End of Worldly Suffering: The Religious Space of the Dying

Dying soldiers, more so than anyone else, turned to the religious support of chaplains and missionaries. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust argues that soldiers "needed to be both willing and ready to die." As they left for war, she further asserts, "they turned to the resources of their culture, codes of masculinity, patriotism, and religion to prepare themselves for what lay ahead." Nineteenth-century Americans of all religious denominations shared the conception of the Good Death, which chaplains and

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157 Herman Eggers Hospital Chaplain Cumberland Hospital Nashville Tenn May 31 1865 Monthly Report of Station and Duty for Month of May to Surgeon Gen U.S.A., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

158 Herman Eggers Hospital Chaplain Cumberland Hospital Nashville Tenn May 31 1865 Monthly Report of Station and Duty for Month of May to Surgeon Gen U.S.A., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

159 Faust, This Republic of Suffering, 5.
missionaries provided to soldiers who died during their military service, far away from home and the support of their families.160

Coming from an antebellum culture almost obsessed with the Good Death, the chaplain focused special attention on the dying or recently deceased. Union Chaplain Thomas Kinnicut Beecher admitted his focus on the dead stating "I cannot explain it-but 'tis so-the departed are more mine than the staying-the dead are more to me than the living."161 Another Union chaplain David W. Tolford of the U.S. General Hospital in Columbus, Ohio reported on the special attention he gave to funerals, stating "I make it a duty to know that the dead are properly and decently laid out and prepared for burial, and all funerals from the Hospitals are attended with religious rites and our military honors."162

An unfamiliar role for most, army chaplains took seriously their most challenging duty: preparing men for certain death. Throughout the conflict, Northern and Southern chaplains prayed with deserters and other condemned men, providing them with religious consolation before their planned executions. Prewar executions were seen as "a setting where all could attend and profit."163 In the antebellum period, individuals punished in this fashion had committed a heinous crime, while wartime justice called for

160 Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 7-8. The use of wartime condolence letters “sought to make absent loved ones virtual witnesses to the dying moments they had been denied, to link home and battlefront, and to mend the fissures war had introduced into the fabric of the Good Death.” (Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 15.)

161 Maryniak and Brinsfield, Jr., *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains The Union*, 77-78.


much harsher penalties. One-time crimes such as desertion, that could potentially disrupt military order, elicited the death penalty. Yet in both arenas the attendees learned from these events. Union chaplain Charles Alfred Humphreys’ experience at a February 1864 execution of a deserter was typical: "The poor victim chose to lean on my arm as he walked to execution behind his own coffin borne by his old messmates," he recalled “while the band marched beside playing a funeral dirge. And he leaned still more closely on my faith that, though his country could not forgive him, beset as she was with enemies, God would forgive if he was truly penitent[].” Right before the scheduled execution, Humphreys offered final prayers before commending the soldier to God’s mercy, binding a handkerchief over his eyes, and requesting that the executioner aim at his heart.164 In this new role, the clergyman served as final confidant and confessor. He also was the lone person to express sympathy for the condemned "They were solemn and tearful as I read the Scriptures and prayed with them," Union Chaplain John Ripley recorded. “Poor men! Death stares them in the face, not with flushes of victory and honor on the battlefield, but with the shame and disgrace of cowardice and false-heartedness.”165 A Confederate soldier, Samuel Pickens, along with his entire division, watched a deserter speak to a chaplain before being executed.166 Another Confederate James Pickens, and the rest of his brigade watched the execution of three deserters in April 1864. Right before being shot to death, they

164 Humphreys, *Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison*, 20-21.
“kneel in prayer, with a minister, for a few minutes, ere their spirits are wafted into eternity.”\textsuperscript{167}

The chaplain’s normally unenviable new wartime role could have a positive outcome when men received last-minute pardons. Midway through the war, Union Chaplain Frederic Denison prayed with a deserter “plainly and faithfully as in the sight of God and not of men.” Finding true penitence in the man, Denison secured his pardon.\textsuperscript{168} In this case, Denison was able to intercede on the man’s behalf but other times an officer would, without clerical assistance. In July 1863, Union Chaplain William Corby, attended to a soldier convicted of shooting a fellow officer for speaking ill of him. While the man prostrated himself before God for the last time, Corby prepared him for certain death, keeping “before his mind the infinite mercy of God, the sufferings of Christ on the cross, and other reflections of a similar nature.” Right before the man’s scheduled execution, an officer granted a last minute pardon.\textsuperscript{169} A similar series of events affected Confederate Chaplain Quintard when ministering to a man sentenced to death for desertion. With the soldier seated on his coffin, Quintard gave him the sacrament and performed final ministrations, before the prisoner received a last second pardon.\textsuperscript{170}

Working within newly created religious roles in the military justice system, chaplains and missionaries placed equal effort into preparing the enemy for death. Civil War clergy felt all men deserved their ministrations regardless of their actions, or the

\textsuperscript{167} Hubbs, \textit{Voices from Company D}, 254.

\textsuperscript{168} Denison, \textit{A Chaplain’s Experience in the Union Army}, 21.


\textsuperscript{170} Elliot, \textit{Doctor Quintard, Chaplain C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee}, 73-75.
side they took in the conflict, actions which would have been unheard of in the sectarian influenced environment of antebellum America. Post Chaplain Francis Springer of Fort Smith, Arkansas ministered to four condemned Bushwhackers (irregular troops who had attacked Union forces in the area) before their July 1864 execution. On the morning of their execution, Springer dutifully sang the following hymn with the condemned, undisturbed that they were the enemy: "In the tempest of life, when the wave and the gate are around and above-if thy footing should fail, If thine eye should grow dim, and thy caution depart, Look aloft, and be firm and confiding of heart." Right before their execution, he said a few words of prayer before the condemned men’s eyes were bandaged and their hands tied. Francis Springer’s ministrations must have succeeded for right before their deaths, was heard “earnest supplications to God for mercy and forgiveness; and one of them broke out in the chorus of a hymn: "We'll all meet in heaven to part no more." In a separate incident in March 1864, the Union army executed Ephraim Smith Dodd for allegedly spying. Taking their Christian duty seriously to treat an enemy as a friend, before the execution, several Union chaplains prayed with him before immersing him in the baptism waters. Through Divine grace, these chaplains hoped that this man could surrender his soul to God and gain salvation.

As opposed to prewar clergy who focused primarily on the living, the chaplain or missionary in the hospital spent much of his time with soldiers about to leave their earthly torment. He aimed to console the soldiers, and hopefully also point them toward salvation, a most effective strategy when a soldier lay on his deathbed. Union chaplain

172 Ibid., 113.
173 Cutrer, *Our Trust is in the God of Battles*, 254.
Andrew Jackson Hartsock recalled the dying words of a mortally wounded man in the hospital “Tell them I die for my country, that my faith & hope is in Jesus.” Another soldier found God on his deathbed, even though “he had been a neglector of religion and was very profane.” “In this trying hour,” Chaplain Beaudry recalled, “he clung to me most ferociously, unwilling I should leave him for a moment. He also desired to have me pray for him.”

Wartime clergy often held burial services for those who perished in hospitals. Evidence suggests that the wounded and sick who could, often attended these services. Union hospital chaplain Rodney Gage explained that the brief religious services held at the grave consist of prayer, a reading of scripture, and sometimes remarks. At a funeral service Union hospital chaplain S. S. Potter would “usually sing a hymn, read a portion of the Lord’s word, deliver an address from 15 to 20 minutes expounding a passage in the Bible and closing with prayer and the benediction.”

Union hospital chaplain M. J. Gonzales described a more intricate ceremony, which

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174 Duram and Duram, *Soldier of the Cross*, 41.

175 Beaudry, *War Journal of Louis N. Beaudry*, 121. Like pre-war clergy, not all clerics performed this job well. J. R. Miller criticized how a preacher he accompanied ministered to a dying man in the hospital. According to Miller, the dying man did not have an understanding of salvation or Jesus Christ. Not cognizant of the situation, the minister attending him expressed the following message “cheer up, brother-you are safe-God only asks you to believe, and you say that you desire to believe—that is enough. You are all right.” Miller articulated scathing criticism of this minister’s actions: “Thus instead of opening up to him a view of his real condition, this man, professing to lead souls to Jesus, smooths down his pillow with false hopes, and tries to make him feel satisfied with his hopes, when in reality the dying man knew nothing whatever of the way to salvation.” (Smith, “Two Civil War Notebooks of James Russell Miller Part I,” 85-86.) For examples of deathbed confessions, see Billingsley, *From the Flag to the Cross*, 317-319.


contained aspects of civil religion. Almost daily at half past three in the afternoon, Gonzales attended a funeral service in which “An escort follows the bodies to the grave and the coffins are always enveloped in the glorious Flag of our Country.”

Confederate chaplain Wiatt recalled reading and commenting on Matthew 22:44 at a service in the tent hospital in mid-January 1863.

As part of this inculcation of religiosity, Union hospital chaplains clung to antebellum notions of the Good Death and presided over burial services for Confederate prisoners. While stationed at Point Lookout in May 1865, James B. Crane recalled “attending at the dead house, performing the burial service and making an address to a large number of prisoners, at the burial of four of their companions.”

Edmund B. Tuttle, while serving at Camp Douglass, Illinois provided religious services to the wards of the prison’s rebel hospital, but did not perform a burial service for the dying. Maintaining a degree of ambiguity about his lack of action, he stated in his report simply “If wrong in this matter, would like instructions.”

While single person burials were the norm in the antebellum period, the vast numbers of deceased in larger hospitals, required collective burial services. Union...


181 James B. Crane USA Genl Hospital Point Lookout, MD May 31st 1865 to Major Genl J.K. Barnes Surg Genl U.S.A., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

chaplain Billingsley describes the type of service he officiated over in the hospital, complete with resonances of civil religion: “At the hour appointed, the escort, drum-corps, dead-cart, pall-bearers, and the chaplain, all being assembled, the funeral begins by placing the encoffined dead into the cart, each one receiving the regular dead salute of a threefold rapping of the drums, and the escort presenting arms. We usually take five at a load, all covered over with the glorious old flag they died to honor and defend.” Then, “with a slow step and solemn notes of the death-march, of fife and drum, we march to the graves, and with solemn silence consign them to the tomb.” Once “the last coffin is let down” the chaplain reads some scripture and offers some remarks, “often speaking of the dying messages and bright prospects of the departed.” The service concludes “with prayer for the sick, wounded, dying, and for the comfort of the bereaved friends at home” and then the escort fires three volleys.183

Another problem that wartime clergy faced which their pre-war predecessors had not concerned burial space. Early in the war, the need for funeral services outstretched spatial limitations. Chaplain C. W. Denison of a Washington D.C. hospital wrote in September 1862 to the Surgeon General explaining his need for a specific space for funeral services. He asked the Surgeon General to make a suggestion on his behalf for “some central church, or vestry (not now occupied as a hospital) where the deceased could be carried, and religious services performed by the chaplains.”184

Due to the mass slaughter during Civil War battles, impersonal, mass burials, unheard of in peacetime, could not be avoided. Union chaplain William Reed Eastman

183 Billingsley, From the Flag to the Cross, 323.
recalled these mass burials in the wake of battle: “Each night at sundown the men who had died during the day were buried, with a short prayer, side by side in one shallow common grave, each in his uniform with canvas wrapped about his face and a strip of paper giving his name and regiment in a bottle buttoned under his blouse.” In the aftermath of a battle on the Rappahannock River in November 1863, Union chaplain Adams spent time with the wounded and dying in the hospital. The next day, he buried the dead “near the rifle-pits, seven in one grave . . . offered prayer, and saw the slain were decently buried, marking the place with head-boards.” Having received orders to advance, the regiment was not present. For some of these mass burials, chaplains required both civilian and military assistance. For example, Union chaplain Louis Beaudry needed this aid to bury eighty men in a mass grave, in the wake of battle in June 1863.

An example of the non-sectarian nature of Civil War religious life is displayed in a cooperative venture between Catholic and Protestant Confederate chaplains, who worked together in a daily funeral service in the cemetery. This type of transdenominational interaction would have been unheard of previously. Pere Louis-Hippolyte Gache, the Roman Catholic chaplain of the 10th Louisiana reported on this daily event with unfeigned disdain. Gache explained that some Catholic army chaplains had reached an agreement with their Protestant colleagues over sharing the conduct of a transdenominational funeral service for the dead of all religious faiths. “So as not to violate the laws of the [Catholic] church in this respect,” Gache remarked with disdain,

“they recite not the prayers of the Latin ritual, but other prayers, and in English. They also insist that they do not read these prayers for the dead, but rather for those who are present at the funeral service.”

Although most Civil War soldiers spent the majority of their time in the camp, the other wartime environments, namely combat and hospital space, created new challenges for clergy. Within hospitals, soldiers dealt with the benefits and curses of ample spare time. Religion definitely helped alleviate the boredom of hospital life. During combat, the lure of religious devotion, might be the only sound which could compete for the attention of the soldiery, offering them hope as they encountered a baptism of fire. It helped soldiers endure the harshness of Civil War life, and kept them connected to their families at home. In these particular spaces, the chaplain or missionary took on the role of mediator between the peacetime world and a world full of bloodshed and death. However, in these two environments, Civil War clergy experienced for the first time, a lack of control. In antebellum churches, the preacher told the congregants what to do and how to behave, and for the most part they listened. During combat conditions, or surrounded by sick and dying soldiers in the hospital, this was not the case. Here outside forces held sway and clergy needed to respond to them, without knowing the outcome in advance.

Clergy adapted pre-war worship techniques to the combat and hospital environments, two arenas where they lacked total control. The next chapter discusses clerical care in general hospitals and prisons. In these places, religious devotion,

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morphed into a civil religion in the North and the South. These spaces were more removed from antebellum religious practice, than the camp or battlefield.
CHAPTER 7
CLERICAL CARE IN GENERAL HOSPITALS AND PRISONS

Introduction

When former American prisoners of war are asked years later about what helped them cope with the indignities of prison life in some far off land they often say religion. The same was true for Confederate and Union prisoners incarcerated in desolate places far removed from familial contact. Hope in these places was often in short supply, and most easily accessible via their religious faith. The same faith helped the occupants of general hospitals endure long periods of recuperation while awaiting contact with prewar friends and relatives.

This chapter examines the construction of sacred space in both prisons and general hospitals, two new and particularly challenging spaces that emerged out of necessity in both the Union and the Confederacy.¹ Within hospitals, chaplains worked alongside missionaries (USCC delegates in the Union) and female nurses to create a religious space. In prisoner of war camps, imprisoned clergy or nearby “enemy” clergy, worked to keep the men occupied in religious pursuits and away from profane influences.²

Although in many senses very distinct sorts of institutions, for our purposes hospitals and prisons lend themselves to a conjoined analysis. Both institutions involved

¹ These two spaces are clear manifestations of decentralized sacred space which developed out of a place of self-sacrificial service to one’s neighbor. (Douglas Davies, “Christianity,” in Sacred Place, ed. Jean Holm (London: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), 56.). The discussion of hospitals in this chapter focuses on the specific religious aspects of the general hospitals. The previous chapter, while including some evidence from the general hospital, focused on how clergy ministered to sick, wounded, and dying men.

² Officer Frederic F. Cavada remarked that Libby prison housed many imprisoned chaplains. According to Cavada, “this time the rude grasp of Mars has not respected the inviolable sanctity of the holy robe.” (Cavada, Libby Life: Experiences of a Prisoner of War in Richmond, Va., 1863-64, 50)
the construction of physical spaces for housing men who were no longer engaged in military pursuits. How did the clergy bring religion to these men in such unfamiliar physical surroundings? Moreover, hospitals existed inside prisons and chaplain reports show that Union chaplains stationed at general hospitals also ministered to prisoners. In fact, Northern officials often located wartime general hospitals and prisons on the same site.

Both general hospitals and prisons provided new religious spaces with no precedent in pre-war America. With some success clergy tried to use antebellum religious practices to minister to the men in these institutions. The religious conditions in these spaces, however, did not replicate the antebellum church, or even the wartime camp, requiring clergy to both adapt antebellum norms and create new wartime practices unique to the general hospital and prison. Out of this environment emerged a civil religion which would flourish in the post-bellum era.

**Time is on Our Side: Sacred Space in the Union General Hospital**

More so than any antebellum institution, the wartime general hospital emerged as an ideal place for inculcating religiosity in Civil War America. Men enjoyed ample free time while staying there for extended periods. Within the Union armies, most hospitals could rely on the services of an in-house chaplain, United States Christian Commission delegates, and nearby civilian preachers. These conditions allowed for clergy to reach

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3 Nine boxes of hospital chaplain reports housed at the National Archives in Washington D.C. form the evidentiary basis for this chapter’s discussion of the religious space in Union general hospitals. In 1864, the Surgeon General of the United States ordered all Union hospital chaplains to submit monthly reports detailing their hospital duties.
many Civil War soldiers, rejuvenating their faith in Christianity, and teaching them about the world to come.⁴

Performing much the same functions as antebellum missionaries, USCC delegates labored alongside officially commissioned Union hospital chaplains stationed at general hospitals. In June 1864, for instance, United States Christian Commission delegates stationed at Fortress Monroe’s McClellan and Chesapeake hospitals tended to the wounded and sick.⁵ They helped relieve “the bodily distress of the sick and wounded” and stressed personal religion to these men.⁶ USCC delegates and chaplains often expanded their religious reach by leading worship together. For example, in April 1863 Chaplain Hartsock worked with a Mr. Centers of the USCC to hold services in three of the division hospital’s wards.⁷ Surgeon John Bennitt told his wife of his positive view of the USCC and its sister organization, the USSC’s, work in hospitals: "The U.S. Sanitary Commission & the U.S. Christian Commission are doing very much good work in supplying those things that conduce to the physical and moral well being of the

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⁴ Chaplain James Marshall of Fort Monroe, Virginia, spoke of the variety of religious meetings he provided in November 1864. Totaling twenty nine, these religious meetings included six Sunday Schools (three for white soldiers and children and another three for African American boys that were servants of officers); four for singing sacred music; eleven for conference and prayer; five for preaching; two in the military prison; and one held during Thanksgiving. (James Marshall Chaplain U.S. Gen Hospital Chesapeake in Officer's Division, Fort Monroe VA Report of Station P.O. Address and Duties for November 1864 November 30 1864 to Brig Genl James K. Barnes Surgeon General U.S. Army, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.)


soldier. There are among us some men, agents of these Societies that seem to be true followers of Him who went about doing good."\(^8\)

Like pre-war church services, the devotional music accompanying ritual acts pervaded the hospital environment.\(^9\) This makes sense considering the ample spare time men could devote to singing and other aspects of the ritual. After Mr. Sloan distributed the Soldier’s Hymn-book in the Smoketown hospitals, he declared the singing heard in most of the wards almost every evening “had a good effect upon the general spirits of the men” and often led to conversion.\(^10\) Union hospital chaplain James Marshall who worked near Fort Monroe, Virginia in January 1864 stated how on every Friday night he sang and taught the principles of sacred music to soldiers in the chapel.\(^11\) A little over a year later, Marshall had established four singing schools, where “a soldier drills a full chapel of orderly soldiers on duty both in Hospital and Prison Guard, in the rudiments of sacred music.”\(^12\)

Unlike the rudimentary hospitals of the antebellum era, a Union general hospital’s spatial arrangements promoted the dissemination of Christianity.\(^13\) Thomas Drumm

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\(^9\) The recitation of hymns or other types of devotional music also marked sacred space. (Hubert, “Sacred Beliefs,” 11. Douglas Davies, “Christianity,” in Sacred Place, 50-51.)


\(^12\) James Marshall Chaplain U.S Gen Hospital Officer's Division near Fort Monroe VA Report of Station P.O. Address and Duties for February 1865 February 28 1865 to Brig. Genl. J.K. Barnes Surgeon General U.S.A., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

\(^13\) Antebellum hospitals mainly served the insane, poor, or travelers. By the mid-nineteenth century the pavilion ward was coming into use. This was “an open ward, but of limited extent; ventilated on both long
worked at the First Division hospital in Alexandria, Virginia. Consisting of three distinct hospitals in a triangle formation, Chaplain Drumm explained, two sides of the hospital complex stretched 1/3 of a mile in length, while the third was 7/8 of a mile. Combined the hospitals could accommodate seven hundred and forty patients.14 The connectedness of these buildings allowed the chaplain easy access to hospital patients, granting him the ability to minister to their religious needs.

Similar to the wartime camp and prewar church, the general hospital’s chapel emerged as a beacon of religiosity. According to hospital administrator Jane Stuart Woolsey, “The chapel services were always well attended, except now and then in times of great sickness and heavy work, or when the Hospital was, for the time, thinned out.”15 Chaplains considered themselves lucky to have a chapel, and many bemoaned the lack of one.16 Joseph Anderson recalled that the wards in his Detroit hospital could not accommodate all who wanted to attend services since they were crowded with beds.17 Reporting from a Pennsylvania hospital in August 1864, Chaplain W. H. D.

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16 Lewis H. Sreoner, a Sanitary Commission delegate, relayed his friend, Chaplain B. H. Crever’s need for a chapel in a January 1863 letter to the Surgeon General. Lewis H. Sreoner Sanitary Commission Frederick City January 6 1863 letter to Brig Genl W. A. Hammond Surg Genl U.S.A. inside chaplain report B. H. Crever Hospital Chaplain USA Genl Hospt Frederick MD April 1 1864 to J.V.G Blaney Surgeon USA and Medical Director Dept West VA Cumberland, MD, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Hatton noted the lack of a suitable place for indoor services necessitated open air services.\(^{18}\) By the war’s last year few open air meetings occurred within the camp. Instead most religious services happened either in chapels or other enclosed areas.

When available, new wartime hospital chapels surpassed in both design and sophistication, those edifices constructed in the camp and in the pre-war period. This is logical considering that general hospitals could be used indefinitely and clergy relied on plentiful convalescent labor to build these structures. Lemuel G. Olmsted, who worked in an Indiana hospital, vividly described an almost completed chapel at the end of June 1865:

> It is 150 feet long, 40 wide, 20 high with a roof quarter pitch, and two side buildings of 14 by 28 ft and endwin to the centre of the sides of the main building. The last are for the Libraries. The work is well done. There is a double floor throughout the whole and filled in with six inches of sawdust to deaden the sound and keep it cool in summer and warm in winter. The building stands on cedar supports about 2 1/2 to 3 feet from the ground. It is well cleared and underneath and the wind drives under, as it does over and around it. The walls have hanging boards for pictures and maps from its waniscotting and the plates and new gable. The building is unique, well constructed, generally admired. The walls, are as fine as can be found and it is one of the easiest houses to speak in, that we know of. The pulpit is one side, in the center of the side. Over against it is an orchestra of one third of the main building, 50 feet in length. I have 300 arm chairs about half or two thirds done. They are a beautiful pattern, of good, well masoned material.\(^{19}\)

With the help of convalescent labor, Olmsted had been working on this chapel since September 1864. After obtaining the necessary funds from the Sanitary and Christian Commissions, as well as some material aid from the United States

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\(^{19}\) Lemuel G. Olmsted Jefferson U.S.A. Hospital Jeffersonville, Indiana June 30 1865 to Surgeon General USA Washington D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
government, Olmsted built an imposing structure which served as a chapel, reading room, and picture gallery. In August 1864, Union chaplain C. Brewster of Readville, Massachusetts reported that his chapel could hold between eight hundred and one thousand people. That same month, James Marshall stated that his chapel near Fort Monroe, Virginia contained a bell weighing three hundred and seventy-five pounds, used to call the soldiers to the sanctuary.

As in the camp, hospital chapel services welcomed all comers. This differed from the antebellum era when transdenominational worship was almost unheard of. Serving in Baton Rouge, Union hospital chaplain M. J. Gonzales, held one Sabbath and two weekday evening services per week. In a March 1864 report he recalled their non-sectarian orientation: “All Union services, where all Christian soldiers of every name and Denomination can unite in the worship of the same God and Savior.” Gonzales continued to mention the non-sectarian nature of services in several other reports he

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20 Lemuel G. Olmsted Jefferson U.S.A. Hospital Jeffersonville, Indiana April 30 1865 to Surgeon General USA Washington D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.


23 Private religious instructions and prayer remained available for those patients unable to attend public worship. (B. H. Crever Hospital Chaplain U.S.A. USA Gen Hospital Frederick Maryland March 31 1865 to Surgeon A.B. Campbell Medical Director Department West Va Cumberland Md, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.)

submitted to the Surgeon General during the war’s last year. Other chaplains undoubtedly shared his perspective on this topic.

Unlike pre-war services which usually attracted the same monolithic groups, Union general hospital services included diverse individuals, besides just the patients. Since his hospital chapel was the only church near Fort Monroe in March 1864, James Marshall’s place of worship was “thronged every Sabbath with strangers, citizens, and soldiers.” The soldiers there were encouraged by the regular attendance of citizens and their families. By January 1866 this hospital chapel remained the area’s only white church. “We rejoice at the presence and seeming cooperation of native residents who are present with Government soldiers and employees in morning service,” Marshall remarked, “and whose children compose chiefly the Sabbath School.”

While antebellum clergy commonly relegated non-natives to immigrant churches, Union hospital chaplains created an inclusive religious space for non-English speaking immigrants, especially Germans. In October 1864, Alfred Nevin, a chaplain at Philadelphia’s Satterlee general hospital, allowed a German missionary to preach to German soldiers on Tuesday evening and preside over their Bible-Class on Saturday.

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afternoon. 29 This minister held Tuesday afternoon German religious meetings through the end of the war. 30 Hermann Bokum, a Union hospital chaplain in Tennessee, explained how the USCC employed a German missionary to minister to hospitalized German soldiers. “The enterprise of the Rev. Mr. Romich, who has been the means of erecting a church edifice at the corner of Poplar and Twenty-first streets,” he remarked “also commends itself to everyone who is aware how important it is that our German emigrants should be provided with the means of grace.” 31

In sharp contrast to the religious segregation of the pre-war years, as in the camp, hospital religious space was racially inclusive. Like USCC delegates, but unlike most of their peacetime counterparts, hospital chaplains were involved in the inculcation of religiosity among African-Americans. But before they could instruct blacks in the Christian faith, chaplains sometimes needed to teach them to read and write. Benjamin Swallow tried to teach reading to sick African American soldiers who occupied the wards of his Little Rock, Arkansas hospital: “I have urged upon those who are able, to employ an hour or two each day in acquiring the ability to read, having secured the assistance of those who can read in their instruction.” The African Americans exhibited much interest and put forth substantial effort. “The disposition to learn is very strong[,]” Swallow stated. “Men sitting on their beds, or chairs may be seen with Spelling Book in

29 Alfred Nevin Hospital Chaplain Satterlee U.S.A. General Hospital West Philadelphia, PA October 31st 1864 Report to Surgeon General U.S.A., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

30 Alfred Nevin Chaplain USA Satterlee U.S.A. General Hospital West Philadelphia, PA November 30th 1864 Report to Surgeon General U.S.A., all reports through April 1865, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

31 Bokum, Wanderings North and South, 72.
hand, working carefully and with success.” He hoped to teach all the African Americans to read the Bible. In July 1865, Swallow observed great ignorance among the African American patients while “their desire for knowledge is so obvious and sincere, that many are employing the present opportunity to learn to read and write.” To this end, Swallow procured and distributed spelling books. A month later, Rev John Woart, a Hilton Head, South Carolina hospital chaplain, conducted religious services, and lectured on several subjects including the Solar System. The increasing density of black troops over the next months led Woart to hold extra educational lectures and religious meetings.

Following the pre-war Sunday School model, wartime clergy viewed children and African Americans as key missionary foci in the waning months of the conflict into the immediate post-war period. Stationed near Alexandria, Virginia in March 1865,

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32 Benjamin Swallow Hospital Chaplain USA USA General Hospital Little Rock Ark 1st July 1865 Monthly Report for June 1865 to Brig Genl Joseph K Barnes Surgeon Genl USA Washington D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

33 Benjamin Swallow Hospital Chaplain USA USA General Hospital Little Rock Ark 1st July 1865 Monthly Report for June 1865 to Brig Genl Joseph K Barnes Surgeon Genl USA Washington D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

34 Benjamin Swallow Chaplain USA USA General Hospital Little Rock Ark 1st Aug 1865 Report for the month of July 1865 to Brig Genl Joseph K Barnes Surgeon Genl USA Washington D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.


37 Aided by the United States Christian Commission, Union general hospitals also offered religious schools for whites modeled on the Sunday Schools prevalent in antebellum America. In a January 1865 report, Chaplain John A. Gere of York, Pennsylvania noted that competent and experienced teachers taught the two hundred men enrolled in his hospital’s daily school. The USCC supplied the textbooks. Every morning the school opened “with reading the Holy Scriptures, singing and prayer.” (John A. Gere Chaplain U.S.A. U.S. Army Gen Hospital York PA Jan 31st 1865 Personal Report of P.O. Address duty to
hospital chaplain Norman W. Camp, baptized one adult and twenty African American children at the “Freedmen’s Village.” That same month, Chaplain James Marshall, stationed at Fort Monroe, Virginia led four Children’s Sunday Schools and four Sunday schools for black hospital attendants. The next month he held a combined ten bible classes and Sunday schools for African American hospital attendants and nearby white children and soldiers. On average fifty people attended the soldiers’ Bible Class and Children’s Sunday School at two in the afternoon on each Sabbath. While on average forty attended the 3:30PM Sunday School for both African American hospital servants and the division’s African American soldiers. By January 1866, Marshall still officiated over the weekly afternoon Sabbath Sunday School for white children, after a morning

Jan 31 1865 to the Surgeon General U.S.A., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.)


41 James Marshall Chaplain U.S Gen Hospital Officers Division Fort Monroe VA Report of Station P.O. Address and Duties for June 1865 June 30 1865 to Brig. Genl. J.K. Barnes Surgeon General U.S. Army, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. One can observe the post-war melding of races, in the shadow of the hospital. In June 1865, Union hospital chaplain James Marshall, operating out of Fort Monroe, preached a fast day sermon in the hospital chapel, and then on the following Sabbath, “repeated it to over 600 soldiers, white and black, in open air, in Segars orchard, near the Hospital.” James Marshall Chaplain U.S. Gen Hospital Officers Division Fort Monroe VA Report of Station P.O. Address and Duties for June 1865 June 30 1865 to Brig. Genl. J.K. Barnes Surgeon General U.S. Army, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
chapel service. That month, Marshall observed, “Both Church audience and Sunday School are growing in size and interest.”

In spite of this wartime drive for racial inclusivity, not all racial barriers were breached within the military hospitals. White nurses commonly treated black nurses as inferior. Chaplains also observed races worshipping separately. Serving in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in the autumn of 1864, M. J. Gonzales, recalled that although separate religious services existed for whites and blacks, they could attend each other’s meetings. Ministering to a diverse audience, Gonzales preached to contrabands and their families, who primarily worked for the U.S. Government, as well as white and black Union soldiers. In September 1864 in Union chaplain W. W. Meech’s Kentucky hospital the wards remained racially divided, except on Sundays when both races shared preaching and prayer meetings.

The welcoming nature of Civil War hospital services also had a downside: not all soldiers found their religious needs met. Due to the lack of religious infrastructure such as chapels and limited denominational variety, clergy could not offer the cornucopia of spiritual options that some soldiers had experienced in peacetime. Ambulatory soldiers often preferred to attend churches in a nearby city rather than religious meetings in the hospital. Chaplain Joseph Anderson of Detroit, Michigan, explained in a May 1864


report why the patients chose to go to the city, stating it “is not unreasonable considering our want of comfortable accommodation, and of that “concord of sweet sounds” which is so exhilarating and so conducive to the true spirit of devotion.” In his next month’s report, Anderson elaborated on another reason why patients pursued prayer opportunities elsewhere: to better meet their denominational needs. One month earlier, Union chaplain Alexander Shiras remarked that he did not hold a service on one Sunday since the mostly Roman Catholic patients remaining wanted to attend Catholic services. This particular incident stands in sharp contrast to the lack of denominationalism present during the Civil War.

Within the general hospital, chaplains adopted antebellum religious functions by leading funeral services according to their specific denomination. The chaplain’s training, not sectarianism, shaped their leadership during services. For example, during their tenure at different general hospitals, M. J. Gonzales, Robert McMurdy, and D. D. Van Antwerp, all Episcopal priests, performed the burial service of the Episcopal Church.

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47 Joseph Anderson Chaplain U.S.A. Report on the Moral Condition of the hospital of this city, Detroit, Michigan 30th June 1864 To the Surgeon General U.S.A., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.


Hospital chaplains also performed the burial services of private citizens. In January 1864, James Marshall of Chesapeake General Hospital near Fort Monroe, Virginia officiated over four funerals: two for black soldiers, one for a white soldier, and the last for a young male citizen.\(^5^0\) An August 1865 report of the Washington D.C.-based Chaplain William Vaux recalled eight funerals in total, one of an officer, another of a soldiers’ wife, and six of privates.\(^5^1\)

Mounting casualties later in the conflict illuminated how newly expanded hospital burial space still proved inadequate for the country’s needs. B. H. Crever submitted a February 1864 report outlining the problem with his Frederick, Maryland hospital’s cemetery. “Though reposing within a general enclosure of great beauty,” the seven hundred and forty soldiers buried there, Crever noted “are not located to my entire satisfaction, not only are they crowded, as is generally the case in military interments, but the great body of them are on low ground which is unfitted for adornment. It is also an extreme position being the utmost margin of the enclosure nor are there any intervening spaces between the trenches, for shrubbery or evergreens.” Crever accepted this situation at the outset of the conflict before the cemetery company had received any governmental assistance. By the time of his report, however, the Government provided a dollar a man, making the situation problematic.\(^5^2\)


\(^5^2\) B.H. Crever Hospital Chaplain U.S.A. General Hospital Frederick MD February 1 1864 to Surgeon J.V.G. Blaney U.S. Vols. Medical Director Department West Va Cumberland Md, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
As in the camp and prewar America, clergy enthusiastically celebrated holidays in the general hospital. Hospital administrator Jane Stuart Woolsey remembered, "We kept all the holidays at the Hospital: feasts and fasts. The fasts were observed, not literally, but with chapel services." In the hospital time and equipment allowed for even grander holiday affairs. Yuletide hospital celebrations were no exception to country-wide Christmastime jubilation. Chaplain Charles Alfred Humphreys remembered that on Christmas Day the band played for the hospital patients. With the help of other chaplains and the Sanitary Commission, Chaplain C. W. Fitch of Jeffersonville, Indiana provided a December 1863 Christmas dinner. According to Fitch, the help of Jeffersonville ladies made this dinner a resounding success. A year later, Chaplain Alex McLeod, of a Wilmington, Delaware, hospital recalled that city’s citizens personally served a Christmas day dinner.

In addition to Christian holy days, other wartime holidays emerged to celebrate a uniquely American civil religion. Foremost among these was Thanksgiving, a holiday that was celebrated in antebellum America but, did not become a nationwide celebration

53 Woolsey, Hospital Days, 63.

54 Humphreys, Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison, 384. Confederate chaplain Robert Franklin Bunting of the Texas Hospital in Auburn, Alabama remembered an even more extravagant Christmas celebration held in December 1864. The young ladies of Auburn made and hung up decorations. At the hospital’s great feast, each plate held “a double ration of fowl and fresh meats, sweet potatoes and light bread, nice custard, pie and pound cake, dough-nuts and milk.” (Thomas W. Cutrer, ed., Our Trust is in the God of Battles: The Civil War Letters of Robert Franklin Bunting, Chaplain, Terry’s Texas Rangers, C.S.A. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 302.)


56 Alex McLeod Chaplain USA Tilton General Hospital Wilmington Dela Dec 31 1864 Report for the Month of December 1864 to Surgeon J.K. Barnes Surgeon Genl. USA Washington D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
until 1863. Nor did it become tinged with patriotism until the Civil War. Operating out of a U.S. General hospital in Fort Monroe, Virginia, in 1864 Amos S. Billingsley held a special Thanksgiving Day service where he “preached in the Dining Hall to a large, attentive congregation, graced by a well-played Harmonium and good singing.” Woolsey remembered with fondness Thanksgiving in her Alexandria, Virginia hospital: "Thanksgiving was the best of all. There was the sermon on the blessing of the time; there was always enough to be thankful about, in the darkest days; and ‘Rally round the Flag, Boys,’ and ‘My Country 'tis of thee[.]’" With delight, Woolsey recalled, “the turkeys with their lovely gizzards chopped up in hot gravy, the mashed potatoes and onions stewed in milk, the cranberry sauce, the pickles, the fruit-pies and puddings and iced-cakes trimmed with pink lightning, and the oyster supper in the evening, crowning all.”

Even more telling was the congregation which amassed for Washington’s birthday

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59 Woolsey, Hospital Days, 63.
celebration in February 1865. About twelve hundred gathered in the Dining Hall, “the largest of the season.”

Abraham Lincoln’s assassination amplified religiosity in the Union general hospital, a demonstration of the increasing role the new wartime civil religion played in the hospital environment by the conflict’s end. Stationed at the U.S. general hospital at Fort Monroe, Virginia, Chaplain A. S. Billingsley, recalled two thousand people meeting in the open air on April 19th, Lincoln’s burial. Near Fort Monroe, hospital chaplain James Marshall noted the effect of Lincoln’s death on religion: "The depth of grief of the soldiers and citizens here at the murder of our President Abraham Lincoln has been immeasurable. The first Sabbath after the terrible day, and April 30 were devoted to the character of the lamented dead and the sources of our nation's grief. Large and solemn audiences filled our Chapel." On Davids’ Island in New York Harbor, Chaplain G. M. Blodgett held a special service in the wake of Lincoln’s assassination where “a large assembly convened in the chapel on the 14th and in solemn and appropriate acts of devotion testified profound sorrow at our recent surprisingly fearful national

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bereavement.” These observances foreshadowed Lincoln’s role as the messiah of the post-Civil War northern civil religion.

The nascent religion in wartime general hospitals foreshadowed the civil religion which would emerge in post-bellum America. In these same hospitals, chaplains and missionaries fought the profane activities which emerged when soldiers had ample free time and nothing required of them. Although vice existed in antebellum America, clergy had little experience dealing with it on so grand a scale.

**Fighting Profane Space in the Union General Hospital**

In the camp, maneuvers could be required of troops at a moment’s notice, while in the general hospital men had almost limitless free time to spend as they pleased. Moreover, ambulatory convalescents could easily move around the hospital grounds. These two facts made the hospital environment a hotbed of profane activities. Fully aware of the variables stacked against them, clergy tried to use antebellum strategies to contain and fight the vice in general hospitals.

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65 See chapter five for a discussion of profane influences, such as gambling, profanity, and alcoholism in the camp environment. This chapter augments that information, by looking at the specific nature of the profane influences in the hospital environment, and compares them to the camp environment where applicable.

66 Chaplain Hermann Bokum described the scene in his Philadelphia hospital accurately and fairly: “We have among the soldiers Christian men who are endeavoring to do good to their fellow soldiers. At the same time there are many who are careless and others who are the slaves of bad habits.” Hermann Bokum Chaplain U.S.A. Turner's Lane Genl Hosp. Phila August 2 1864 Monthly Report of Station and duty for July 1864 to Surgeon General U.S.A. Washington D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
Some chaplains, however, refused to admit the presence of antebellum vice --
gambling, alcohol abuse, profanity, and card playing -- in the hospital. Chaplains
Burdett, Carver, and McMurdy all claimed that in their hospitals no patients gambled,
sware, or drank heavily. Yet, other chaplain reports and basic human nature, testify
that these chaplains deliberately chose not to report these activities to their superiors.
Perhaps they thought that the presence of these vices demonstrated their
ineffectiveness as guardians of hospital vice.

Chaplain John F. Wright offered an honest assessment of profanity in the hospital.
Although he seldom heard foul language, he noted “perhaps they will not do it out of
respect for my friendly feelings, where they know I am within hearing distance.”
According to Wright, those men who curse take “the hook of the subtle temptor without
any bait. They voluntarily serve him not having even the promise of a reward.” Wright
further acknowledged the pervasiveness of this vice throughout the army, navy, and the
entire population, “reminding us of that terrible utterance of the Bible “for because of
swearing the land mourneth.”” According to Chaplain W. H. D. Hatton, the hospital

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67 Michael Burdett Chaplain U.S. Army St Louis Gen Hospital New Orleans LA Nov 14 1864 Monthly
Report to Brig Gen J.K. Barnes Surgeon General USA; Thomas G. Carver Chaplain U.S.A. Taylor
General Hospital Louisville, KY January 31 1864 Personal Report of Station Duty and Post Office
Address to Surgeon General U.S.A. Washington D.C.; Robert McMurdy Chaplain USA Hd Quarts 2nd Div
Genl Hospital Alexandria VA November 30 1864 Chaplain’s Monthly Report to Surg Gen. USA
Washington D.C.; R. McMurdy Chaplain USA Hd. Qrs. US Genl Hospital Division No. 2 Alexandria
Virginia Chaplain Report August 31 1864 to the Adj General U.S.A. Washington City D.C., National
Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

68 As in pre-war times, the poor quality of other chaplains affected vice. Surgeon John Bennitt of a U.S.
General Hospital in McMinnville, Tennessee noted in February 1864: “I wish we could have a good
chaplain. One that would stand uncorrupted, & be always exemplary. I feel the need of religious influence
to restrain me from falling by the corrupting influences around me in the army. But my trust is in God, &
He is able to keep me.” Beasecker, “I Hope to Do My Country Service”, 239.

69 John F. Wright Hospital Chaplain U.S.A. Marine U.S. General Hospital Cincinnati May 31 1864 to
Surgeon General U.S.A., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Here Wright
quotes Jeremiah 23:10: “For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the
pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right.”
staff might have been more at fault for swearing and blasphemy than the patients. He added that some of the acting Asst. Surgeons and even the head Asst. Surgeon frequently used profanity, negatively affecting the morals of their hearers.\textsuperscript{70}

In the same report, Wright also explained how familiar card games disrupted the sanctity of the hospital. "I believe no games are played with cards . . . at the Marine Hospital for a wager," Wright remarked “yet I have some evidence that games played with cards, for which the men seem to have a wonderful passion are sometimes rather unsafe through there be no bet involved, on account of the excitement produced, sometimes resulting in wrangling if not something worse."\textsuperscript{71} This chaplain was not alone in his views. Union Chaplain W. H. D. Hatton saw card-playing as even more pernicious, thinking it “productive of idleness, wrecklessness, swearing, etc.” and calling on Congress to prohibit the use of cards within the army.\textsuperscript{72}

In addition to standard prewar vices, the clergy feared that dancing in the hospital could corrupt soldiers’ morals. According to Chaplain W. Allington, who worked in Nashville, Tennessee, “the introduction of dancing in various rooms on the hospital grounds, have increased the difficulties of the chaplains” and “have received the condemnation of the Christian portion of the inmates, and of many desirous of becoming much besides being in uncomfortable proximity to sick and dying men.”

\textsuperscript{70} W. H. D. Hatton Hospital Chaplain USA USA G. Hospital White Hall near Bristol, Bucks Co, PA Monthly Report of Hospital November 30 1864 to Surgeon Genl. J.K. Barnes USA Washington City D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

\textsuperscript{71} John F. Wright Hospital Chaplain U.S.A. Marine U.S. General Hospital Cincinnati May 31 1864 to Surgeon General U.S.A., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

\textsuperscript{72} W. H. D. Hatton Hospital Chaplain U.S.A. Camp Curtin Post Hospital Harrisburg PA March 31 1864 Monthly Report to Surgeon Genl. W.A. Hammond USA Washington D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
hospital, threatened him with bodily harm when he spoke out against them. The chaplain’s report ended with a condemnation of these citizens’ conduct, finding them injurious to the patients’ religious and moral interests.⁷³

As in the camp, some soldiers fought these profane influences by enlisting in temperance organizations, often with the hospital chaplain’s blessing. These groups emerged out of prewar Northern evangelical Christianity’s focus on improving societal morals. Resident at a Washington D.C. hospital in August 1864, Chaplain James J. Ferre noted that a Sons of Temperance organization had been active among both patients and staff in his hospital for the past eight months.⁷⁴ Hospital temperance meetings supported the abstinence pledge. In June 1864, Chaplain N. L. Brakeman serving at Fort Williams in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, held a temperance meeting every Wednesday night, and already four hundred and thirty-five men and officers had signed the pledge.⁷⁵ In April 1864 another chaplain explained that the one hundred and thirty member Sons of Temperance branch organized months ago among both members of the Invalid Corps and the patients of his Washington DC hospital diminished the drunkenness there.⁷⁶

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⁷⁴ James J. Ferre Hospital Chaplain USA Lincoln US Gen Hospital Washington DC August 31 1864 to General L. Thomas Adjutant General US Army, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.


⁷⁶ W.W. Winchester Hospital Chaplain U.S.A. Finley Hospital Washington D.C. April 30 1864 Report for April 1864, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. For an earlier report of this temperance society see W.W. Winchester Hospital Chaplain U.S.A. Finley Hospital Washington D.C. February 1 1864 Report for January 1864, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
As in the pre-war years, the increase in temperance was tied to religious revivals. In December 1864, Chaplain James White preached in his Philadelphia hospital chapel twice on the Sabbath, and held well-attended nightly religious services. This dovetailed with flourishing temperance activity. According to White, "We have a Temperance League numbering 628. Gambling is not allowed in the Hospital and the use of profane language is becoming less general." Only a few months earlier, hospital Chaplain Alfred Nevin of Philadelphia’s Satterlee, noted that along with the Sons of Temperance, he hoped the hospital’s sacred music class will "exert a good influence on the moral condition of the soldiers under our care." 

Similar to the camp and prewar era, regardless of the interest at prayer meetings, diligent clergy could never rid the hospital completely of profane activities. Chaplain R. Gage reported that even though gambling was not allowed, both men and officers under his care uttered profanity. He also noticed “a few cases of intemperance of an alarming character.” In an April 1864 report, B. H. Crever noted that licentiousness “with intemperance, is working terrible mischief doing more harm than the enemy. How lamentable that a cause so holy should be thus enfeebled and scandalized.” These chaplains’ remarks undoubtedly echoed the experience of many of their colleagues.

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78 Alfred Nevin Chaplain USA Satterlee U.S.A. General Hospital West Philadelphia, PA April 30th 1864 Report to Surgeon General U.S.A., National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.


80 B. H. Crever Hospital Chaplain USA Genl Hospt Frederick MD April 1 1864 to J.V.G Blaney Surgeon USA and Medical Director Dept West VA Cumberland, MD, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
Those religious-minded patients with access to a chaplain were lucky. As in peacetime, religious hospital patients without access to a chaplain struggled to keep away from sin by banding together as stalwart defenders of Christ. John Bennitt of the U.S. General Hospital at McMinnville, Tennessee explained that biweekly prayer meetings and a Sabbath Bible class "serve to bring to our minds good thoughts and tend to keep us out of sin. Still we have many temptations to overcome-and there is so much of evil going on all around that it is almost impossible to keep God in the thoughts. But He is faithful and kind & will not forsake us so long as we trust in him and strive to do his will." Still Bennitt and others acknowledged the need for a hospital chaplain in an April 1864 letter: "Elder Webb has been 14 years in Burmah as a missionary. I hope he will come and do us good, for we need it. I so much desire to have good preaching and the influences of a pious minister among us. I feel that they are important for my present & eternal good." Later in the same letter, he wrote "Our Bible class was not very largely attended, but to-night there was a house full at Prayer meeting. The fields seem ripe for a harvest if we only had a faithful Chaplain. We hope to have one before many weeks." 

Union chaplains utilized antebellum techniques to fight a losing battle against the vice in general hospitals. Other chaplains and missionaries responded to the needs of the most disillusioned soldiers of all, those languishing away in wartime prisons. This was a new wartime space with which no clergy had previous antebellum experience.

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82 Ibid., 257.
83 Ibid.
Prisons: Inculcating Religiosity and Civil Religion

Prisoners normally had little access to chaplains or missionaries. At the same time, soldiers confined in these hellholes, where disease spread rapidly and often brought with it the cold hand of death, needed religion the most. Whenever possible, clergy tried to use traditional worship tactics to reach these men. These attempts met with mixed success, but in the process a new civil religion emerged.84

While distinct from the prewar era, at first glance the religiosity exhibited in the prison environment did not dramatically differ from the military camp. Clergy utilized whatever spaces were available, seeking outside areas during pleasant weather, and covered spaces during inclement conditions. On the same day, Delegate Andrew B. Cross ministered to both Confederate prisoners and Union soldiers stationed at Fort Delaware. At ten o’clock in the morning he preached with other delegates in the quarters of the artillery inside of the fort and then at eleven in one of the hospitals.85 Lacking access to a chapel, after dinner, he preached to the prisoners, in an open air religious space “in the barrack yard, which was protected from the wind, and where the sun shone.” In only a few minutes nearly one thousand men gathered in this space. After listening to Cross and the other delegates for over thirty minutes, they “seemed unwilling to part” and begged for additional preaching.86 In January 1864, many prisoners at Point Lookout demonstrated an interest in preaching. In case of inclement weather, an unoccupied cook house near the gate could hold about five hundred

84 In addition to the work of chaplains either stationed near, or interned at prisons, the United States Christian Commission aided both Union and Confederate prisoners. (Henry, “History of the United States Christian Commission,” 236.)


86 Ibid.
people. When the weather was pleasant the preferred method was “a very large and very attentive congregation” in the open air.  

Disregarding the antebellum need for a clergyman’s guidance, imprisoned soldiers prayed regardless of clerical presence, speaking to the drastic need for religion and faith, in a place with little hope. Union chaplain Henry Trumbull observed that the prisoners in Richmond’s Libby Prison could attend prayer-meetings three nights a week. Religious services with sermons were held twice each Sunday in the presence of chaplains, and often even when they were not in the prison. In June 1864, Confederate Ted Barclay writing from Fort Delaware noted, "We have religious exercises here regularly and there is great interest manifested, about twenty have professed faith in the last fifteen days." According to Chaplain Amos Billingsley, the poor souls interned at Andersonville Prison in Georgia displayed intense religious devotion. Billingsley described the prayer meetings in that camp thusly: “Deeply realizing their need of Divine help, with no covering but the canopy of heaven, and no light but that of the moon, yet enlightened by God’s spirit, and constrained by Christ’s love, they often met, read God’s word, sung and prayed.” In these appeals to God for protection and deliverance, one soldier remarked, “We could pray as well, or better, there, than at home.”

88 Trumbull, *War Memories of an Army Chaplain*, 297.
90 Billingsley, *From the Flag to the Cross*, 163. Although the exact details of this account, drawn from a work displaying Christian incidents during the war might be exaggerated, the message is undoubtedly accurate.
According to some accounts, prison chaplains were not as competent as their pre-war counterparts. Union officer Bernhard Domschcke praised the Rev. Mr. Louis N. Bouldrye, the chaplain of a New York Cavalry regiment. But he criticized other chaplains. "Even we [skeptics and freethinkers] could stand an occasional sermon - one composed clearly, delivered effectively, and aimed at a useful end," Domschcke explained. "But, again and again in the meetings, the windiest of windbags babbled and blustered. Worse, the manner, a sanctimonious chest thumping, would nauseate any honest, rational listener."

Still when a chaplain preached to disillusioned prisoners he usually found much religious interest. In Salisbury Prison near Charlotte, North Carolina, Confederate Chaplain Mangum ministered to the Union foe. On a Sabbath afternoon, Mangum observed a Baptist minister preaching to a large congregation near the old well on the prison yard. To entice the thousands who were not in attendance, Mangum began to sing, attracting a steadily increasing crowd at a large oak in the eastern center of the prison. The men attending “were very respectful, earnest and solemn” eager to obtain the one testament Mangum intended to present to one of them. At the conclusion of his service, the prisoners “crowded thickly around me, and a number grasped my hand in Christian fervor.”

In his history of Salisbury prison, Mangum further explained how religion functioned in this institution: “And doubtless amid the gloom and horror of that old prison, there was many an upward glance of the heart-many a struggle and triumph of faith-many a thrill of redeeming love and heavenly hope, which all unknown

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to friend and foe, were recognized by Him whose nature is love, and who is mighty to save."\(^{93}\)

The new wartime spiritual environment most affected recently captured prisoners, who looked to clergy to help them keep the faith necessary to weather their present situation. Temporarily detained at Kinston, North Carolina, while awaiting further transportation to a large prison camp, Union chaplain White officiated over a Sabbath prayer service. His remarks concerned the psalm “The Lord is my Shepherd.”\(^{94}\) In response, “Every knee bowed as I offered prayer.” According to White, “Such ability to lay hold of the promises I have seldom felt.” Whites’ worship service explored themes touching on civil religion, including, “Home and loved ones, and dear country, and the sacred flag and its noble defenders, as well as our personal salvation and holiness.”\(^{95}\) In Richmond’s infamous Libby prison, Domschcke remembered, newly arrived Catholic prisoners or those that claimed to be, received preferential treatment. When Richmond’s Catholic bishop came to Libby, both Catholics and those who falsely claimed allegiance to the Pope flocked to him. As a result, Domschcke recalled, “Soon, with few exceptions, Catholics and all who claimed to be Catholics were exchanged.”\(^{96}\) Prisoners, however, understood the hypocrisy. According to Domschcke, “One prisoner, piqued, nailed up a caustic placard of classification by belief. His category number

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\(^{94}\) “The Lord is my shepherd” is the opening of the 23rd Psalm.


\(^{96}\) Trautmann, *Twenty Months in Captivity*, 50-51.
seven (those who could least expect to be exchanged) consisted of Jews, Mormons, and atheists.”97

Unlike the fully furnished antebellum church, the prison lacked even the scarce religious paraphernalia of the camp, including a conventional chapel, altar, or a covering above the head of those assembled. Chaplain Humphreys attended a Sunday service held in a Confederate prison in Charleston where the improvisation of religious space was obvious. The filthy prison yard served as the auditorium. The ground and open windows of the prison acted as seats. There was no roof except the sky. A box standing on its end served as the altar and a tub the platform. “To mark the time,” Humphreys further explained, “the booming of the Swamp Angel battery told off the quarter-hours like the strokes of the clock of fate. In place of organ accompaniment there was the terrific bursting of the death-dealing shells. For an audience I had the sick and wounded prisoners, the heavy-hearted captives, the despairing victims of a remorseless cruelty.”98 To this sad assemblage, Humphreys tried to instill optimism, explaining providence’s role in their situation. By enduring their providentially ordained imprisonment, “each one of us was thus doing more to bring the war to an end than we could by adding our enfeebled strength to the armies of the Union, since our wasted vitality would be so much overbalanced by the well-fed recruits to the Southern cause.”99 Nor could chaplains easily obtain religious reading. While incarcerated at a

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97 Trautmann, Twenty Months in Captivity, 50-51.
98 Humphreys, Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison in the Civil War, 1863-1865, 138-139.
99 Ibid., 139.
prison in Savannah, Georgia, Chaplain White could not obtain a Bible. He even wrote letters requesting that Methodist ministers nearby send him one, without success.¹⁰⁰

Like their foes, Confederate chaplains imprisoned in Union institutions had no access to religious paraphernalia. Catholic Chaplain James Sheeran spent time at Fort McHenry in late 1864. Upon recently arriving at the prison, a group of Protestant prisoners asked him to conduct a service for them. The chaplain initially declined, since he “had no vestments, altar furniture, or vessels.” Sheeran later reconsidered, thinking that his preaching might prove beneficial to the incarcerated men. He focused his oration on fighting obscenity, gambling, and profanity.¹⁰¹

Even without the trappings of the antebellum church, prison prayer meetings were more intense than those in the camp, since these men felt they had nothing left to lose. Chaplain White explains how these open air events were illuminated only by “the fitful glare of the fires that burned along the dead line to enable the sentinels to fire well.” The audience consisted of “good men whom abuse had soured,” who White explained, uttered prayers with “bold and terrible denunciations that almost chilled my own blood, and I do not wonder that they stirred up the rebels.”¹⁰²

Bold prayer meetings combined with sacred song set to traditional tunes encouraged the inculcation of religiosity among the prisoners. During his imprisonment in Charleston, Chaplain Humphreys and two messmates, sang a hymn nearly every day. The singing of this hymn “God of the fatherless: to the tune “Day slowly declining”

¹⁰⁰ White, Prison Life Among the Rebels, 76.
¹⁰¹ Durkin, Confederate Chaplain, 129.
¹⁰² White, Prison Life Among the Rebels, 67.
by Von Weber,” Humphreys acknowledged, helped “to keep up our spirits.” He sang
it for the last time upon his release from prison.

Unlike the camp or hospital, chaplains did not need to promote religion within the
prisons, since captured soldiers actively sought out opportunities for spiritual growth and
comfort. In the camp and hospital, authority figures such as officers, chaplains, or chief
surgeons sometimes forced soldiers to attend services. Within the prison, soldiers took
the initiative to request religious services. For example, Union chaplain White, received
an officer’s request for a service, during his first week in the Macon prison. He obliged,
holding an evening service with his fellow inmate, Chaplain Dixon.

While inculcating religiosity was not difficult, clergy still attempted to fight the
profane influences in the prison, just as they did in the camp, hospital, or prewar church
community. As historian George Rable explains, blasphemous and profane speech
permeated the prison, and irreverent soldiers often disturbed worship services held
there. While imprisoned at Baltimore’s Fort McHenry, Confederate chaplain James
Sheeran preached on two occasions. On Sunday, November 13, 1864 he spoke against
profanity, obscenity, and gambling, specifically exhorting “them to discontinue their
obscene and profane language if for no higher reason, at least through respect for their
fellow-prisoners.” A week later, Sheeran continued his tirade against profane
influences, stating “I know not where my words or ideas came from on that occasion but

103 Humphreys, *Field, Camp, Hospital and Prison in the Civil War, 1863-1865*, 143-144.
104 Ibid.
106 Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples*, 366.
it appears to me that I pictured the vices of impurity and profanity in such colors that even the most abandoned would feel ashamed of themselves."\(^{108}\)

The constant fight against vice highlights the contested nature of prison religion, where space limitations necessitated that religious devotion occur near profane acts. In contrast, the availability of prewar churches allowed for a strong boundary between sacred and profane space. Rev. J. M. Clark, the USCC’s permanent agent at Annapolis, pieced together the preaching experience in this infamous prison from various soldiers’ accounts. These accounts told of so-called “Chaplains” (few if any had an actual commission) who preached the Gospel to the imprisoned. They preached in three spots, where up to six hundred could congregate. The most frequently used spot had formerly served as the execution site for six of the infamous “raiders.”\(^{109}\) Regardless of where they prayed, nearby wicked prisoners disturbed the devout.\(^ {110}\)

As in other Civil War settings, chaplains near prisons worked with needy soldiers regardless of the uniform they wore.\(^ {111}\) The religious diversity of the antebellum era dissolved in the shared traumas of the wartime experience. Many Union hospital chaplains navigated the liminal space between the hospital and prison. While assigned to a hospital and primarily responsible for the patients there, the chaplain also felt a

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\(^{109}\) Smith, *Incidents Among Shot and Shell*, 408-409.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., 409.

\(^{111}\) As in antebellum times, nuns also ministered to prisoners, regardless of whether they wore Confederate gray or Union blue. Officer Charles Mattocks thought highly of the “Sisters of Mercy” who ministered to him and other Union prisoners near Charleston, South Carolina. In mid-September 1864 Mattocks wrote “Two of the “Sisters of Mercy” (Roman Catholic) called on us today, bringing books, grapes, &c. They have visited our men (6000) now in a prison camp on the “race course” near this city. The "Sisters" represent the condition of these men as truly horrible. Many of them are already idiotic. We took up a contribution for the Sisters to use for the benefit of the poor fellows.” (Philip N. Racine, ed., “Unspoiled Heart” *The Journal of Charles Mattocks of the 17th Maine* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 203.)
need, to voluntarily minister to the Confederates imprisoned at the adjacent institution.\textsuperscript{112} This need arose out of a perceived Christian duty, to minister to those in need, regardless of whether they were friend or foe. Rev. Thomas G. Carver of the United States Officers Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky acknowledged this fact in a March 1864 report. In addition to his hospital duties, he voluntarily agreed to serve as chaplain of the military prison “where a clergyman’s services are constantly and urgently needed.”\textsuperscript{113} Chaplain William G. Leonard of Point Lookout’s Hammond General Hospital, mentioned his duties toward the Confederate prisoners. In the Summer of 1864, he preached to them weekly on Sabbath mornings and administered the Sacraments to some of them.\textsuperscript{114} A. H. Lackey, hospital chaplain at Alton, Illinois’ military prison, acknowledged the worth of this missionary endeavor, stating “My services in the Prison are attended by a congregation of six to eight hundred and at our prayer meetings which are held nightly many are inquiring and ask to be prayed for.” His overall goal remained “to be the instrument in accomplishing a great religious work here.”\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112} This was not always true. For example, the prisoners in Fort Delaware lacked religious services and reading matter, since the chaplains confined themselves mostly to the garrison and the hospital. (Cross, The War and the Christian Commission, 10.)

\textsuperscript{113} Rev. Thomas G. Carver Chaplain U.S.A. U S Officers Hospital Louisville KY March 31 1864 Personal Report of Station orders and duty, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.


Not to be outdone by their Union foes, Confederate chaplains also saw through the Union uniform to preach salvation and Christ’s love. Adolphus Williamson Mangum preached to Union prisoners before they left Salisbury prison in February 1865, promising one of the soldiers would receive his Testament. At the end of the service, the soldiers gathered around Mangum to obtain the coveted book. “I really felt a strange interest in them,” Mangum remembered. “One of them spoke out “I love all of God’s people.” Another said “Today reminds me really like old times.” Excited by an imminent exchange, the prisoners expressed a heartfelt goodbye to Mangum.¹¹⁶ In another example of Confederate chaplains preaching to Union soldiers, Mangum with the invitation of the prison hospital’s chief surgeon, held a service for the sick in the hospital located in the basement of a large building on the prison’s grounds.¹¹⁷ Chaplain sources posit that all soldiers appreciated the chaplains’ efforts.¹¹⁸

Using the prewar technique of pooling spiritual resources, Union chaplains and missionaries affiliated with the United States Christian Commission also ministered to their Confederate foes. While imprisoned in federal installations at Vicksburg and Memphis, Chaplain J. K. Street of the 14th Texas Cavalry recalled a Methodist chaplain preaching from Isaiah 48:18 “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” on

¹¹⁶ Mangum Family Papers, 1777-1993, Letter from A.W.M. to “my dear sister” dated Feb. 20th 1865 from Salisbury, N.C., Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.


¹¹⁸ According to historian George Rable, visiting local Protestant clergy faced skepticism or hostility, while Catholic priests received a warmer reception since there was a shortage of them in the Union army. (Rable, God’s Almost Chosen Peoples, 367-368).
Sunday, February 7th 1864. This same chaplain, with help from a Dr. Warren, and a USCC agent, preached to Street and other Confederate prisoners from February through April. The United States Christian Commission also ministered to rebel prisoners at Camp Douglas near Chicago. As explained in the Commission’s Second Annual Report, at these meetings “large numbers have nightly crowded to the chapel, or during the day gathered in the open air, to listen to the word of God, and many of them we hope have been changed from rebels against God to the willing subjects of King Jesus; and many give good promise of returning loyalty to our Union.” In addition, hospital chaplains received generous aid from the United States Christian Commission in ministering to Confederate prisoners. Two USCC delegates helped William H. Paddock, Fort Delaware’s hospital chaplain, minister to the over nine thousand prisoners at that barracks. According to T. S. Dewing, chaplain at the US General hospital in Elmira, New York the USCC provided both the military prison’s hospital and

119 J.K. Street diary, “Sunday February 7 1864, John Kennedy Street Papers, 1858-1899, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Street does not specify his location in his diary, but scholars know he wrote in his diary while at prisons in Vicksburg and Memphis. (See finding aid to John Kennedy Street Papers, 1858-1899, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.)

120 J.K. Street diary, “Sunday February 7 1864 to Sunday, April 24 1864”, John Kennedy Street Papers, 1858-1899, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. In May 1864 Street tried to preach to the men. (J.K. Street diary, “Sunday May 1st 1864 and Sunday, May 8th 1864,” John Kennedy Street Papers, 1858-1899, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.)

121 USCC, Second Annual Report, 219-220.

the U.S. General Hospital with one hundred and twenty volume libraries. The USCC delegates preached to both prisoners and hospitalized Union men at Point Lookout, Maryland with excellent results: “The Gospel seems to have been effective upon the prisoners, as well as those that were free, and many a rebel who entered the prison a scoffer, has become a man of prayer.”

The USCC was an offshoot of the antebellum YMCA movement, an active force in at least one prison. Confederate officer Edmund DeWitt Patterson, imprisoned at Johnson’s Island on Lake Erie noted the impact the interdenominational YMCA of Johnson’s Island, Ohio had on the prisoners. In mid April 1864 Patterson attended a YMCA meeting. Approximately three weeks later, he listened to a lecture, describing it as “one of the most eloquent and instructive lectures which it has been my good fortune to hear. It was delivered by Col. L. M. Lewis, before the Y.M.C.A. He pictured a glorious future for the young men of the South, if they only prove true to themselves.”

In September 1864 Patterson had emerged as the Secretary of the Association. By the end of that month, the YMCA had decided to work toward what their Christian compatriots in the USCC were doing throughout the Union armies-building a church in the prison. Patterson hoped that the prison authorities would allow a church, stating “If they will only give their permission, we can very soon raise the funds with which to build


126 Ibid., 162.

127 Ibid., 192.
it. If we do not get one built, we will have no place at all for worship this winter as all the blocks will be closed up, partition[ed] off into small rooms."128

Like surgeons in hospitals, Confederate prison officials or prison hospital surgeons tried to control the religious space around them. This arrangement altered the freedom of religious worship seen in prewar churches. The commandant, the guards, and even the surgeon wanted the prisoners to remain as docile as possible, and religious fervor might make them agitated and encourage a revolt. Dr. Currie discouraged Chaplain Adolphus Mangum from “preaching to the masses of prisoners, stating that they were generally foreigners and Catholics, and were not at all likely to give me a kindly reception.”129 This is an odd remark, considering that it was widely known that the majority of Civil War soldiers were Protestant and American-born, although antebellum immigration patterns caused the Union to have larger concentrations of Catholics and foreigners. Another incident reflecting on this theme, involved Union Chaplain White, who was imprisoned outside Andersonville’s main stockade. Although White tried to preach to the men inside the main prison, the commandant, Captain Wirtz would not allow it. Neither would the surgeon. Writing after his imprisonment, White recalled the incident with sadness, stating: “O how my soul longed to preach Christ to those dear and dying men.”130

128 Barrett, Yankee Rebel, 200.
130 White, Prison Life Among the Rebels, 42.
A series of events in a Macon prison illustrates the fusing of patriotism and religion - civil religion - which the Confederates found troubling and potentially dangerous.\textsuperscript{131} Civil religion emerged as a new religious entity in wartime. According to historian George Rable, Union soldiers’ prayers for Lincoln always drew the enmity of Confederates.\textsuperscript{132} While imprisoned among his fellow officers at Macon, Georgia in 1864, Union chaplain White spoke out in support of the U.S. government and the Federal armies at a service. He specifically asked God to “bless the President of these United States, his cabinet, the Congress, the army and navy” and to “give wisdom to our officers, and confuse the counsels of our foes; and so give victory to the loyal armies of the nation.”\textsuperscript{133} The Confederate authorities responded to the chaplain’s ministrations by indirectly telling him that prayer for the President and the army of the United States was not permitted. A few days later, after another chaplain imprisoned with White offered prayers for the President and the country, a General officer informed White that prayer for the President of the United States offended the Confederates. The next time White preached, the prison’s commandant interrupted the service to stop White from praying for the President of the United States, the success of the Union army, and the defeat of the Confederacy. Unwilling to back down, White argued with him in front of guards, citizens, and imprisoned Union soldiers, at one point stating that Confederate chaplains in Union prisons were allowed to say whatever prayers they wished. In the end, White’s


\textsuperscript{132} Rable, \textit{God’s Almost Chosen Peoples}, 367.

\textsuperscript{133} White, \textit{Prison Life Among the Rebels}, 62.
arguments prevailed and the commandant permitted him to say his prayers. A Union soldier in Macon, Captain Bernhard Domschcke recalled another incident between Chaplain White, Chaplain Dixon, and the commandant Captain Tabb. At the beginning of a service Tabb told Chaplain White that prayers for the President of the United States were not permitted. However, this did not deter Chaplain Dixon from praying loudly “for the president, his cabinet, the Congress, and generals Grant and Sherman.” According to White, “Tabb heard the prayer to the end, thunderstruck,” before responding "Well, your prayer won't do much good." He then promptly left.

This nascent wartime civil religion was not confined to only large prisons. During his imprisonment in Lynchburg, Virginia, Chaplain Humphreys officiated at a service which struck tones of civil religion and devotion, while exploring the captivity of those assembled. Encompassing much of the prison, this service began with Humphreys recalling the biblical captivity of the Hebrews in Babylon, stating “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.” Following this recollection, he explained the patriotic duty of his countrymen and “emphasized the duty of remembering still our country’s cause and serving it by patient endurance of our sufferings-as “they sometimes serve who only stand and wait.” The service closed with “the expression of my deep conviction that the cause of the Union must triumph” before

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134 White, *Prison Life Among the Rebels*, 62-65. White held a patriotic service filled with resonances of civil religion on at least one other occasion. When White first came to the Macon camp, another officer asked him to hold a service where he sang “America,” prayed “to God for the President, for Congress, the army and the navy, and for the country” and once the service was over spent an hour “singing our own national songs. The “Star Spangled Banner,” and “The Red, White and Blue,” and “Rally Round the Flag, Boys” and others. (White, *Prison Life Among the Rebels*, 52) What is really interesting about this first service is that in contrast with the incident explained in the above text, the rebel soldiers, along with women and African Americans watched it without interference. (White, *Prison Life Among the Rebels*, 52)


136 Humphreys, *Camp, Hospital and Prison in the Civil War*, 120. This quote is taken from Psalm 137:5.
the singing of “America,” where the USA is described as the “Land of the Pilgrims’ pride.”

This new Union pride in civil religion extended to such traditional observances as the Fourth of July holiday, indicating a sense of sacred time penetrated into the prison. Chaplain White recalled how Chaplain Dixon officiated at Macon’s Fourth of July services. After an opening prayer, Dixon offered “warm and holy petitions for the President and the country” before speeches, toasts, and the singing of national songs caused increased excitement. Even “the rebel soldiers caught it and seemed moved,” White explained. “The eyes of the sick and dying began to snap, and all their faces blushed with laughter and hope. The rebel officers, fully armed and in full uniform, moved rapidly from point to point.” After a colonel gave a “most radical, bold and noble speech” two hours into the meeting, the prison officials ordered all attendees to disperse. This case illustrated another example of how Confederates tried to regulate prison sacred space.

Late in the war an emergent Confederate civil religion also materialized alongside its Union counterpart. The fact that they were losing the war caused Confederates to fuse patriotism with their trust in God’s providence. In May 1864, Confederate officer Edmund DeWitt Patterson attended almost daily prayer meetings held “for the special purpose of invoking God's blessing on our arms during the coming campaign and to

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137 Humphreys, *Camp, Hospital and Prison in the Civil War*, 120-121.
139 Ibid., 69-70.
140 Historian Kurt Berends has also identified the emergence of a Confederate civil religion during wartime. (Kurt O. Berends, “Confederate Sacrifice and the “Redemption” of the South, in Beth Barton Schweiger and Donald G. Mathews, eds., *Religion and the American South: Protestants, and others in History and Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 114.)
thank him for the successes already gained; more especially however, the object is to pray for the success in Virginia, that our army there may go forth conquering and to conquer, and that we may there gain a victory which will give us peace.” Patterson felt satisfied after attending these meetings, later remarking on his faith in General Lee as the Army of Northern Virginia’s leader “I feel almost certain that our noble Lee will live to see his work accomplished, to see the South free and independent.”

General hospitals and prisons arose as new wartime religious spaces, distinct from anything that clergy had encountered in the antebellum era. Prewar hospitals and prisons were small structures, unlike the massive buildings that housed thousands of wartime soldiers. Many of the profane influences from the camp, including profanity, gambling, and alcoholism appeared in the hospital space. Chaplains and missionaries actively sought to rid the hospital environment of these issues, but in the end, as in the camp, they could only do so much. The outnumbered clergy competed with vice for patients’ attention. They would have to be content with small victories. The prison and the general hospital also inculcated a new civil religion, within the ranks of Union and Confederate men. This civil religion appeared in essentially similar forms in Union and Confederate wartime discourse, and then became more regionalized in the post-war period.

Clergy adapted pre-war worship techniques to two utterly new environments, general hospitals and prisons. These places proved the foundation for the Northern and Southern civil religions which came to fruition in the post-bellum era. The next chapter

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141 Barrett, *Yankee Rebel*, 162.
concludes the dissertation by reiterating the main arguments, couching them within the scholarship on organized religion in post-bellum America.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

During the Civil War, thousands of young men in the North and the South marched off to war with much in common, including a Christian background; a sense of religion and prayer; and an anxiety resulting from separation from home and fear of the unknown. Another army of men accompanied these soldiers to care for their spiritual needs. Mostly older than the soldiers, these clergy belonged to every Christian denomination. Some possessed formal theological training, while others were devout lay practitioners. All shared a spiritual sense of duty and hoped to evangelize at any cost.

This dissertation explores how these two cohorts of men, North and South, navigated the challenges of the Civil War in military camps, battlefields, hospitals, and prisons. These wartime spaces differed from familiar prewar spaces in a host of ways. Moreover, soldiers and clergy intent on maintaining a spiritual life had to adapt to wartime exigency, including constant movement, persistent deprivations, and the peculiar challenges posed by living in an almost entirely masculine setting.

The Civil War was a grand spatial conflict. During the War, familiar antebellum space was contested and reconceived and functions shifted. Limited capacity hospitals that had served peacetime needs transformed into massive structures serving large numbers of sick, wounded, and convalescing soldiers. The discrete battlefields of previous eras disappeared as armies brought the war to civilians. Small prisons expanded into massive stockades where tens of thousands of men starved and died of disease as they waited indefinitely for exchange. By the end of the war, the dead
created landscapes of their own, with national cemeteries stretching for miles established at places such as Arlington and Gettysburg.

In the wartime armies clergy initially attempted to replicate the idyllic world of the antebellum church. Instead of succeeding in that endeavor, they found themselves constructing a new religious world. Instead of static physical spaces being largely responsible for creating religious meaning, wartime clergy generated religious belief by their presence. A dynamic sacred space moved along with the Civil War chaplain or missionary, as needed to accommodate changing wartime circumstances. These clergy did their best to create a sense of the sacred amidst the profaneness of war. For example, the sacred manifested itself in the work of USCC delegates as they constructed chapels during the height of revivalism in the Army of the Potomac, and through Father Corby’s absolution of the Irish Brigade at Gettysburg.

Throughout the war, Civil War soldiers searched for religious continuity with their prewar beliefs and practices. In turn, clergy tried to assist them in their quest by promoting revivals, constructing churches, distributing tracts, preaching sermons, and fighting profanity, alcoholism, and gambling. However, constructing religious spaces and promoting religious belief proved difficult in the constantly changing wartime world. As the war continued, armies grew larger and casualties increased. The war itself became more destructive. By the end of the conflict, battles lasted for weeks on end, and hardened veterans populated the armies. In addition, changing infrastructure including new hospitals and expanding prisoner of war camps, all presented new challenges for clergy and their flocks. In working through these challenges, clergy
gained increasing numbers of male converts and helped inculcate them into a new civil religion which would continue to develop in the post-bellum period.

At the same time that the scale of war intensified religious practice, Civil War spiritual leaders continued antebellum religious precedents, especially in emphasizing the teachings of evangelical Protestantism. Providence, the underlying theological conception of the prewar era held sway during wartime. Revivals, the hallmark of evangelical religious life, existed and were perpetuated throughout both the Union and Confederate armies. Bibles, tracts, religious newspapers, and the rest of the burgeoning evangelical publishing industry in nineteenth-century America developed before the Civil War, and the war saw continued growth in these areas. Both clergy and soldiers brought their prewar religious beliefs and practices into the wartime environment. Like those men growing up in antebellum America, evangelicalism served an integral role for the common soldier in the Union and Confederate armies.

The Civil War placed soldiers and clergy in an unusual situation, and it took time for both to learn how to navigate its challenges. War disrupted many of the patterns and routines of prewar church life, but the foundation of the relationship between clergy and parishioner remained strong. The wartime armies were populated by young men and older clergy. Women, family, and the physical apparatus of church-going were suddenly absent. Moreover, soldiers and clergy had to grapple with the prospect of death and the horrors of war, presenting them with new challenges to their faith. In addition, over the course of the war, a constant flow of new missionaries and chaplains confronted increasingly war-weary soldiers. Nonetheless, these spiritual leaders did a remarkable job in maintaining some continuity in religious practice throughout the conflict. While
primarily responsible for holding religious services, wartime clergymen might be asked to perform numerous duties for their soldier parishioners, ranging from writing letters to delivering deathbed confessions. The bond which developed between chaplains, missionaries, and members of their flock increased in intensity over the course of the war, as the conflict became increasingly more destructive.¹

Previous scholars have argued that the Civil War was a conflict that challenged—and perhaps transformed—established gender roles and relations, a contention which helps explain religious change as well.² The antebellum church world had in many senses been dominated by church-going women. Due to their wartime experiences and the frequent proximity to chaplains and missionaries who had actively evangelized, especially by the end of the conflict, men in ever increasing numbers flocked to Christ. As a result, the wartime armies became cauldrons of male religiosity. However, this wartime transformation did not translate into a post-bellum shift toward the masculinization of religious adherence where men and women jointly worshipped God. Late nineteenth-century white protestant churches remained two-thirds female, and for black Protestant churches that number was even higher. Only in Catholic churches was the gender proportion almost evenly split.³

¹ Postbellum congregations maintained these strong bonds. For example, African American preachers, helped congregants deal with issues ranging from relating to God to coping with daily life. In black communities, only the bonds between family members trumped those between a preacher and his congregation. (William E. Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 322, 324.)

² For seminal work on gender and the Civil War, see especially LeeAnn Whites, The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890 (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2000) and Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Civil War armies displayed a unique form of ecumenicalism, which also demonstrated a shift from prewar religious practice. Contemporary clerics routinely praise and promote ecumenicalism among Christian groups, but in the nineteenth century the individual churches were more insular. In the pre-war period, Protestant clerics only displayed non-denominationalism through their work in benevolent organizations. However, within the Civil War armies, clergy broke down denominational walls and practiced ecumenicalism widely, especially the evangelical spiritual leaders affiliated with the United States Christian Commission. Although most religious leaders leaned toward non-denominationalism within the armies, ingrained hostility between the papal subjects and the followers of Luther did occasionally bubble to the surface, indicating that spiritual battles on the home front did, at times, penetrate the boundaries of the military establishment. In the postwar period, this wartime thrust toward ecumenicalism dissipated as soldiers demobilized and moved back to civilian churches. At home, they had more religious options and took advantage of these opportunities to reconnect with their denominational faith. Nonetheless, the sectarianism of antebellum times was not as marked in the postbellum era.4

In stark contrast to prewar America, the Civil War military environment fostered themes of religious and societal equality. With few exceptions, chaplains and missionaries ministered to men regardless of religious belief, racial identity, or army

MacFarlane (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 111, 115-118. Lewis Saum argues that the feminization of religion is more apparent in the post-war period than in the antebellum religious world. (Lewis O. Saum, The Popular Mood of America, 1860-1890 (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 87)

affiliation. Differences were subsumed under the banner of unity under the flag of a Christian nation. These ideas of equality showed that Civil War soldiers and their clerical leaders operated in an environment that differed from nineteenth-century society at large. Racism, xenophobia, fear of Catholics, all played a major role in the lives of most nineteenth-century Americans. Yet in the Civil War military environment these prejudices were normally suspended, if not dispatched with entirely. Once soldiers and clergy came home, however, most reverted back to their ingrained biases and prejudices.

The religious culture surrounding death during the Civil War also showed continuities with the antebellum era, albeit with certain adaptations. Acknowledging the concept of the Good Death, prewar Americans of all religious denominations, hoped that on their deathbed they would be surrounded by family members ushering them into the hereafter. The war often made these comforting rituals impossible. Civil War chaplains and missionaries, however, served as surrogates for family members, providing an improvised version of the Good Death to soldiers who died during their military service, far away from home and the support of their families. When available, female nurses also helped prepare soldiers for death. In the aftermath of the conflict, Civil War dead, served as a flashpoint of sectional discord, yet by 1900 memorialization of the dead helped unify the nation.

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The influence of the United States Christian Commission, an evangelical organization which provided support for almost all religious activities in the Union armies and hospitals, also shows continuity with antebellum precedents. Borne out of the YMCA and Sunday school movements of the pre-war years, USCC delegates worked together with Union chaplains through such activities as delegate-chaplain meetings and served an instrumental role in the fostering of a non-denominational religious space. Perhaps most significantly, USCC delegates actively ministered to non-English speaking soldiers and Native Americans, groups which Confederate spiritual leaders disregarded. By the later part of the war, the USCC placed much of its resources toward evangelizing African Americans, both soldiers and civilians, through a dual program of education and spiritual ministry. Directly affecting the beginnings of religious reconstruction, these missionaries composed the vanguard of the Northern missionary efforts in the South.\(^7\) At the end of the war, delegates complemented their ordinary work by teaching in Freedmen’s Schools, distributing numerous copies of Testaments and “The Freedman,” in addition to preaching in black churches.\(^8\) The Congregationalist American Missionary Association expanded upon its wartime operations by bringing the USCC’s educational work into the post-bellum South through the establishment of a

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\(^8\) The USCC officially ended its work on January 1, 1866.

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network of common schools, with a largely religious based curriculum.\textsuperscript{9} Through their educational and religious work, both the AMA and the USCC fostered the expansion of post-bellum African American churches.\textsuperscript{10}

In the spirit of antebellum clerical efforts, chaplains and missionaries sought to provide worship spaces within the confines of the Union and Confederate armies. Although generally successful, this spiritual project faced persistent obstacles. During their entire tenure, spiritual leaders battled the bewildering array of profane influences inherent in military life.\textsuperscript{11} They did not come to these fights unarmed. Antebellum temperance organizations and bodies devoted to combating prostitution and other sinful behavior had been battling profane influences in society since the Second Great Awakening. Post-bellum temperance organizations would continue to fight vice, although their job was perhaps easier than that of the wartime clergy because they did not work in an almost wholly masculine environment, where people had limited options with which to occupy their time.

\textsuperscript{9} Richardson, \textit{Christian Reconstruction}, 27-28, 44. In June 1867 AMA teachers worked in every southern and border state, instructing approximately eighteen thousand in Sabbath schools and nearly thirty-nine thousand in day and night classes. (Richardson, \textit{Christian Reconstruction}, 37)

\textsuperscript{10} See William E. Montgomery, \textit{Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993) and Joe M. Richardson, \textit{Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890} (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986). Post-bellum black worship practices show continuity with their antebellum and wartime predecessors. Influenced by Southern slavery, prewar black worshippers and preachers perpetrated emotionally driven church worship services. Wartime clergy noticed this same degree of emotionalism when ministering to African Americans. Fully integrated into the ritual of African American worship services, by the post-bellum period emotionalism had become a hallmark of Southern black churches. If worship did not elicit an emotional response from the congregation, the service would be deemed a failure. (Montgomery, \textit{Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree}, 291.)

\textsuperscript{11} Soldiers dealt with the benefits and curses of ample spare time. For some, religion helped alleviate the boredom free time imposed. Other soldiers occupied their time with profanity, gambling, and alcoholism. During combat, the lure of religious devotion, might be the only sound which could compete for the attention of the soldiery, offering them hope as they encountered a baptism of fire.
For the first time many Civil War soldiers observed holidays in camp which became central to post-bellum American life. The Sabbath, a day of rest and the focal point of civil war clergy’s emphasis on religiosity, became linked with Sunday School. While Sunday Schools emerged in the antebellum era and continued in the wartime environment, only during the post-bellum period did common people embrace the Sunday School movement. For many, the Sunday School replaced the contemplative Sunday.\textsuperscript{12}

The more significant wartime change in holiday observance was Americans’ conception of Christmas. Many soldiers first observed Christmas in the wartime camp. Prewar Americans tended to associate Christmas with Catholicism, a sect of Christianity often seen as negatively associated with immigrants and foreigners. Soldiers brought this holiday home with them, albeit without its religious message as a celebration of Jesus’s birth. Instead, Christmas represented to most postbellum Americans a time for exchanging gifts, dancing, and frolicking.\textsuperscript{13} This foreshadowed twenty-first century America’s mass commercialization of the holiday.

However, increased wartime observance of traditional religious holidays was not the only change from pre-war America. While first emerging within the camp and battlefield environments, the prison and the general hospital inculcated civil religion within the ranks of Civil War soldiers. Scholars have posited that a renewed focus on civil religion occurred in post-Civil War America, especially in the post-war South with


the rise of the Religion of the Lost Cause.14 In the post-war North, Lincoln emerged as the messiah of another branch of civil religion.15 Yet the extant scholarship does not link this postwar religiosity to the wartime activities of soldiers. My evidence posits that Civil War soldiers were exposed, and initiated into this civil religion during wartime in so-called sacred spaces, and then, brought it home with them after demobilization.

The revivalism of the antebellum period, especially the camp meetings of the Second Great Awakening, paralleled the evangelical revivalism at work within the Civil War armies. Scholars tend to focus on the success of Confederate revivals, however, the evidence suggests that Union revivals, especially those inspired by the USCC achieved good results in the northern armies. One can note ebbs and flows in the strength of Confederate revivals but cannot really find a consistent pattern to them. Instead, they appear as localized movements. On the other hand, USCC delegates acted much like the itinerate preachers of the Second Great Awakening, generating interest in conversion wherever they went or were stationed. These USCC revivals became widespread even before the tide had turned in favor of the Union.

Civil War spiritual leaders borrowed revival techniques and methods used by their prewar predecessors. In the Civil War armies and during previous revivals, the converted were awakened during either camp meetings or in-church services. Moreover, during revival periods preaching could be held nearly every night and multiple times on Sunday. As in other nineteenth-century revivals, prayer meetings would often be held during the day to sustain the revival spirit.


All nineteenth-century revivals, including those during the war, emphasized public conversion and the communal spirit it generated. Revivals moved conversion from a private matter to a public concern. These democratic and egalitarian movements strove to include all people, regardless of denomination, in the worship of Jesus Christ, using stalwart Christians to help engage potential converts. The revivalist or spiritual leader directly appealed to the audience who gathered to hear his message.

Participants in wartime revivals differed from their peacetime predecessors. While before the war, revivals drew and involved members of all ages, classes, and backgrounds, the reality of the wartime military camp environment did not allow that to occur. Young men in their twenties and thirties comprised the majority of the population in Civil War military camps. Women occasionally visited and the memoirs and diaries of some spiritual leaders point to them in the crowds during religious services, but they played a very minor role. While antebellum women urged men to participate in the revivals and the resultant conversions, as well as occasionally served as revivalist preachers, they could not perform this function in the Civil War camp. However, sweethearts and wives could (and did) urge their men to convert or become more religious through correspondence and letters, a technique far less effective than the face to face contact of prewar revivals.

As opposed to the almost wholly masculine Civil War religious environment, the antebellum revival tended to be a family affair. Families would go to the camp ground together and pray together. The revivalist spirit also spread through families and other people close to those involved, especially during the revival sparked by Finney in Rochester, New York in the 1820s. In the Civil War camps, traditional families did not
pray together. Instead, soldiers relied on the combat unit for support, and also identified with this group during prayer services, especially when a regimental chaplain presided over it.

Prewar revival movements did not spawn chapel building and the creation of new physical prayer spaces, like their wartime iterations. Instead, the open air antebellum revival would just build the church community. While the church community remained a focus of the Civil War revivalist, during the war, indoor prayer space was at a premium. The influx of new conversions and increased interest in the worship of Jesus Christ by the soldiers, created the need for more and bigger chapels. In the Union armies, the United States Christian Commission supplied this need by providing chapel flies to any religious leader who requested one.

While some similarities surely existed, one also sees important differences in religious practice. Early nineteenth-century revivalists provide numerous accounts of seemingly bizarre behavior among those attending both camp meetings, such as the one held in Cane Ridge in 1801, and more structured meetings in churches, such as those which Finney held in Rochester in the 1820s. The experience of “falling” so eloquently described by James Finley, a revivalist in Kentucky in 1800, finds no parallels in the extant materials on the Civil War. Nor does one find the further degree of emotionalism described by antebellum participants: coma inducing, crying, shouting, or convulsive movements or jerks. While emotionalism was present in the Civil War revivals, the evidence does not support the degree of emotionalism described by peacetime revivalists.

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Post-bellum revivals tended to follow the patterns set by antebellum and wartime revivalism. By ten years after the war’s end, annual revival meetings by professional itinerants were integral to evangelical church life in America. This revivalist’s job was to rekindle the attention of church members and those who strayed from the faith, while also trying to attract nonchurchgoers. While prewar revivals tended to have a specific denominational focus, those in the post-bellum period tended to cross denominational lines.\(^7\) Two main reasons account for this change: first, wartime revivals which by necessity had to attract an assortment of men from across denominational lines and second, the labors of a revivalist named Dwight Moody who worked with the USCC during the Civil War. His work in particular set the stage for the revivalism of the twentieth century as epitomized by Billy Graham.

To the extent possible, wartime religion maintained continuity with antebellum precedents. However, the cauldron of Civil War transformed how Americans looked at and experienced religiosity. In turn, clergy adopted wartime spiritual measures to reach both old and new population groups in peacetime America. Through their religious activities, postbellum clergy and their flocks traversed a peacetime religious landscape that had vestiges of the chaos of the wartime spiritual world.

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