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TOWARD HUMANITARIAN ENDS? PROTESTANTS AND SLAVE REFORM IN SOUTH CAROLINA, 1830-1865

KIMBERLY R. KELLISON*

FOR OVER ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY YEARS, SCHOLARS AND laymen have analyzed and debated the reasons why the South lost the Civil War. Confederate military blunders, the superiority of northern manpower and industry, southern commitment to states' rights, and the Union naval blockade have been posited as important reasons for Confederate loss. Many scholars argue that the failure of Confederate leaders to formulate and sustain a cohesive sense of southern nationalism also played an integral role in the ultimate defeat of the South. Society was too divided for southerners to fight a long and drawn out war, especially when one of the main reasons for the conflict revolved around the defense of slavery. In the end, the Confederacy lost the war because many southerners, men and women alike, simply lost the will to support the cause.[1]

One of the most controversial assumptions about the decline in Confederate morale is that southern slaveholders exhibited a sense of guilt over the very institution they were fighting to protect. As Gaines M. Foster points out, this argument did not make its way into scholarship on the South until the mid-twentieth century, when journalists and historians began to produce more objective and introspective studies of the region. Kenneth Stampp's "The Southern Road to Appomattox" serves as one example of what Foster terms the "guilt hypothesis." Stampp argues that many southern slaveholders struggled with the ethical implications of owning slaves.

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[1]Richard Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), esp. 4-34; Drew G. Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); William W. Freehling, "The Divided South, Causes of Confederate Defeat, and the Reintegration of Narrative History," in his *The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 220-252; Gabor S. Boritt, *Why the Confederacy Lost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 238, 247; Drew G. Faust, "'Without Pilot or Compass': Elite Women and Religion in the Civil War South," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 250-260.

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While opposing the abolition of slavery because of the overwhelming material loss they would accrue, they simultaneously "knew that slavery betrayed the American tradition of individual liberty and natural rights and that the attack [on slavery] was in the main valid." Because of these uncertainties, many slaveholders lacked the full, deep commitment to southern independence that might have allowed the South to win the war.[2]

More contemporary scholars also agree that guilt over slavery deeply affected southern thought and behavior. James Oakes in *The Ruling Race* argues that the equally strong ideological forces of liberal capitalism and evangelical Christianity shaped the values of nineteenth-century slaveholders. While the former encouraged white southerners to embrace and enjoy the material world, the latter taught rejection of worldly goods, leading many white southerners to hold on to their wealth (including their slaves) but to feel guilt at doing so. While Oakes finds few direct examples of white admissions of remorse, he argues that the defensiveness of white southerners over the subject of slavery clearly signifies their turmoil and guilt. "The paucity of open expressions of remorse among slaveholders, either before or after the Civil War, cannot be taken as evidence for the absence of guilt," he declares. "For while remorse normally follows an avoidable misdeed, guilt is the product of a deeply rooted psychological ambivalence that impels the individual to behave in ways that violate fundamental norms even as they fulfill basic desires." For slaveholders, that guilt found expression in oft-repeated excuses for being born into a slaveholding society that past generations, rather than the current one, created.[3]

Not all historians agree that guilt—whether hidden or explicit—significantly influenced white antebellum and Civil War southerners. James L. Roark argues that during the Civil War, only a small percentage of white southerners felt guilt over slavery. The majority of those who expressed some discomfort with the institution, moreover, were women, whose

[2]Kenneth Stampp, "The Southern Road to Appomattox," in his *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 246-269, quote 263; Gaines M. Foster, "Guilt over Slavery: A Historiographical Analysis," *Journal of Southern History* 56 (November, 1990): 665-694. Also see Charles G. Sellers, "The Travail of Slavery," in his *The Southerner as American* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 40-71.

[3]James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 117-122, quote 119-120. Also see Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 21; Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1985), 85-103; Kenneth M. Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997).

positions as household dependents provided them a different perspective on personal freedom than that shared by white men.[4] Like Roark, George C. Rable asserts that white southerners felt little apprehension over living in a slave society, since the presence of black slaves ensured white liberty and at least some measure of egalitarianism.[5] Other scholars argue that guilt played into southern ideology in a limited form. Eugene Genovese, who in earlier scholarship disagreed that guilt over slavery had much influence on southern thought, argues in more recent works that white southerners did not question or doubt the morality of the institution of slavery as defined in the Bible. The inability of many slave owners to uphold a biblically sanctioned form of slavery, however, did produce feelings of guilt among southern Protestants.[6]

Guilt over slavery no doubt troubled some white southerners, compelling them to support plans to reform the institution through both moral suasion and, at times, legal action. Protestant ministers played the largest role in the effort to ameliorate slavery, demanding laws to protect slave marriage, prevent the separation of mothers and small children, and allow slave

[4]James L. Roark, *Masters without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 97. Roark notes that most slaveholding women and men supported slavery during the war, and that for the majority of the planter class "the war served to re-emphasize, not undermine, the validity of traditional beliefs." Roark, 97-99. Although some historians have addressed white women's attitudes toward slavery, greater attention is needed to the subject of guilt in the female mind. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 339-365; Sudie Duncan Sides, "Southern Women and Slavery," *History Today* (January, 1970): 54-60, and (February, 1970): 124-130; Sudie Duncan Sides, "Women and Slaves: An Interpretation Based on the Writings of Southern Women," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1969); Carol K. Bleser, "Southern Planter Wives and Slavery," in *The Meaning of South Carolina History: Essays in Honor of George C. Rogers, Jr.*, eds. David R. Chesnutt and Clyde N. Wilson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 104-120; Virginia Ingraham Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848-1889* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 42-48; John Hammond Moore, ed., *A Plantation Mistress on the Eve of the Civil War: The Diary of Keziah Goodwyn Hopkins Brevard, 1860-1861* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 29, 30, 90.

[5]George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 14.

[6]Eugene Genovese, *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 32-33; Eugene Genovese, *The Slaveholders' Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 46-72; Eugene Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

literacy, among other measures. But some Protestants also opposed southern efforts to liberalize slavery. While religious leaders seemed to agree that slaves and masters benefited most from a paternalistic style of ownership and management, they differed over the best way to recover this system of relations. A study of the diverging viewpoints of South Carolina Protestants sheds further light on the complexities of slave reform in the South and helps assess the importance of guilt in the minds of southern slaveholders.[7]

As countless scholars have shown, Protestant ministers played a crucial role in defending southern slavery during the antebellum years. Ministers penned over half of all proslavery tracts written in the United States, and from the mid-1840s on Baptists and Methodists worshipped in denominations that had broken from national bodies over the issue of slavery. Yet as Anne C. Loveland and more recently Eugene Genovese have illustrated, the belief in slavery as a positive good, as practiced in the South, did not permeate the beliefs of most Protestants; indeed, many southern ministers harbored doubts about the morality of slavery in its existing condition. Since the colonial era, a small number of ministers had underscored the responsibility Christian masters owed their slaves, noting that slavery would receive God's blessing only when slaves were treated according to Biblical standards. Protestants continued this argument during the revolutionary and early national decades and became even more insistent on the point in the three decades prior to the Civil War. Indeed, Genovese contends, "by the 1850s the great majority [of southern ministers] were pleading that the South could defend slavery only if it met its Christian responsibility to the slaves."[8]

[7]Like their Protestant counterparts, some Jewish and Catholic leaders voiced support for slave reform. Further investigation into the views of Protestants, Jews, and Catholics toward slavery in South Carolina is needed. With the exception of one slave, for instance, Charleston's Beth Elohim synagogue forbad blacks from worshipping with whites, creating a different religious relationship between slave and master than found in many Protestant and Catholic churches. Genovese, *Consuming Fire*, 4-6, 21-22, 53-54; Bertram Wallace Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789-1865," in *Jews in the South*, eds. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 115; Randall M. Miller, "The Failed Mission: The Catholic Church and Black Catholics in the Old South," in *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture*, eds. Randall M. Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), 149-170.

[8]Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 186-218; Genovese, *Consuming Fire*, 3-33, quote 14; Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 210; Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987); William S. Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Gloucester: Peter

While prominent antebellum Protestants supported plans for more humane treatment of slaves, the parameters of reform varied widely. Some religious leaders (and congregations) turned their words into actions by demanding laws granting slave literacy so slaves could read the Bible, allowing slave testimony in civil trials, and forbidding the separation of mothers and young children. In 1838 over sixty residents of Abbeville district petitioned the South Carolina legislature to repeal the law passed in 1834 forbidding slaves from reading or writing. These petitioners, all slaveholding members of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, argued that prohibiting slaves from being "taught to read at all of course forbids them to be taught to read the holy Scriptures." While blacks should not be given the educational opportunities afforded to whites, slaveholders should have the freedom to teach their slaves to read so that they "will be able to pursue the word of God and other religious books with pleasure and profit to their souls." Indeed, the soul of the slave was more imperiled than that of the southern white, not because of race, but because the law prohibited slaves from being able to read religious material:

> Oral instructions once in seven days, or once a month, on religious subjects is not sufficient to preparing our servants to meet their God. The religious master with all his learning, and means of improvement, very often finds himself poorly prepared to enter the invisible world; how can an ignorant man, such as our servants are, be prepared for the Eternal State by hearing a Sermon or Lecture once a week, much of which they will not understand?[9]

Smith, 1960); Eugene Genovese, *'Slavery Ordained of God': The Southern Slaveholders' View of Biblical History and Modern Politics* (Gettysburg: Gettysburg College, 1985); Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separation in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1993); John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, eds., *Religion and the Antebellum Debate Over Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

[9]Petition on Slavery, Abbeville district, 1838, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC (hereafter SCDAH). Also see Petition on Slavery, Chester district, 1838; Petition on Slavery, Sumter district, 1842, SCDAH; Janet Duitman Cornelius, *'When I Can Read My Title Clear': Literacy, Slavery and Religion in the Antebellum South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 37-58, esp. 53-58; Robert M. Calhoon, "Religion Confronts the Social Order," in *Religion in South Carolina*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 175-176; Robert M. Calhoon, *Evangelicals and Conservatives in the Early South, 1740-1861* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 152-154. The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church was formed in Philadelphia in 1782, when Associate Presbyterians and Reformed Presbyterians merged. In 1790

The 1834 law banning slaves from reading and writing was morally repugnant, and it was also unconstitutional, since the eighth article of the state constitution specified that "all mankind within the limits of the State, are allowed the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship." Confounding the notion that slaves were only property—at least on a spiritual plane—the petitioners noted that "Our servants are part of mankind": God had bestowed slaves with "immortal souls" identical to those of the free population.[10]

Like the residents of Abbeville District, other South Carolinians voiced strong support for changes within the political system regarding the care of slaves. Anderson judge and Baptist John Belton O'Neall, Presbyterian minister John B. Adger, and Baptist minister Richard Fuller argued for legal change of the slave code, including laws permitting black testimony against whites in court and laws allowing slaves to read.[11] These actions paralleled movements for slave reform in other southern states. North Carolina citizens produced the strongest prewar effort to modify slavery when, in 1855, a group of slaveholders petitioned the state legislature to legalize slave marriages, to forbid the separation of mothers from young children, and to permit slave literacy and education. Although no such laws were passed, the memorial illustrates the important link between religion and reform. The petitioners noted that they were proposing "some radical changes in the law of slavery, demanded alike by our common Christianity, by public morality, and by our common weal of the whole South."[12]

While the politically charged atmosphere of the prewar years may have spurred support for reform, the Civil War created a social and political environment that granted ministers even greater authority—and greater leeway—to push through legal changes ensuring more humanitarian treatment of slaves. Already central to southern self-identity, religion's role was heightened during the war years. Southerners rationalized Confederate

the Associate Reformed Presbytery of the Carolinas and Georgia was established in Abbeville district, South Carolina. Ray A. King, *A History of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* (Charlotte: Board of Christian Education of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, 1966).

[10]Petition on Slavery, Abbeville district, 1838, SCDAH.

[11]Genovese, *Consuming Fire*, 3-33; Cornelius, *When I Can Read*, 54; John Adger, "Human Rights and Slavery," *Southern Presbyterian Review*, 2 (March, 1849): 569-587; John Belton O'Neall, "Slave Laws of the South," in *The Industrial Resources, etc. of the Southern and Western States*, ed. J.B.D. DeBow, vol. II (New Orleans: DeBow's Review, 1853), 278-279. Also see William W. Freehling, "James Henley Thornwell's Mysterious Antislavery Movement," *Journal of Southern History* 57 (August 1991): 383-406.

[12]R.H. Taylor, "Humanizing the Slave Code of North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Magazine* 2 (July 1925), 331; *The Weekly Raleigh Register*, April 18, 1855.

independence and warfare by claiming that the southern cause was a holy one and that southern victory would be achieved, even if that victory was long and hard-fought, because God favored the southern cause. Southerners simply had to reform their sinful ways, Protestants claimed, for the war to reach a victorious end. Ministers and denominational leaders proclaimed this theme time and again, particularly as the war edged along and southern victory seemed increasingly problematic. "The present struggle is more of a Reformation than a Revolution," editors of the *Southern Christian Advocate*, the most influential Methodist periodical for South Carolina and Georgia during the war years, proclaimed. "It will not realise [sic] its best results unless it reform deeply and thoroughly all those abuses of civil liberty which, as a people, we had in our unexampled prosperity fallen." Not only did the South need to maintain its independence through military action, but southerners "must succeed in constructing a *national character* upon pure and abiding principles." Hardship and affliction during the present war were but God's way of purifying the righteous South: "A prayerful people may have affliction—reverses—hardships, and perhaps in *answer* to their prayers; for God knoweth best how to secure large and lasting good to those who sincerely pray; and, at last, out of all their distresses, His mighty arm will surely lift them into light and liberty."[13]

Again and again, religious and secular leaders stressed the importance of a southern reformation. During the early years of the war, messages differed regarding the precise nature of southern transgressions. Diatribes condemning worldly frivolity, drunkenness, swearing, and nonobservance of the Sabbath appeared frequently, and warnings against extortion seemed especially prevalent. Ministers also directed southerners to help care for the sick, wounded, and poor in order to further propagate Christian values throughout the South.[14] By late 1862 and 1863, reformers increasingly targeted another southern sin, that of the disintegration of the master-slave relationship. Numerous factors compelled this shift in emphasis, one of the most important being the changing Union strategy regarding slavery, especially the Emancipation Proclamation. But plans to reform slavery were also meant to appeal to non slaveholders, suggesting a decline in Confederate morale that leaders not only recognized but attempted to reverse.

For some ministers, the Civil War offered a chance to prove to critics the benefits of a Christian, slaveholding society, so long as slaveholders reformed

[13]*Southern Christian Advocate*, July 31, 1862.

[14]*Confederate Baptist*, March 4, 1863; March 11, 1863; April 8, 1863; October 12, 1863; April 27, 1864; *Southern Christian Advocate*, February 13, 1862; May 22, 1862; September 11, 1862; August 25, 1864; Edward Martin, "The Law of the Sabbath, in its Bearing Upon National Prosperity," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 15 (July 1862): 23-30; Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 41-57.

their treatment of slaves. Mississippi Presbyterian James A. Lyon argued that modifications of the slave system would make slavery appear "in entirely a different and milder light to the eyes of the civilized world," and Georgia minister Charles Colcock Jones admonished fellow Presbyterians that "the eyes of the civilized world are upon us."[15] Other Protestants correlated the sins of slaveholders to losses in battle and the ongoing destruction of war. The *Southern Christian Advocate* reiterated antebellum arguments that while many slaveholders treated slaves with benevolence, some ignored or neglected the religious instruction of their bondspeople. Such men treated slaves "as mere machines of accumulation and means for gratifying their sordid lusts." These owners deserved censure and condemnation, for they ignored "those high and awful obligations which grew out of [their] relations to those so dependent upon him." Their actions beckoned the wrath of God: "No one who reads Providence correctly, as revealed in the history of peoples and nations, can be surprised at the punishment now resting upon us," the author reasoned, for there was no way a "just God" could sanction a society in which "such flagrant violations of moral obligation—such outrages against reason and duty" were practiced. God had ordained slavery and intended for both slave and slave owner to benefit from the relationship; the abuse of such relations had resulted in the present curse that God had placed upon the South.[16]

A small minority of Civil War South Carolinians demanded legal reform of the slave code. In a sermon entitled "Our Peculiar Sins," Reverend William Bell White Howe preached to Charleston Episcopalians that the moral abuse of the slave system constituted the South's chief sin—and the chief reason for God's continued punishment of the Confederacy. Laws that banned literacy and legal marriage for slaves, as well as that prohibited an owner's right to manumit slaves, were wrong, Howe argued. While such abuses should not be addressed legally until after the war, the minister challenged South Carolinians to promise to support such reform "if God gives us success." The *Charleston Courier* lauded Howe's proposal, and by

[15]Charles Colcock Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes* (Savannah: Thomas Purse, 1842), 24-25; James A. Lyon, "Slavery and Duties Growing out of the Relation," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 16 (July 1863): 36. Both quotes from Faust, *Creation of Southern Nationalism*, 75-76. Also see Clarence Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 250.

[16]*Southern Christian Advocate*, January 14, 1864; January 21, 1864.

early 1865 the newspaper published a series of editorials encouraging legislation granting greater protection to slaves.[17]

Yet just as other states surpassed South Carolina in pressing for change before the war, some states, notably Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama, achieved more tangible success in their drive for ameliorative reform during the war years. In 1863 the Georgia legislature legalized the licensing of black preachers; that same year Alabama passed a law declaring the right of slaves to legal counsel and a fair trial, regardless of the offense committed. In 1865 a Mississippi house committee approved a bill to legalize slave marriage and literacy and to protect slave families, among other things, but the war ended before further action could be taken. In each of these states, denominational bodies advocated reform much more forthrightly than they did in South Carolina.[18]

One of the reasons that legal change did not come to South Carolina slaves during the antebellum and Civil War years was because of the marked resistance of some South Carolinians toward any type of liberalization of the slave code. These individuals, who may be labeled reactionary reformers, provided a marked contrast to the progressive reform supported by more liberal southern voices. While both groups supported change, reactionary reformers took a much more conservative stance toward master-slave relations, calling for a return to an authoritarian but protective paternalistic order that they felt was being chiseled away. The Columbia-based *Confederate Baptist*, a weekly paper that ran from October 1862 to January 1865, best represented this reactionary stance. J.L. Reynolds and J.M.C. Breaker co-edited the periodical until January 1863, when Reynolds assumed sole editorial responsibilities. Both men were Baptist ministers, and Reynolds played a particularly active role in the South Carolina Baptist Convention, serving as president in 1857, 1868-1871, and 1873-1876.[19]

Throughout its existence the *Confederate Baptist* consistently opposed amelioration of the slave code and criticized reformers for promoting such

[17]*Charleston Courier*, April 20, 1864; May 4, 1864; June 9, 1864; June 30, 1864; August 6, 1864. Also see January 19, 1865; February 9, 1865; Bell Irvin Wiley, "The Movement to Humanize the Institution of Slavery During the Confederacy," *Emory University Quarterly* 5 (December 1949): 207-220, esp. 215-218.

[18]Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, 235-271; Lyon, "Slavery and the Duties Growing out of the Relation," 1-36; "A Slave Marriage Law," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 16 (October 1863): 145-162; Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 75-81.

[19]Reynolds also served as Senior Professor of Theology at the Furman Theological Institution from 1839-1844, leaving after being replaced by James C. Furman. Although initially bitter over this issue, he again held a faculty position at Furman University from 1875-1877. He also helped edit *The Working Christian*, which began circulation in Charleston in 1870 and in 1877, after moving to Columbia, was

an agenda. The actions of Georgians who supported laws allowing slaves to read were "particularly unfelicitious," the periodical declared in October 1862. Slaves did not need a written understanding of the Bible to ensure conversion and salvation; oral instruction and communication were fully sufficient. Indeed, slave literacy would more likely harm than help slaves. "In these times it would be much wiser," the newspaper asserted, "to enforce the existing laws in reference to the regulation of our colored population at large, than to seek their repeal." Society had become less attentive to such laws in part because of the criticisms of northerners, and this negligence hurt master and slave alike. "It is time to discard our misplaced indulgence, and bring back our dependents to their former condition of humble submission and prompt obedience," the editors concluded. "What we want is discipline—stern, Scriptural discipline—and the more thoroughly that it is enforced, the better it is for us and our servants."[20]

Progressive and reactionary reformers were in agreement that white southerners had allowed the slave system to become perverted, not only because some masters treated their slaves inhumanely, but because the natural, paternalistic relations that once characterized the system had disintegrated. But while progressive reformers maintained that paternalism could be recovered by working to ameliorate slavery, reactionary reformers reversed the argument, contending that paternalism had broken down precisely because traditional slave codes were being changed or ignored. Such blatant disregard of slave laws, the *Confederate Baptist* warned, helped explain the prolonged suffering and agony of the war years. A January 1863 article noted, for example, that God had channeled his wrath upon the Confederacy because southerners failed to fully promote the moral and spiritual welfare of blacks in general, in large measure because many owners opted to free their slaves. "We have proclaimed to the wall that slavery is the normal condition of the colored race"; yet the 1850 census listed a large number of free blacks living in South Carolina. White attitudes and laws promoting manumission were fundamentally wrong, the newspaper insisted, since they taught slaves that good behavior could possibly lead to freedom. The article also deemed miscegenation, as well as

renamed the *Baptist Courier*. Joe M. King, *South Carolina Baptists* (Columbia: The R.L. Bryan Company, 1964), 203-207, 236, 252-255, 354; W.J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Beginnings in Education: A History of Furman University* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1926), 90-91, 232; John Hammond Moore, *South Carolina Newspapers* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 200.

[20]*Confederate Baptist*, October 8, 1862. See also April 1, 1863; April 29, 1863; December 23, 1863; Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 78-79.

the freedom of action allowed to "the most obnoxious portion" of the black race, sins that desperately needed reform. The public should demand that laws restricting the dress and actions of free blacks be sturdily enforced, which, among other things, would "keep them out of sight." Indeed, the inversion of servitude available to free blacks may well have comprised the major reason for God's present wrath upon the South. "This crime alone," the editorial concluded, "may cry for a vengeance to be appeased only by repentance or ruin."[21]

The *Confederate Baptist's* call for a return to the slave system as it used to be merits attention. Because slavery was a positive and providentially devised blessing for blacks, the newspaper argued, any effort to lessen the bonds of slavery—much less manumission—was detrimental to the true interest of blacks. Frequent assertions that slavery had changed in recent years, and that in the process whites had lost a measure of control over blacks, also reveal a fear that social relations in South Carolina were becoming frighteningly convoluted, a view that was certainly exacerbated by wartime conditions. Even before the war, however, white South Carolinians had become increasingly critical of the economic and social power of the free black population. Economic competition between free black and white artisans in Charleston, especially, led to greater tension between the races in the 1850s, but it was John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry in October 1859 that led whites to endorse the most severe measures toward free blacks. Fearing the role that this sector of the population could play in fomenting insurrection, the South Carolina legislature debated a number of measures in 1859 and 1860 to either enslave or remove from the state all free African Americans. Other states endorsed similar measures, intensifying a trend that Clarence Mohr argues would have put a completely different face on slavery had not the Civil War intervened. Clearly, desire to control the actions of both slaves and free blacks exerted an important influence on the thoughts of some southerners during the 1850s and 1860s.[22]

The *Confederate Baptist* expressed such desire in an article lamenting the eclipse of paternalism in the South. "In the course of time," the editorial stated, "the patriarchal has been superseded by the praedial relation; and owners of slaves have come to regard them, not as members of the family—dependents, for whose moral and spiritual welfare they are responsible—but as mere instruments in the accumulation of wealth and of the facilities

[21]*Confederate Baptist*, January 7, 1863.

[22]Bernard E. Powers, Jr., *Black Charlestonians: A Social History, 1822-1885* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1994), 62-65; Marina Wikramanayake, *A World in Shadow: The Free Black in Antebellum South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), 169-170; Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, eds., *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co.,

of sensual gratification." The loss of this paternalistic ethos had resulted in slave owners hiring their slaves out to others solely to achieve material gain. Such a process, however, left slaves "removed from the superintendence and humane guardianship, which the [master-slave] relationship involves," and subjected them instead to "the debasing influences of their own self-will, or the wiles, caprices, and cruelties of others," a situation that more closely resembled the much-criticized plight of northern workers than that of slaves in the family. Adding substantially to the problem was the effect these slaves had on others:

> That portion of them that have been corrupted by such agencies, have infused their spirit of independence and insubordination, of morose discontent and restiveness, into others; so that the affection and confidence which formerly pervaded the bosom of the slave, and identified him with the welfare of the master, have given place to a feeling of antagonism and suspicion, and transformed him into a sort of compulsory hireling, grudging his services, and solicitous only to render as little as possible.[23]

While the loosening of a paternalistic spirit had by no means permeated all master-slave relationships, the article noted, the potential existed and was increasing over time. "The chasm between the two great classes, into which Southern society is divided," warned the writer, "has been progressively widening, and the negro is fast becoming a mere laborer, instead of a ward and part of the family."[24]

1984), 205, 218-220, 233-287, 292; Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *No Chariot Let Down: Charleston's Free People of Color on the Eve of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 7-15, 41, 85-99, 101-122, 128-149; Lacy K. Ford, Jr., "Republics and Democracy: The Parameters of Political Citizenship in Antebellum South Carolina," in *The Meaning of South Carolina History*, eds. Chesnutt and Wilson, 121-145; Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaveholders Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 398-413; Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, 237-238.

[23]*Confederate Baptist*, June 1, 1864.

[24]Ibid. Proslavery advocates often argued that southerners provided their slaves much greater care and protection than free-wage laborers found in the North. William J. Grayson, *Hireling and Slave, Chicora, and Other Poems* (Charleston: Russell and Jones, 1858); William J. Grayson, "The Dual Form of Labor," *DeBow's Review* 28 (1860): 48-66; Genovese, *Slaveholder's Dilemma*, 68-73; Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought*, 303; Lacy K. Ford Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 352-365; Drew G. Faust, *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 1-20.

But why, exactly, had a paternalistic ethos been replaced by a blatantly materialistic emphasis? Although the author did not claim to identify the root of the problem, he delved into an issue that was integrally related to a slaveholding society, that of white unity. The present, alarming trend had "been greatly aggravated by the aggregation of our slaves, instead of their dispersion." The desire to own large amounts of land and large numbers of slaves "and to live in a style of baronial dignity," the writer chided, "has been the bane of our higher classes, as it was that of the patricians of Rome under the empire." Large numbers of slaves on one plantation denied slaves the paternalistic relation that slavery should bequeath them, since there were too many slaves for the master to know and to properly care for: "This concentration of slaves places them, by a sort of inverse action, beyond the master's care. He undertakes more than he can manage, and thus deprives both himself and his slave of the mutual benefits which spring from their more immediate contact, and their habitual intercourse."[25]

The solution to this problem, argued the *Confederate Baptist*, was one that had been expressed in both political and religious circles in the years preceding the Civil War—one that realized the importance of a unified white population in the face of both internal dissent in the South and increasing northern and European criticism. In his 1856 address to the South Carolina legislature, Governor James H. Adams had proposed a plan to bring a greater consensus to white South Carolinians. "The outward pressure against the institution of slavery should prompt us to do all we can to fortify within," the governor warned. The redistribution of the slave population—diffusion, Adams called it—offered a fundamental solution to potential class divisions over slavery. "Our true policy," he asserted, "is to diffuse the slave population as much as possible, and thus secure in the whole community the motive of self-interest for its support." To achieve this goal, Adams recommended a law guaranteeing all white families at least one slave, free of charge. "As you multiply the number who acquire the property, so will you widen and deepen the determination to sustain the institution," he argued.[26] While antebellum legislators refrained from passing

[25]*Confederate Baptist*, June 1, 1864.

[26]Ibid.; *Message Number One of His Excellency Jas. H. Adams, Governor of South Carolina, To the Senate and House of Representatives, at the Session of 1856* (Columbia: Edward H. Britton, 1856), 9. Georgia politicians proposed a similar plan in the prewar years. See Michael P. Johnson, *Toward a Patriarchal Republic: The Secession of Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 127-128. Adams's message also called for the reopening of the African slave trade in South Carolina, a movement that gained momentum in the 1850s but that was ultimately defeated by the South Carolina legislature. Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 125-152; Ronald Takaki, *A Pro-Slavery Crusade: The Agitation to Reopen the African Slave* Trade (New York: Free Press, 1971).

such a measure into law (an 1857 legislative committee responded that South Carolinians would "with reason regard such legislation as partial and unwise"[27]), several religious and political leaders revived the idea during the Civil War. The *Confederate Baptist*, for instance, in 1864 referred to Adams's 1856 proposal to redistribute slaves to a broad base of white Carolinians. Adams had "expressed the benevolent desire to see every man the owner of at least one slave," a system that the editor of the *Confederate Baptist* wholeheartedly endorsed, since "dispersion of the institution" would benefit both master and slave, as well as safeguard the slave system, ensuring that slaves would remain under "the immediate and constant influence of their owners—a humanizing, moral and Christian influence." Slaves would once again become part of the family, rather than acting, or perceiving that they could act, independently of their masters.[28]

The *Confederate Baptist* was not alone in realizing both the humanitarian and practical benefits of slave redistribution. The *Southern Christian Advocate* forthrightly acknowledged that conflict between slave owner and those not owning slaves could (and at times during the war did) provide explosive ammunition for northerners who sought to divide white southern opinion and unity. To counter this attack, the *Advocate* advised a plan to equalize the slave population among white southerners similar to that proposed by the *Confederate Baptist*. Laws should be enacted to limit the number of slaves a person could hold (100-200 being the limit), but other measures were proposed as well. "Restriction on the one side requires distribution on the other," the author reasoned. A law protecting a small number of slaves in each household from taxation or seizure would accomplish this ideal. Such measure would provide slaves the best conditions as well as promoting and protecting the social and political unity of the South.[29]

These changes would work to the benefit of both master and slave. Smaller slaveholdings would allow slaves greater contact with white culture and instruction, thus producing a "civilizing" effect upon them, and such a proposal would also deter absentee slave ownership. For white southerners, this system would encourage "a general investment in slavery, whenever possible, and render Southern society more homogeneous and compact. No feeling could demagogues get up, then, between the slave-holding and the non-slave-holding population, no rivalry, no prejudice." Dissension

[27]*Report of the Special Committee of the House of Representatives of South Carolina, On So Much of the Message of His Excellency Gov. Jas. H. Adams, As Relates to Slavery and the Slave Trade* (Charleston: Walker, Evans, 1857), 53.

[28]*Confederate Baptist*, June 1, 1864.

[29]*Southern Christian Advocate*, May 12, 1864. The author also advised that excess capital, since it would no longer be placed toward the purchase of slaves and the running of plantations, be invested in other enterprises, in the process diversifying the southern economy and better ensuring southern independence.

was exacerbated, of course, as the war continued, a factor that the author by no means underestimated. For years, northerners had attempted to increase dissent within the South by appealing to non-slaveholders, and their efforts were partially successful. "Let us close up this dividing seam, as far as possible," the article counseled. "We shall be infinitely more united and stronger as a Confederacy," a pivotal factor in ensuring southern victory. "This is the heel of the Achilles," warned the author. "Let us guard it."[30]

The *Confederate Baptist's* and the *Southern Christian Advocate's* calls for slave redistribution reveal anxieties about both race and class in Civil War South Carolina. *The Confederate Baptist*, especially, lamented the growing independence—and perhaps haughtiness as well—perceived in the black population, and harkened back to a romantic, reactionary time when masters exerted a benevolent but stern authority over their slaves, consequently keeping the slave population in "place." This look backwards suggests the panic many white South Carolinians doubtless felt as they pondered the problem of slavery during the Civil War. It also reveals that in many cases, master-slave relations were already undergoing marked change.

But just as importantly, the solution to the increasing independence and insubordination of the black community had now become rooted not only in a return to more conservative attitudes among slaveholders, but also in the redistribution of the entire slave community—a revolutionary means to establish a reactionary goal, and one firmly aimed at appeasing non-slaveholders, whose discontent with the war increased each year the war continued. Both class and race, then, figured into dramatic proposals to democratize the ownership of slaves in the South.[31]

What these proposals do not reveal, however, is a unified Protestant guilt (much less a unified guilt among slaveholders in general) over the morality of southern slavery. Some South Carolina Protestants supported progressive slave reform for apparently genuine humanitarian concerns about the abuses of the practice of slavery, and many fewer probably felt a real sense of guilt over slavery in the abstract. Yet other South Carolina Protestants remained staunchly opposed to the amelioration of the slave code. Christian, moral slaveholders, they argued, could provide slaves all the instruction and care that was needed; traditional paternalism would also ensure that whites maintain firm authority and discipline over blacks in the South. The plans and proposals for slave redistribution also support

[30]Ibid. Also see Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 74; *Southern Christian Advocate*, May 12, 1864.

[31]For discussion of class divisions during the Civil War, see Escott, *After Secession*, esp. 94-134, 168-225; Rable, *The Confederate Republic*, 185-186, 190-192, 243-245; Gallagher, *The Confederate War*, 18-19, 21-23, 27, 67-68, 71; Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 82-85; Thomas, *The Confederate Nation*, 233-236.

this latter evangelical stance, for much more than revealing a widespread sense of guilt over the practice of slavery, such measures illustrate the threat that class antagonisms posed to the southern war effort. It was the latter, much more so than the former, that played the more significant role in the demise of the Confederacy.

"WE HAVE FOUND WHAT WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR!"THE CREATION OF THE MORMON RELIGIOUS ENCLAVE AMONG THE CATAWBA, 1883-1920

DANIEL LIESTMAN*

NOW, AS MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO, THE CATAWBA RIVER sweeps southward near Rock Hill, and winds its way around an area locally known as "The Bend." Along this bow overlooking the banks of the river that bears its name is the remnant of the Catawba tribe, living on a 630 acre fraction of what was once their domain. By 1881, the once large and powerful tribe was reduced to an estimated 100-120 people.[1] Clustered on their small reservation, the Catawba were all but overlooked by their neighbors. But in 1883, events began which changed how the Catawba saw themselves and how their white neighbors perceived them as well. For as anthropologist Frank G. Speck notes, the Catawba are unique "in the history of evangelical mission labors among Indians of North America," in that theirs is the only case among American Indians "where conversion to the religion of the white man shifted a whole group from paganism to Christianity in the Mormon path."[2]

Indeed the Catawba tribe is unique, both in South Carolina and among other Native American people for their high proportion of adherents to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS)—the Mormons. In spite of this distinction, there is little written on this topic.[3] This article seeks to

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[1]"Remnant of the Catawbas," *Fort Mill Times*, June 18, 1925, 1; J. Hurtle, "Indians in South Carolina," *Yorkville Inquirer*, August 3, 1882, 1; Jerry D. Lee, "A Study of the Influence of the Mormon Church on the Catawba Indians of South Carolina, 1882-1975, (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 1976), 24; *South Carolina Stake*, Twenty-fifth Anniversary, 20.

[2]Frank G. Speck, "Catawba Religious Beliefs, Mortuary Customs, and Dances," *Primitive Man* 12 (April 1929): 24; Frank G. Speck and C. E. Schemer "Catawba Kinship and Social Organization with a Resume of Tupelo Kinship Terms," *American Anthropologist* 44 (October-December 1924): 562.

[3]There is a considerable corpus of primary and secondary literature on the history of the Catawba, much of which has been capably compiled by Thomas J. Bloomer. Thomas J. Bloomer, *Bibliography of the Catawba*, Native American Bibliography series No. 10 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1987). Brown provides a general introduction to the tribe, while Hudson emphasizes the mid-twentieth century and Merle's history of the tribe up to removal is an exceptionally solid work. Douglas Summers Brown, *The Catawba Indians: People of the River* (Columbia: