CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS IN THE CIVIL WAR: MASCULINITY,
WAR EXPERIENCE, AND RELIGION

A Thesis
Presented
to the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
History

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, who have been my cheerleading squad throughout my journey as a young man. They cheered me on through thick and thin, thanks mom and dad.
This is my first thesis and just like any academic project it is not the result of just one person. Rather it is the product of many people who encouraged me either professionally or personally. Consequently, I have a lot of people who deserve mention. First, historians are essentially gracious thieves, and I am no different. We steal from the personal lives of people who lived before us, and we steal ideas from other historians. The difference is historians are simply kind enough to leave a footnote explaining from where and from whom they stole. With that in mind, this project was conceived after I read Dr. Stephen Berry’s book *All That Makes a Man*. His book was, and continues to be, an inspiration to my work. Dr. Berry was also gracious enough to review my early drafts and he gave me kind encouragement tempered with insightful criticism.

I owe a special thanks to Jean Irving, who got me into Chico State as a young kid who really did not belong. This project would simply not exist had it not been for Dr. Robert Tinkler. Dr. Tinkler continually impresses me with his unwavering support, his sharp insight, his patience, and his love of teaching. I consider him both a mentor and a friend. Dr. Robert Cottrell has a marvelous eye for grammar and punctuation, and his editing skills were indispensable. Dr. Ken Rose brought a keen interest and enthusiasm that was greatly appreciated.

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know. My sister Cassie constantly advised me how to survive the rigors of graduate
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ABSTRACT

CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS IN THE CIVIL WAR: MASCULINITY, WAR EXPERIENCE, AND RELIGION

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Although there is a large body of work that deals with the experience of Civil War soldiers, there are relatively few male gender studies of the war. This project seeks to examine the relationship of masculinity and the Confederate soldier in the American Civil War.

This project seeks to shed light upon ideas of 19th century masculinity and how it was invoked, shaped and ultimately changed by the Civil War. Masculine roles were changing in the 19th century; the southern ideal of manhood was beginning to become obsolete in the face of the new Self-Made Man of the Market Revolution. In order to protect their homes and preserve their manliness, Southern men embarked on the bloody affair known as the American Civil War. Historians that I consulted to help introduce and explain 19th century masculinity include Michael Kimmel, E. Anthony Rotundo, Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover.
Courage and religion are interwoven with 19th century notions of manhood and the manly soldier and must be examined. Confederate soldiers in the Civil War initially believed that the courageous soldier who never flinched in the face of enemy fire would not be killed. They also comparatively believed that the soldier who had an unyielding faith in God would be protected. These ideas were dramatically molded by the experience of soldiering. The popular ideal of what made a courageous soldier was quickly modified to suit realistic purposes. Faith in religion was used to explain the unexplainable in battle and camp, and generally became stronger during the war. Historians I consulted for information concerning courage and religion include but are not limited to Bell Irvin Wiley, Gerald Linderman, and James M. McPherson.

This project additionally seeks to intimately shed light on the war experience by closely examining the lives of several Confederate soldiers who lived and died during the war. The letters that these men wrote home during their service have been meticulously researched specifically seeking to examine how they dealt with masculinity, courage and religion during their war experience. The published letters of Joshua K. Callaway, James M. Williams, Edwin H. Fay and William Dorsey Pender were examined. The unpublished letters of Walter Lenoir were examined as well.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1815, John Adams wrote his friend Thomas Jefferson and asked who could ever write a true history of the American Revolution. “Nobody,” responded Jefferson. “[T]he life and soul of history must for ever be unknown.”1 While this project is certainly not a definitive response to Jefferson’s conclusion, it is a feeble attempt to prove the Virginian wrong. But this study does not concern itself with the American Revolution. Rather, it is an effort to understand the cataclysmic Civil War that unfolded over eighty years after the birth of the United States. Specifically, it investigates the experience of the southern men who lived before the war, fought its battles, and suffered its aftermath.

Forty-six years after Adams wrote to Jefferson, a young southern man wrote to his family from Richmond in October 1861. “I think when we gain our independence and get back home we will have a jubilee…I want to see you very bad and spend some more pleasant hours with you,” thirty-three-year-old Benjamin Moody wrote. “But I could not stay there until the war is over. I am glad that I did have fortitude enough to

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come to the war, for I believe that it was my duty to come.”

Three months prior, Moody had joined the Thirty-Fifth Georgia Volunteer Regiment as a private on August 12, 1861. Like many men, he felt it was his obligation as a man to be a soldier in the war. The conflict bore him away from his home in Campbell County, Georgia, and placed him in defense of the Confederate capital in Richmond. By late May 1862, the Confederacy was bracing to repel General George McClellan’s invasion of Virginia. The flurry produced by the invading Yankees sunk the optimism Moody had enjoyed in 1861. “[D]eath is abroad in the land,” he wrote his wife. “I think this is the most unholy war. The sufferings and miseries of this war will never be forgot by us that is engaged in it.” To help her understand, Moody gave his wife a list of the hardships he was enduring: “The miseries of being absent from our families…sickness and exposure to rain, mud and dust, cold and heat, lying and rolling on the ground in the dirt without a change of clothes, [sleeping] without blankets, suffering under hard and rigid officers.”

He needed his wife to comprehend what he was undergoing, but he was desperate for much more; he wanted to be remembered. Benjamin Moody’s war did not last long. He lost his life during a hopeless charge at Mechanicsville, on June 26, 1862.

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4 Benjamin Moody, 22 May 1862, in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 121.

In less than a year Moody’s views of the war had changed drastically. His once sanguine view of the conflict quickly turned gloomy and bleak. Why? To answer this question I have not written a narrative of the causation of the Civil War, or of the war itself. I am not interested in the leading generals or prominent politicians. This project is devoted to the common men who fought and died during four years of war. Specifically, it is an examination of southern men. It seeks to trace the roots of southern masculinity prior to the war, to explain why southerners became Confederate soldiers, and to examine the effects of combat upon southern manhood, including the coping strategies of men in the aftermath of warfare.

No subject in American history has received the amount of attention lavished on the Civil War. But many scholars have overlooked the essential motivation that drove southern men to fight in the conflict. They enlisted for a variety of reasons, but chief among them was the fact that they were men. For many, the war presented a chance to test their manhood. It was an opportunity to see if they measured up to the standards of manliness, an opportunity that a shocking number of men welcomed. Along with their haversacks, canteens, Bibles, and pictures of loved ones, Confederate soldiers carried with them notions of what made a man. Many of them would find that the war deeply challenged their notions of manhood, and in some instances, deconstructed them.

In his 1976 publication *The Face of Battle*, historian John Keegan notes that military history had previously focused on prominent generals and military strategy. He recommended a new military history that concentrated on the common soldier: “Since we appear to know a great deal more about generalship than we do about how and why ordinary soldiers fight, a diversion of historical effort from the rear to the front of the
battlefield would seem considerably overdue.” This study is an answer to Keegan’s clarion call. Not only will it examine what brought southern men to the field of battle, but it also seeks to explain what kept them there while their world fell apart.

There are pitfalls to this kind of study. Examining Confederate soldiers in the Civil War is like looking at a car crash. Thousands of men, on the wrong side of the moral question of slavery, eagerly rushed to their doom. We want to look away, but find we cannot avert our gaze from the spectacle unfolding before us. In his 1997 book *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War*, historian Eric T. Dean Jr., claims: “Overemphasis on the common soldier in one’s study of war may thus produce not clarity and greater understanding, but a sense of meaningless and futility.” Bearing these lessons in mind, one cannot shy away from a subject simply because it risks being depressing or complex. Greater understanding must be achieved at whatever cost.

In order to find out what drove Confederate soldiers in the Civil War, I enthusiastically consulted countless primary and secondary sources. I researched numerous manuscript collections, rare books, unpublished letters and diaries, as well as memoirs written after the war. I also meticulously examined various published letters written during the war. A profusion of published books and articles contributed to my understanding of southern men, the Civil War, and the common soldier’s experience. I have quoted source material directly, without any corrections, so as to present the source exactly as it was written.

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It is my hope that this study will contribute to a greater understanding of the Confederate soldier in the Civil War. Perhaps it will also show that there still is some “life and soul” in history. Maybe Jefferson can be proven wrong after all.
CHAPTER II

EXAMINING SOUTHERN MEN BEFORE THE WAR

In the middle of October 1861, Shephard Pryor, a Sergeant in the 12th Georgia Volunteer Infantry, was languishing in Virginia having just experienced his first battle.¹ Like many men in the nineteenth century, Pryor equated military service with manliness. “This is the place that tries men’s souls, this is the place to find out the true man,” Pryor wrote to his wife. “The men, [who] in the ordinary circles of life appears to be what we style a gentleman, are not always the true man. A man here will show what he is fully soon.”² For Pryor, and many southern soldiers in the Civil War, war became the ultimate test of manhood. Pryor believed that being a gentleman was no longer enough. Men needed to prove that they were indeed men.

“All wars, of course, are meditations on masculinity.” Michael Kimmel asserts in his book Manhood in America: A Cultural History. “And the Civil War was no different.”³ The inherent desire to prove their manliness and courage led thousands of southerners to join the Confederate Army in 1861. These men volunteered for a variety of reasons, primarily because of an intense, though sometimes unacknowledged desire to

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² Shephard Pryor quoted in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 77-78.
prove their masculinity and achieve immortality among their family, friends and community. Shephard Pryor believed that the war was trying his soul. War was testing him to determine whether he were a man, regardless of his class position prior to the war. Shephard Pryor and men like him could never have foreseen the devastating consequences of the American Civil War. An estimated 620,000 soldiers died between 1861 and 1865. One in five southern men of military age did not survive the war. Not only could they have never imagined the terrible hardships and privations they would face, but they could never have predicted how the war would shift their values and beliefs. The war forced men to adjust their beliefs about how a manly soldier should act, not only in the face of battle, but in camp as well. The war tested their fortitude, their endurance and their faith in the cause, their families and God. In many instances once men had looked into the fury and death of battle, they had seen enough. Once they had fought, they did not have a strong desire to fight again. David E. Johnston, who as a young Virginian fought in the war, remembered the story of a comrade who returned home after a year of service in the Confederate Army. This friend was immediately bombarded with questions about what war was like and how he liked it. He replied, “Well gentlemen, I have seen the elephant; don’t want to see him any more.” Johnston concluded that this comrade adequately expressed the common opinion of the southern soldier.

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Most historians would agree that southerners like Shephard Pryor held an ambiguous model of manhood. Men in the Antebellum South were obsessed with social hierarchy, independence and individuality, honor, and self-control. They possessed an enormous fear of dependence and a fear of the feminine that guided their lives. However, the complexities of southern manliness have lain dormant in the historical literature and have only recently been engaged.

Historians have constructed ideal types of male identity to help explain masculinity in nineteenth century America. The archetype of manliness prior to the nineteenth century is what historian E. Anthony Rotundo has called “Communal Manhood.”6 According to this model, manliness in eighteenth century America centered on the family and the community. The fundamental position of the communal man was as head of the household. Men in the eighteenth century had a duty to govern their dependents, including wives, sons, daughters, slaves and kin, with kindness and restraint. If a man failed to fulfill his duty to his family, or failed to be useful to the community, he would be ostracized and labeled as a failure by community members.7

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In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, masculinity took on some regional differences. In the South, two male identities emerged out of communal manhood; historian Michael Kimmel labels these identities as the Genteel Patriarch and the Heroic Artisan. The Genteel Patriarch represented a “dignified aristocratic manhood, committed to the British upper-class code of honor and to well-rounded character.”\(^8\) Manliness for the Genteel Patriarch was achieved through property ownership, benevolent patriarchal authority over his home and family, moral instruction of his sons, and embodiment of the values of a Christian gentleman. This was the ultimate archetype of the cavalier planter/politician in the South, such as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Robert E. Lee.\(^9\)

The Heroic Artisan was another masculine identity that was prevalent in the American South. He was often a small yeoman farmer, or toiled in an urban crafts shop. At his best, the Heroic Artisan was independent, virtuous, and honest. He was unafraid of hard work, and proud of his craft. He was also deeply aware of his self-reliance. The Heroic Artisan was proud of his ability to provide for himself, and sensitive of the independence that his self-reliance brought him.\(^10\) This was the man that Thomas Jefferson envisioned would make America, the yeoman farmer. “Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God,” Jefferson stated in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*,

\(^8\) Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 16.
\(^9\) Ibid., 16.
\(^10\) Ibid., 16.
“if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue.”

Between 1800 and 1840, the United States experienced staggering economic growth. Between 1793 and 1807 American exports tripled. Americans began to become committed to capitalism and helped to create a market revolution that remade the nation. The North became the primary motivators of this economic change, distancing itself from the southern states. Southern planters became dependent on northern cities such as New York, which would send agents to purchase cotton from Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans and ship it to Liverpool. The massive economic growth in America helped to facilitate a transportation revolution that further separated North from South. In 1825, the Erie Canal was completed and within a few years was carrying $15,000,000 worth of cargo annually, twice the amount that reached New Orleans from the Mississippi River. The banking system in the United States drastically expanded from the first incorporated bank in 1781, to over two hundred state-chartered banks by 1815, to over seven hundred in 1837.

The genesis of a new masculine identity emerged from the womb of the fresh capitalist America. The market revolution gave rise to the Self-Made Man. It is strangely ironic that the ideal of manhood that became dominant in the northern states was first coined in 1832 by Henry Clay, a slaveholder from Kentucky. Historian Michael

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13 Kimmel, Manhood in America, 26.
Kimmel asserts that the Self-Made Man’s identity derived entirely from his actions in the public sphere; his status was measured by his accumulated wealth and his geographic and social mobility. Historian E. Anthony Rotundo argues that the Self-Made Man put all of his faith behind the belief that free competition would reward the best man. The Self-Made Man believed that the individual was the fundamental element of society, not the community.\textsuperscript{14} “America was entering a new age,” Michael Kimmel states. “And men were free to create their own destinies, to find their own ways, to rise as high as they could, to write their own biographies.”\textsuperscript{15}

The Self Made Man found a particularly strong home in the northern states of America. The Self Made Man was defined by boundless ambition, a limitless desire to make himself wealthy beyond belief. He was defined by success in the market, individual achievement, accumulated wealth and status. Consequently, a separation of spheres occurred in the nineteenth century. Because work dominated the lives of men, the workplace became masculine and home became feminine. This would have enormous consequences for men and women.\textsuperscript{16}

It is important to remember that gender ideals such as the Self-Made Man, the Heroic Artisan, and the Genteel Patriarch are partially to help us understand manhood in America. Men were influenced and shaped by these archetypes of manliness, regardless of whether they knew it or not. But just like human nature, men were not bound by these

\textsuperscript{14} Kimmel, \textit{Manhood in America}, 17; and E. Anthony Rotundo, \textit{American Manhood}, 19.

\textsuperscript{15} Kimmel, \textit{Manhood in America}, 22-23.

ideals. The Antebellum South was much more of a melting pot of manhood than historians like to think. While the Self-Made Man was stronger in the North, he could be easily found in the South as well. But slavery and the unique social hierarchy of the South ensured a variation of the Self-Made Man.

Southern society was not as egalitarian as that of the North. The upper class consisted of a particular class of slaveholders known as the planters. It is important to note that there remains considerable dispute among the historical community as to what constituted a planter and how much importance historians should assign to them. But for the purpose of this paper, planters shall be defined as owning twenty or more slaves. Those who owned fewer slaves are generally referred to as small slaveholders. The remaining white southerners are defined as nonslaveholders. Planters made up a minority of the population of the South yet they controlled the society in which southerners lived. Opportunities were open to planters in the realms of economics and politics, which were not available to small planters and nonslaveholding whites. Many southern whites aspired to become planters and to become masters themselves.

Andrew Jackson exemplified the southern Self-Made Man turned planter. Born on the frontier of the southern English colonies in 1767 to a family of Scots-Irish immigrants, Jackson seemed to have few prospects for worldly success in his early life. His father, who died two months before Jackson's birth, left him no land, title or honor, and the rest of his immediate family, including his mother and a brother, died during the


18 Ibid., 71.
American Revolution. By age fourteen, Jackson was on his own. His family ties extinguished, Jackson strove to secure his own independence through hard work and determination. He was admitted to the North Carolina Bar in 1787 and soon practiced frontier law in Tennessee. There Jackson became a prominent land speculator, merchant, farmer, and, most crucially for his status as a southern Self-Made Man, a slaveholder; he owned a large plantation with over one hundred slaves. The once penniless orphan had indeed reached the apex of southern society.\textsuperscript{19}

The ownership of other human beings was the essential split between Self-Made Men of the South and those of the North. “Slavery established the basis of the planter’s position and power,” Eugene Genovese writes in his book \textit{The Political Economy of Slavery}: “It measured his affluence, marked his status, and supplied leisure for social graces and aristocratic duties.”\textsuperscript{20} Northern men ruthlessly engaged in commerce and business for personal profit and the accumulation of wealth. Southern men were driven by similar motives, and by the iniquitous desire to own human property. The ownership of slaves provided men such as Jackson not only with forced labor, but also with social prestige and power. Southern men could not expect to climb the social ladder if they did not own slaves.

This was the sheer, naked truth of the Antebellum South. Slavery became a cultural institution that destroyed black families in the South so white men could gain a prominent social standing. James Henry Hammond, for example, was driven by a furious


desire for social prestige that compelled him to marry into an influential South Carolina slaveholding family. Hammond was the son of Elisha Hammond, who despite his best efforts could not achieve either prosperity or social prominence. Young James Henry met and married Catherine Fitzsimons in 1831 when he was twenty-four-years of age. Catherine was the sister-in-law of Wade Hampton II, one of the most influential players in the planter aristocracy of South Carolina, and the marriage brought Hammond into the fold of high society.²¹

Hammond’s dowry consisted of Silver Bluff plantation, which according to him had not been adequately maintained by Catherine’s father. He energetically threw himself fully into restoring Silver Bluff and improving his land, wealth, and title.²² Hammond had risen from humble origins to become a prominent southern planter and politician. He had all the trappings of a southern Self-Made Man, but he achieved success along a slightly different path from that followed by Jackson.

Southern men like Hammond and Jackson were consumed by an indomitable ambition. At the same time that they were plotting their personal growth and triumphs, the fledgling nation was bidding for greatness. Historian Stephen Berry asserts that many southerners did not distinguish between their self-interest and the country’s unstoppable growth; they were one and the same. Berry’s term for the unique ambition that many southerners held is éclat: “a term comprising power and honor but bigger than both of

²² Ibid., 9.
them.” Hammond and southerners like him had endless dreams that aspired so high that they could almost never be reached. As young men they were weaned on stories of Washington, Napoleon, and Caesar. Their models were mythic men who had conquered and carved an empire out of sheer will. This ambition fueled the nation, but it was not without consequences.

Hammond was haunted by the dark side of the Self-Made Man, what historian Michael Kimmel describes as “anxiety, restlessness, [and] loneliness.” Contemporaries of Hammond would have described him as a successful South Carolina politician and planter. But Hammond was plagued by loneliness. “I want a friend,” Hammond sadly proclaimed in the initial page of his diary. “Circumstances…have combined to prevent me from having a friend to whose sympathetic bosom I could confide anything.” Hammond’s own ambitions led to his debilitating loneliness. He had entered politics in 1835 as the representative of South Carolina’s Barnwell District in Washington. Hammond served energetically splitting time between Washington and a trip to Europe, and constantly working to improve his lands at Silver Bluff. His relentless desire for prestige, power, and wealth left him isolated and despondent.

Hammond was also seized with anxiety. He was so consumed by his own ambitions that he could rarely enjoy the moment. “I was always looking to the future, not

24 Ibid., 37.
26 Hammond, 6 February 1841, in Bleser, ed., *Secret and Sacred*, 25.
so much because I was sanguine in temperament as because I could not dwell on either
the present or the past,” he wrote.28 This restlessness remained typical of the ailments
endured by ambitious southern self-made men.

He felt an aching awareness of his sad condition when he prepared to send his
sons to school. He worried that he was going to actively repeat the cycle that had left him
so unstable and depressed. “My poor dear boys, may a better fate await you. I shall be
careful not to make you too ambitious or too anxious, but to enjoy the present moment as
far as reason and prudence will allow,” he wrote.29 For Hammond ambition and anxiety
co-existed together inseparably. A man could not strive for majesty without the pangs of
a constant and ever present anxiety. He wanted to raise his children without the pains of
ambition, but he did not want to raise lazy and indolent sons. “Reason” and “prudence”
dictated that men needed to have at the very least a substantial amount of ambition and
anxiety to lead successful lives.30

James Henry Hammond and many southerners such as he ultimately became
the architects of their own demise. Their aspirations were so high that it was inevitable
they would encounter failure and disappointment. Hammond proved to be unusually self-
destructive. He became governor of South Carolina in 1842 and was ready to enter
national politics until the sexual relationships he had engaged in with four of his underage
nieces became public.31 After withdrawing to his home in disgrace he contemplated re-
entering politics until his wife discovered he was carrying on illicit affairs with two of his

28 Hammond, 15 February 1841, in Bleser, ed., Secret and Sacred, 34.
29 Ibid., 35.
30 Berry, All That Makes a Man, 42.
31 Hammond, 9 December 1846, in Bleser, ed., Secret and Sacred, 175.
slaves. He eventually returned to politics only to abandon the secessionist banner he had held for twenty years when secession finally came to fruition.32

The nineteenth century American South was a society that was extremely hierarchical. Virginians in the early eighteenth century established the social hierarchy that would prevail in the South for a century and a half. It was a hierarchy primarily based on race, with white men at the apex of southern society. Large planters convinced poor farmers that they both had a vested interest in precluding a substantial portion of the population of the South from receiving full citizenship.33 African-Americans were denied any substantial civic participation in southern society. The social hierarchy of the South also excluded women from full participation within the community. Focusing on race helped to downplay issues of class that could potentially divide white southerners. Planters consistently emphasized white racial superiority and male supremacy as the guiding virtues of citizenship.

Several experiences served to strengthen the domination of white men in southern society. For example, politics was employed to uphold the social hierarchy in which southern men benefited. Party membership was a male social identity, passed on from father to son. White masculine culture celebrated manly American heroes of the past and praised the manhood of its members. Women and African-Americans were excluded from political activities and membership. White men determined to uphold the

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32 Hammond, 23 October 1861, in Bleser, ed., Secret and Sacred, 277; and Berry, All That Makes a Man, 44.

hierarchy that benefited them, filled political events such as military style parades, torchlight rallies, and barbecues.34

An additional example was antebellum South Carolina, where proslavery politics and the concept of male supremacy became intertwined during the 1830’s. Abolitionist attacks on slavery prompted South Carolina politicians to try and unite large planters and small farmers together in opposition to emancipation.35 Yeoman farmers demonstrated their unequivocal commitment to slavery and the social hierarchy of the South. The abolitionist critique of slavery had challenged the small farmer’s ideology of mastery in his own home. Yeoman farmers believed that the right to rule slaves, and the right to dominate women at home were fused together. Small planters and nonslaveholders upheld southern society because they sought to benefit from the promise it made to them.36

Men in the nineteenth century devised fraternal rituals that sought to establish an imagined community of white men each entitled to the fruits of a capitalist democracy. At the same time, fraternities and fraternal experiences sought to justify the uneven distribution of wealth that men experienced in a capitalist society. Through fraternities white men sought to downplay the issues of class that could potentially divide them.37

The Petersburg Benevolent Mechanic Association was an example of a fraternity that sought to unite white men in opposition to the enfranchisement of women

34 Rotundo, American Manhood, 218-219.
36 Ibid., 1259.
and black Americans. Fraternal orders focused on gender and racial differences in organizing a collective identity to distract members from growing class differences in southern society. Fraternal members included poor artisans, rich entrepreneurs, slaveowners, and European immigrants, but the fraternity never granted membership to African-Americans or women. Historian L. Diane Barnes concludes that fraternities “capitalized on the conception of racial inferiority outlined in planters’ justification of slavery and claimed the benefits of whiteness that southern society offered.”

Annual slave shakedowns in which southerners participated proved to much more chilling and sinister. Poor nonslaveholding whites would search slave quarters, looking for subversive material and weapons, harassing slaves along the way. All under the watchful eye of the planter, who often condoned the personal invasion of their slave’s property. Young Harriet Jacobs was enslaved in North Carolina during an unusual shakedown that occurred in 1831 following Nat Turner’s insurrection. “It was a grand opportunity for the low whites, who had no negroes of their own to scourge,” Jacobs remarked. “They exulted in such a chance to exercise a little brief authority, and show their subserviency to the slaveholders.” Jacobs was acutely aware of the motivators behind slave searches. These shakedowns would not only ease the slaveholder anxieties of a rebellion, but they would unite rich and poor whites in their malicious intent toward

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39 Ibid., 83.


41 Ibid., 64.
slaves. Poor whites could feel empowered to denigrate slaves while simultaneously demonstrating their loyalty to the hierarchy of the South.42

The final experience that served to strengthen the domination of white men in the Antebellum South was service in the militia. The southern militia helped to preserve the artificial fraternity of white men and the benefits afforded to the enfranchised few. African-Americans and women were of course excluded from service in the militia. The organization of the militia preserved the social hierarchy of the community without threatening the unity of white males. Poor whites marched with their social and economic superiors who generally served as officers of the company.43 Officers often purchased the uniforms and weapons donned by the company, thus enhancing the ideas of exclusiveness, hierarchy, and prestige. The essential message became that only white men could dress up, march, and protect the community during times of war.44

The exclusive society of the antebellum South put white men face to face with the literal effects of disenfranchisement. White men walking down the streets of Charleston, New Orleans, or Lexington were able to see what it meant to be restricted and dependent. To be a woman or a black American in the Antebellum South meant to be unfree. Consequently, white men had a hypersensitive state of independence. Southern men believed that property ownership and self-sufficiency were keys to personal

42 Joshua McKaughan, “‘Few Were the Hearts…that did not Swell with Devotion’: Community and Confederate Service in Rowan County, North Carolina, 1861-1862,” North Carolina Historical Review 2 (April 1996), 164.


44 Ibid., 10.
independence. Any threat to the personal or economic independence of a southern man enacted violent retribution.45

From a very young age, southern boys were afforded lessons on self-autonomy and independence. These lessons became especially pertinent when they left home to attend college. Southern colleges gave the sons of planters an education in social reputation and refinement. The parents of young collegiate boys wanted to instill a healthy dose of independence and individuality, while testing their judgment; so they often allowed these young men to make most of their decisions about their college career.46 The parental desire to instill independence and individuality in their children allowed southern colleges to spin out of control. Historian Lorri Glover asserts that young college students frequently spent much of their time “fighting, drinking, carousing, and squandering money.”47 They quickly learned to master themselves, to be controlled by no man.

Southern youth who did not have the means to attend college had very few options to receive an education. No southern state funded a public school system in the years prior to the Civil War. Instead, non-elite southern boys could receive a secondary education at military academies. Cadets at these academies were often the sons of small planters or nonslaveholders. Military academies in the South required a certain level of


47 Ibid., 34.
submission that southern society normally deplored. In order to receive a diploma, young cadets needed to reconcile their personal independence with the discipline demanded by the academy. What emerged was a microcosm of southern society for non-elite whites. Poor whites longed for the personal independence that southern society celebrated, but reality demanded that they submit to their social and economic superiors.

The hypersensitive desire for personal independence and individuality felt by many southerners held unintended emotional consequences. Southern men were terrified of becoming dependent and losing their self-autonomy, real or imagined. Dependence upon another man was a condition that crippled the honor of a white southern man. Only women and black slaves were considered dependent and consequently feminine.

Dependence, then, carried with it an emasculating feature that was equally terrifying for white southern men. The fear of dependence transcended time and raised the hairs upon Thomas Jefferson’s neck. “Dependence begets subservience and venality,” Jefferson claimed in his Notes on the State of Virginia, “suffocates the germ of virtue.”

Many southern men following Jefferson were haunted by their fear of dependence. Andrew Jackson was one of these men. The forced removal of 70,000 Native Americans was fueled by Jackson’s personal anxiety over dependence. To achieve this removal, Jackson cast the Southwestern Indians as childlike, and dependent.

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49 Ibid., 180.

Assumptions about children dictated that they required a parental figure, which Jackson eagerly assumed. Casting the Native Americans as dependent, gave Jackson the authority to dominate them, and assuaged his own personal and the nation’s anxiety over issues of dependence. The Supreme Court similarly agreed, and in *Cherokee Nation v. The State of Georgia*, in 1831, Chief Justice John Marshall asserted that Native Americans were not independent foreign nations. Rather, in the eyes of the court, they were domestic dependent nations. Their relationship to the United States was “that of a ward to his guardian.”51

The subject of dependence was not limited to politicians. It also kept ordinary southerners awake at night. The issue of dependence became intertwined with raising children and apiqued constant debates between men and women. The cycle proceeded as such; women were confined at home to raise the children, men were often abroad to escape both the monotony and feminine influences of home life. Women lavished attention on their children, and men worried that their wives would raise shamefully dependent and effeminate boys. Young southern boys were caught in a tug of war between parents. They often turned to their siblings for support, and southern brothers and sisters developed tender relationships. When these young boys married they repeated the example set forth before them by their father.52

Home life could present unique challenges to the masculine mind of a white southern man. Many southern men, whether they were aware of it or not, were threatened

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by what Catherine Beecher called the female “influence over her husband” and the “moral interests of her domestics.” Unsettled by the thought of becoming dependent on their wives, they tried to escape the monotony and emasculation of home. Men in the nineteenth century sought to escape the feminine world by going West. The westward movement reached its pinnacle with the California Gold Rush of 1849. Southern men, fueled by their fear of dependence, their enormous ambition, and the chance to accumulate vast amounts of wealth, struck out West. Even James Henry Hammond felt the tug as he languished in isolation at his plantation, “Sometimes I entertain serious ideas of removing to California,” Hammond wrote in 1848. “I would not remain here another year if I could sell my land.” Once they had escaped, men created hypermasculine environments often characterized by violence and alcohol abuse. One forty-niner remembered that in early Gold Rush California the “absence of woman” effectively showed “that man, when alone, and deprived of that influence which the presence of woman only can produce, would in a short time degenerate into a savage and barbarous state.”

The charge of being dependent or feminine was deeply upsetting to most southern men, who felt it soiled their character and personal honor. Honor was extremely important to many southerners, particularly men of the planter class. Honor served as a vital code of conduct for southern men. It provided a navigable pathway through the

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54 Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 60.
chaos of life in the antebellum South. Honor gave white men a standard for appropriate conduct that could guide their relations with other white men. Historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown asserts that honor “helped Southern whites to make life somewhat more predictable than it would have been otherwise.”

By far the most intriguing manifestation of honor in southern life had to be the duel. Dueling was surprisingly widespread in the antebellum South. Despite strong opposition from Americans, dueling remained prevalent. The long arm of dueling even reached to early California, where in 1859 a Golden State judge originally from Texas killed a United States Senator in an affair of honor. Historians Steven M. Stowe and Bertram Wyatt-Brown both insist that the duel arose for two reasons. It was meant to control feuds in order to keep them between two men alone, and prevent a bloody conflict between entire families, thus poisoning the social order. The duel was also a construct of the social hierarchy of the South. It was meant to demonstrate the gentility of the duelers. Non-elite southerners were not supposed to duel; instead they engaged in ruthless eye-gouging brawls. Character and personal honor were still at stake in these low class brawls, but they lacked the structure and ritual of the duel.

An important component of the duel, honor, and southern life in general was the idea of self-control. According to the guiding rituals of southern honor, a gentleman

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60 Brown, *Southern Honor*, 352.
had to exercise control of himself and his emotions. If another man offended him he was supposed to exercise controlled resentment, rather than exploding in a fit of rage. Elite southern men wrote multitudes of letters to ascertain an offense, and to help control their soaring emotions. If an argument actually made it to a dueling ground, the duelists were expected to retain complete control, giving the appearance of being cool and collected. Southern men sought to strictly regulate their emotions.61

Like most American men in the nineteenth century, southerners exerted self-control over other facets of their lives. They encouraged each other to control their sexual impulses and avoid the temptation of masturbation.62 Temperance crusades grew increasingly popular in the nineteenth century. Temperance however, was received more favorably in the North. Social reformers began to promote temperance in unison with larger reforms; many abolitionists’ linked temperance and slavery. In the South, consumption of alcohol became both a tactic to ward off feelings of failure and a masculine form of protest against feminization. Temperance crusaders were often women or social reformers; southerners viewed both as feminine. Drinking could be a direct repudiation of both.63

Together these characteristics helped to shape the southern mind prior to the Civil War. Combined with these values was the Revolutionary heritage of the American South. The importance of the Revolutionary generation cannot be overstated. Southerners seeking advice often looked to the past for the examples set by the Founding Fathers.

63 Ibid., 50.
They measured themselves against the impossible standard established by early Americans in the struggle for independence. Evidence definitively supports the claim that men who joined the militia in the South did so partly to prove themselves worthy heirs of the Revolutionaries. Southerners yearned to regain the courage, honor, and spirit of those who had bravely sacrificed for American independence.64 What would the Founding Fathers do? This was a question southerners most likely asked themselves when faced with a political dilemma.

And a political dilemma forced itself upon Americans in the 1850s after land acquisitions in the West had expanded the nation by two-thirds. James K. Polk initiated a war with Mexico that resulted in California, New Mexico, and Utah becoming territories of the United States.65 The question then became whether slavery would be allowed to exist in the new western territories? The ensuing decade was wrought with a plethora of arguments about the extension of slavery into the territories. As James Henry Hammond noticed the political agitation: “The Session of Congress has been stormy and thus far nothing has been done but to debate Slavery and the Union. The South has threatened dissolution through many Representatives…[Henry Clay] has denounced the South bitterly and prophesied, if not threatened, Civil war and coercion.”66

Believing that slaves were property, slaveholders argued that to deny the extension of slavery into the territories was to deny southerners their constitutional right to property ownership and independence. But even more, territories in the American

66 Hammond, 17 March 1850, in Bleser, Secret and Sacred, 197.
West that would exist without slavery promised a more egalitarian society that challenged the social hierarchy of the South. Southerners could not imagine a society that existed without slaves and slaveholders. Additionally, many southerners believed that they were building the finest society the world had ever known. They regarded slavery as a healthy aspect of their society. To limit the extension of slavery was to accept the unacceptable; that the South was inferior to the North, and that slavery was evil.67

The political disputes about the extension of slavery created an impasse in the minds of many southerners. Many men began to adopt the idea that they were ethnically different than northerners. While these views had existed prior to the crisis of the 1850s, the political quarrels certainly exacerbated them. Southerners increasingly began to view northerners as aggressive, mercenary, and concerned only about money. “Yankee” was a derisive term, denoting dishonorable behavior.68 In the wake of John Brown’s raid of Harper’s Ferry, the Raleigh Register published advice to Virginia’s Governor regarding Brown’s execution:

We hope that Gov. Wise will have the gallows on which Brown was hung burned, and give notice of the fact. Our reasons for this wish is this: The Yankees have no objection to mingling money making with their grief, and they will, unless Brown's gallows is known to have been burned, set to work and make all kinds of jimcracks and notions out of what they will call parts of Old John Brown's gallows and, sell them.69

Disunion suddenly no longer became a whisper upon the lips of a few radical Southern Democrats. Instead, it became a thunderous yell that plagued the minds of many Americans. In the Lower South, secession found a warm embrace among white men who

67 Genovese, Political Economy, 250.
68 Kimmel, Manhood in America, 76.
69 Raleigh Register (North Carolina), 3 December 1859.
were marching inexorably towards separation. “They [northerners] are a different people from us, whether better or worse and there is no love between us,” Thomas R.R. Cobb wrote to his wife in October of 1860. “Why then continue together? No outside pressure demands it, no internal policy or public interest requires it. Separation is desirable, peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must.”

The election of 1860 rubbed salt into the already gaping and festering wound of sectionalism. Many white men in the South were furious that the nation had elected Abraham Lincoln, a man they believed was opposed to the interests of slaveholders. “A geographical line has been drawn across the Union,” South Carolina’s convention on secession declared. “And all the States north of that line have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States whose opinions and purposes are hostile to Slavery.” The nation was teetering on the edge of fratricidal warfare and South Carolina wasted no time in ensuring the conflict would occur.

Before president-elect Lincoln had a chance to take office, South Carolina’s legislature called a convention to consider secession. On December twentieth, 1860 by a vote of 169-0, the state adopted an ordinance of secession proclaiming independence from the Union. “The State of South Carolina has resumed her position among the nations of the world, as a separate and independent state,” the convention declared.

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The language of the ordinance tapped into the masculinity of the southern mind. It dripped with éclat, the term for southern ambition, which comprised power and honor. Only in separation did South Carolina resume its status among the nations of the world. By leading the South in disunion, the state fulfilled its ambitious desire for prestige and honor. In removing itself from the Union the convention claimed the state resumed its position as separate and independent; fusing masculine language into its proclamation ensured men would welcome the bold, albeit rash decision. Individuality and independence were prized among white southern men, by claiming both; South Carolina drew in supporters.

White men in the South did not, however, universally welcome separation. As seven states in the Lower South passed similar ordinances of secession in January and February of 1861, many men, particularly in the Upper South states of North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri remained apprehensive even disdainful of secession. The decision to walk away from the Union was a personal decision that was very emotional and complicated.

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CHAPTER III

WHY MEN VOLUNTEERED TO FIGHT
FOR THE CONFEDERACY

“It is interesting, sometimes, to the old veterans, to go back, in retrospect, to the days of 1861,” John S. Robson, a Virginian who volunteered at sixteen years of age, mused after the war.

[When soldier-life was gilded with the glory that was to be...in a war which we were taught to think would be a very short one-ninety days at most, but which tried our faith, nerve, and patience, for four of the longest years that are ever crowded into the lifetime of a generation.”]¹

What convinced men like John S. Robson to embrace secession and join the war effort? Specifically, how were men living in the Upper South, which was not as economically tied to slavery as the Lower South, convinced to join the war? The decision to welcome secession remained a complex, emotional decision that often took the form of a religious conversion.²

Southern men faced a perilous decision in the spring of 1861. By February of that year, South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas had all left the Union.³ Men in the Upper South had to decide whether they turn away

³ McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 235.
from the Union and risk war against the nation that had given them everything. Or would they stay loyal to the Union and risk war against their homeland? During the early months of 1861 a generational divide arose between southern men regarding the decision to secede from the Union. Young men overwhelmingly supported secession, while older men remained conservative, hoping that the fissure among the states would heal on its own before they were forced to choose sides.4

Colleges became breeding grounds for the secession movement among the Upper South states. Young college students became infatuated with joining their southern brethren in disunion. Is it a surprise that so many southern youth were so initially enthusiastic about secession and the possibility of war? Historian Stephen Berry certainly does not think so: “For any still curious as to why young men fought in the Civil War, they need look no farther than this-they fought because they were young.”5 Youth was certainly a driving force in the loving embrace secession felt among young men in the South.

But the reasons ran far deeper than just age alone. Young men attending the southern universities were the sons of planters and politicians. They came to these universities to receive more than an intellectual education; they came to receive instruction in gentility. Personal independence and individuality were important to the parents of collegiate youth and were emphasized by them. Embracing secession and possible civil war allowed southern youth to fully realize their education in

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5 Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 168.
independence. Defying parental and academic authority was the ultimate form of independence.\textsuperscript{6} “Resolved, That being deeply impressed with sentiments of patriotism for the honor of our beloved state,” fifteen Louisiana students at the University of North Carolina claimed in a resolution signed after Louisiana adopted an ordinance of secession. “[W]e are ready to forsake the peaceful duties of a college life, and take up the sword, in defence of that sacred Liberty, we have been taught to cherish from our earliest childhood.”\textsuperscript{7} Additionally, as the sons of planters, they believed their future rested on the institution of slavery. They felt slavery was under attack, and therefore their future livelihood was under attack as well. The students continued: “[A]nd in defence of that Institution, at once our pride, and the source of all our health and prosperity.”\textsuperscript{8}

An analysis of masculinity in the nineteenth century American South reveals that manhood was not simply achieved by age. Young adults were not considered men, they were considered youths. They lacked all the indicators of southern manhood: property ownership, slave ownership, successful career, successful marriage, self-control, dependence upon one’s self. But by embracing disunion and later volunteering for the war effort, young men had found a shortcut into established manhood. Secession served as a rite of passage for young southerners.\textsuperscript{9}

Rebel flags were raised at several universities, including the University of Virginia, before the state had seceded. Randolph H. McKim, an eighteen-year-old

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} Glover, “Educating Elite Boys,” in \textit{Southern Manhood}, 35.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Alfred Grayson Thomson, \textit{Resolution} (January 1861), Thomas Benjamin Davidson Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Carmichael, \textit{The Last Generation}, 145.
\end{itemize}
Virginian who attended a flag raising ceremony at the University remembered: “But it is evident the foreign flag is a welcome intruder in the precincts of Jefferson's University, for a great throng of students is presently assembled on the lawn…and one after another of the leaders of the young men mounts the steps and harangues the crowd in favor of the Southern Confederacy.”

Flag raising ceremonies served several symbolic functions. They demonstrated an obvious shift of loyalty from the United States to the southern Confederacy. They also demonstrated a shift from adult authority to youth solidarity. They were a visible statement that young men wanted to lead in secession and war.

There were, however, exceptions to the monopoly of secessionist thought among young adults. Several young men were aghast at the prominence disunion held among college youth. “I have seen Lincoln’s inaugural,” twenty-one-year old Tennessean John W. Halliburton wrote his fiancée from Chapel Hill. “Still it does not make me a secessionist only an anti-Lincoln man…I can hate him and still love the Union.”

Halliburton was an island of unionism awash in a tumultuous sea of disunion, and he knew it. “I verily believe that I am the only union man in College,” he confided in his fiancée in the same letter. “I have a hard time here about politics. I am assailed and attacked by all the boys that I meet…Daily am I engaged in a wordy war with some two or three and I just slash right and left.” Life must have been tough for young Halliburton on the campus of Chapel Hill; southern youth had no patience for dissent.

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12 John W. Halliburton to Juliet Halliburton, 6 March 1861, John Wesley Halliburton Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
13 Ibid.
They would have demanded solidarity from him or demanded he leave and join the old men. He may have found better company among his elders.

In the early months of 1861 older men in the Upper South were not as warm to secession as the younger generation was. They were apprehensive, even disdainful of the disunion movement. While many of these men despised President-elect Lincoln, they still maintained a fierce loyalty toward both the Union and the Constitution of the United States. Even Robert E. Lee, who later became one of the most revered American generals in the pantheon behind George Washington, and the most famous Confederate soldier, scorned the secession movement. “The framers of our Constitution never exhausted so much labor, wisdom, and forbearance in its formation and surrounded it with so many guards and securities if it was intended to be broken up by every member of the Confederacy at will,” Lee argued in January 1861. “It is idle to talk of secession.”

In the same month, T.N. Crumpler delivered a speech in the North Carolina House of Commons, in which he affirmed his rabid loyalty to the Union, and attempted to dissuade the state from entertaining secession. “I have been influenced from early manhood to this moment by love of country; and I shall ever continue to be a patriot and a true friend of the Constitution and the Union…The Union must be preserved. It shall be preserved.” Speeches like this were common among men in the Upper South during the early months of 1861. It spoke to their reaction against both the agitators of the secession crisis, and the radical youth who embraced disunion.

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Voters in both Tennessee and North Carolina were given the choice of voting for or against the holding of a state convention to consider the question of secession. “I have considered a Convention part of the disunion machinery which is necessary to force a State from her accustomed orbit, and drive her into another system,” Crumpler stated in North Carolina. “It is the door through which we are to walk out. It is the bridge upon which we are to cross the Rubicon…we cannot dissolve the Union.” 16 Voters in both Tennessee and North Carolina agreed, and voted against even holding a convention. In Tennessee, in fact, only twenty-three percent of voters favored secession in February of 1861. 17

Virginia, Arkansas, and Missouri, did hold conventions to consider secession from the Union. Missouri and Arkansas both rejected secession in March, while Virginia continued to deliberate through February. The Virginia convention allowed commissioners from the Lower South to speak, like John S. Preston, who was a Virginian by birth, but a resident of South Carolina. He pleaded for Virginia to join the Confederacy. “[B]elieving the rights violated and the interests involved are identical with the rights and interests of the people of Virginia,” Preston argued. “[A]nd remembering their ancient amity and their common glory, the people of South Carolina have instructed me to ask, earnestly and respectfully, that the people of Virginia will join them in the protection of their rights and interests.” 18 Virginia did not believe its rights and interests

were identical to those of South Carolina’s, and its representatives voted against secession in early April.¹⁹

For mature southerners, refusing to leave the Union held a dual repudiation. It was obviously a dismissal of their Lower South brethren, essentially proclaiming a separate interest that did not lie with disunion. But much more than that, spurning secession also insulted the younger generation of southern men who so enthusiastically embraced it. It was a refusal to recognize the masculinity of the younger generation. Older southerners regarded the younger generation’s acceptance of disunion as immature and irresponsible, both of which were clear indicators of youth, not manhood.²⁰

Clearly the Confederacy was hoping for allies on the basis of geography, desperately trying to entice men from the Upper South into vigorous action. But the regions did not have identical interests; there remained a fissure among the South concerning the prominence of slavery. Slaves constituted forty-seven percent of the population in the Confederate states, while only twenty-four percent of the population in the Upper South. Thirty-seven percent of white families in the Confederate states owned slaves, compared with twenty percent of the families in the Upper South. Men in the Upper South were less invested in slavery than were families in the Confederate states. Simply put, not all southerners were initially willing to risk war over the potential limitation of slavery.²¹

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However, this fissure was healed when fighting erupted at Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. Lincoln sent a message to the Governor of South Carolina, informing him that an attempt to supply the fort would be made with provisions only. The Confederates soon decided they could not suffer the fort to remain in Union hands. At 4:30 am on April 12, Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard opened fire from Charleston Harbor upon the miniscule fort enveloped in darkness. After thirty-three hours of bombardment, the tiny garrison inside the Fort surrendered. Immediately following the attack, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion. 22

The fighting at Fort Sumter and the subsequent proclamation had a galvanizing effect on the Upper South, serving as the catalyst for the acceptance of radical secessionist thought. In a letter to his father, twenty-year-old Edward H. Armstrong revealed why the Upper South had suddenly embraced radicalism. “Further bloodshed could be avoided, by every man in the South shouldering his musket,” Armstrong claimed while reiterating a speech he heard at Chapel Hill. “Lincoln would then see our strength and would know that it would be useless to attempt to coerce us.” 23 Coercion implies persuading an unwilling person to do something usually by threats or force. When a man is forced to do something against his will, he could potentially be relegated to a state of dependence. Submission to Lincoln’s supposed “coercion” would

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22 Ibid., 274.
23 Edward H. Armstrong to Thomas G. Armstrong, 20 April 1861, Julien Dwight Martin Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
suggest a state of dependence in the minds of many southerners, who had unique fears of dependence.\textsuperscript{24}

Regardless of the fact that Confederate forces had fired the first shot from Charleston Harbor on Fort Sumter, southerners regarded Lincoln’s proclamation as an act of war, and a threat of invasion. “We know, my Sister and Mother,” Georgian Edwin Bass wrote his sister, “that our country is threatened [with] destruction by an inveterate enemy that is willing to show no regard for humanity nor the rights of our section and people.”\textsuperscript{25} Certainly, the threat of invasion weighed heavily on the minds of southerners in the spring of 1861. Many men capitalized on the fear of invasion to help fill the enlistment of local regiments. “Men of the Potomac border,” a leaflet calling for Virginia recruits proclaimed. “Your Country calls you to her defence, already you have in spirit responded. You await but the order to march, to rendezvous, to organize, to defend your State, your liberties, and your homes!”\textsuperscript{26}

The shame of submission, and the dependence and emasculation that submission carried with it, certainly weighed upon their minds as well. Submission did not signify masculinity, but resistance certainly did. “Think of what an unjust people are endeavoring to do to us, threatening not only our liberties but our lives,” William Butt wrote to his wife. “What would you think of the Southern people if they quietly give up and submitted? What would you really think of me were I too craven-hearted to resist our

\textsuperscript{24} Kimmel, \textit{Manhood in America}, 34.

\textsuperscript{25} Edwin Bass, 22 April 1861, quoted in Lane, ed., \textit{Dear Mother}, 4.

\textsuperscript{26} Philip St. George Cocke, 5 May 1861, Call for Enlistment of Virginians in the Potomac Military Department, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
Honor certainly played a lead role in convincing men to enlist in the conflict. The sinews of southern honor comprised the ability to defend family and home. If a man could not or would not defend his family, he was considered dishonorable, cowardly, and feminine. In such a case, many southerners charged women with inspiring men to go to war: “Women of Virginia, cast from your arms all cowards; and breathe the pure and holy, the high and glowing inspirations of your nature, into the hearts and souls of lover, husband, brother, father!”

War fever spread across the South like a raging wildfire. The young generation of southerners who had warmly embraced secession, was now ecstatic to become soldiers in the conflict. “There is a great excitement here. Everybody talks, thinks and dreams of war. The students are leaving daily,” Lavender Ray wrote his sister from Chapel Hill in April 1861. “I desire very much to join them and will do so, if Pa and Ma are willing. I shall await their answer with impatience, hoping it will be in the affirmative.” Ray joined Company A of the 1st Georgia Volunteer Infantry as a private, on July 6, 1861. After the older southern men embraced secession and confirmed the authenticity of separation, the young generation returned to its traditional role within the social hierarchy. Younger southerners still considered themselves worthy men for being early proponents of disunion, and for being eager participants in the war. But instead of defying the adult generation, they again looked to them for guidance and permission. “I beg you to let me be one to proceed to Federal Point and frighten Lincoln out of his

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27 William Butt, 22 June 1861, quoted in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 19.
28 Philip St. George Cocke, 5 May 1861, Southern Historical Collection.
29 Lavendar Ray, 28 April 1861, quoted in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 6.
wits… I should be happy to bear a part, humble though it be, in defense of my country,” Edward H. Armstrong requested his father.31

Contributing to the torrent of war that had spread across the South after the firefight at Fort Sumter was the widespread belief among southern men that the war would be quick. Most men did not believe they were signing up to fight in a war that would last four years, and cost the lives of thousands of men, not to mention the collapse of their society and culture. Some even denied that there would be any violence. “The chances are decidedly against war,” Thomas R.R. Cobb wrote to his wife. “[T]here may be a little collision and much confusion, but no bloody or extensive war.”32 A young Georgian shared Cobb’s confidence that secession would occur without any violence: “What will the Europeans think when they find out that one of the greatest revolutions that has ever taken place was begun and ended without bloodshed? It is truly a revolution guided by reason and carried through without the aid of brute force.”33 Inexperience contributed to the widespread belief that secession would be carried through peacefully, or with minimal conflict. Most of the combatants were not professional soldiers, or had limited experience with soldiering.

A widespread sense of adventure convinced many men to enlist and become soldiers. Many volunteers believed that the war would be filled with distinction and excitement. Combined with the predominant feeling that the war would be quick made

31 Edward H. Armstrong to Thomas G. Armstrong, 20 April 1861, Julien Dwight Martin Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
33 John Elliot, 12 February 1861, quoted in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 2.
the early southern volunteers a very eager bunch. “Those of us who had enlisted felt that we were great heroes and were going forth to participate in a kind of holiday excursion, soon to return crowned with victorious laurels,” Alabamian William Robert Houghton, who enlisted at eighteen, remembered. “I had but limited education and knew very little of the ways of the world, but felt my importance as a prospective soldier of the Confederacy.”34 The romance and adventure that battle seemed to promise to southern volunteers breached the generations and tugged at the hearts of older men. Men who had never ventured from the farm, or who spent their day working at an urban craft shop, or who spent all their time on the plantation, were very easily lured to volunteer by the prospect of fame and excitement.35

Many volunteers certainly joined the war effort not out of patriotism or a strong sense of duty, but because enlisting was popular. Peer pressure has always played a part, and will always play a part, in convincing men to go to war. That proved especially true in 1861 when regiments were raised locally, often in the same neighborhoods. Men who grew up together, went to school together, worked together, all joined a regiment together. Peer pressure must have been particularly strong.36 “I never would come if it had not been that all the boys was going off,” Lavender Ray wrote his brother in 1861, as a private in the 1st Georgia Volunteer Infantry. “And if I was you, I

36 Wiley, Johnny Reb, 18.
would leave right straight for home, and there I would stay until peace is made."37 Very few men could resist the pressure to enlist and risk looking unmanly in the eyes of their friends and family.

Apart from actual service in warfare, southerners’ knowledge of soldering would have been limited to two experiences. Militia service would have been an experience in which a select few participated. While the militia rarely saw actual service, it would have given men a background in marching, weaponry, and the hierarchy of the military, which complemented the social hierarchy of the South.38 Another experience, which proved to be tactically limited, but a greater number of southerners participated in, would have been slave patrols. Most slaveholding communities organized a muster annually to terrorize slaves. Following the escape of a slave, or a slave insurrection, slaveholding whites organized a slave patrol to police the area. Harriet Jacobs, a former slave from North Carolina described one such patrol: “At night, they [whites] formed themselves into patrol bands, and went wherever they chose among the colored people, acting out their brutal will.”39

Men who did have extensive experience in warfare were understandably hesitant about the conflict. They were also critical of the popular belief that the war would be short and perhaps bloodless. Many professional soldiers had a sense of foreboding, because they knew the war would be extensive and violent. Robert E. Lee was plagued with a fearful apprehension even after Virginia had left the Union:

37 Lavender Ray, 14 May 1861, quoted from Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 10.
39 Yellin, ed., Incidents, 64.
“Whatever may be the result of the contest, I foresee that the country will have to pass through a terrible ordeal.”  

The popular notion that the war would be brief permeated the minds of men and led to a sense of invincibility that irritated the professional soldiers. Men who had experienced warfare wanted to instill their sense of trepidation into the southern people. Twenty-seven-year old North Carolinian William Dorsey Pender was one of these men. “We shall never be able to do anything until our Southern troops get two or three sound whippings,” Pender wrote his wife Fanny. “I firmly believe it would be the best thing for the South.”

The widespread sense of invincibility that pervaded the mind of southern men, and perplexed the professional soldiers, certainly was influenced by the military tradition of the South. The most successful and popular American generals were southerners including George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Winfield Scott, Zachary Taylor, and Albert Sidney Johnston. Additionally, American armies had a history of success against superior odds. Washington fought against superior numbers in the American Revolution. Jackson fought against a superior British force at the Battle of New Orleans. During the war with Mexico, Generals Scott and Taylor continually fought outnumbered against Mexican forces. Southern men influenced by this tradition had no reason to believe

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they could not soundly defeat a numerically superior northern army in a relatively short
time.

This was the maelstrom in which southern men were immersed; the pressure
to enlist in the conflict was so great. None felt that pressure more than a North Carolinian
named Walter Lenoir. Walter was born in 1823 and was the son of Thomas Lenoir, and
the great grandson of William Lenoir, a revolutionary hero. The Lenoirs were one of the
leading families who lived in East North Carolina, and like most prominent southern
families, they were planters and slaveholders.44

Walter was the third son of Thomas Lenoir and Selina Louise Lenoir, and his
experience was typical of planter society. He attended the University of North Carolina,
from which graduated in 1843. After graduation, Walter began a five-month tour of the
northern states with his brother Tom. The signs of progress and improvement, which
seemed breathtaking when juxtaposed to rural North Carolina, particularly surprised him.
In 1846, Walter became licensed to practice law in North Carolina, a common profession
for the sons of planters who had no land of their own. In 1856, Walter proposed to a
Virginia cousin, Cornelia Christian, and they were married in the summer of that year.
The couple was blessed with the birth of a daughter in 1857, but like thousands of
children in the nineteenth century the infant succumbed to disease. Tragedy soon struck
again as Cornelia lost a prolonged battle with illness in February of 1859. While coping
with his massive grief, Walter made a trip North in search of a new home and a fresh
start, which he thought he had found in Minnesota.45

He returned to North Carolina in November of 1860, and became a witness to the unraveling of national unity during the secession crisis. When secession came to fruition, Walter joined his elders in scorning the rash decision made by the Lower South states. In January of 1861, Walter wrote to North Carolina governor Zebulon Vance. “What shall we do, who are still loyal to the constitution, the union, the laws, the treaties and the flag of our country?” Walter wrote Vance. “I am opposed to joining our state with the schemes and politics of the cotton states,” he continued. “Nor do I wish to take part in a civil war between the North and the South.”46 He was thirty-eight-years-old, and this reaction was typical of men his age living in North Carolina.47

After the fighting at Fort Sumter erupted and Lincoln made his famous proclamation, Walter was swept up in the war fever that raged through the hearts of southern men. In a letter to his little brother Rufus, who remained on the homefront during the war, Walter revealed why he enlisted. “I have on two occasions during the war found it necessary to reflect very seriously upon what course it might be my duty to take,” Walter related in 1863. “The first time was when I first became certain that the war was actually upon us. For ten or fifteen minutes I studied perhaps harder than I ever did in my life. I remember that large drops of sweat stood on my forehead…I reflected that, under God, I owed my life, my ease, my enjoyment, my property, to the laws and institutions of my country.”48


48 Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, 27 February 1863, Lenoir Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
Walter had a literal conversion experience after Fort Sumter that transformed him from an ambivalent Unionist to a hardened Confederate. He had never been very religious, but the war gave him the religious experience he had always craved. Adding to his conversion experience, a heavy feeling of duty convinced Walter, and many southerners, to enlist. Duty to country, as Walter and many other men understood it, was a reciprocal obligation to home and country. They were duty bound to protect the country, and the family, that had for so long protected them. Additionally, the war presented a second chance for older men like Walter to fulfill their manly dreams. Like many thirty-something men, Walter was not completely satisfied with the life he was leading. He was a widower, he did not own substantial property, and his legal career was mundane and dull. In his mind, the war offered him a chance to participate in a manly crusade against an agitating enemy, to reconnect with a youthful masculinity that was previously long lost.

Thomas Lenoir, Walter’s older brother, raised a volunteer company in Haywood, North Carolina, that became known as the Haywood Highlanders. Its members were mustered into state service as Company F of the 25th Regiment of North Carolina Infantry. In 1860, ordinary men raised volunteer regiments locally. Much like the militia, social and economic superiors often funded the regiment; in return the men would

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52 Ibid., 54.
elect them officers. By the end of April 1860, 60,000 southern men had volunteered in local companies like the Haywood Highlanders, to fight in the impending war.\footnote{McPherson, \textit{For Cause and Comrades}, 318.}

While Rufus refused to enlist, Walter joined Thomas and the Haywood Highlanders in South Carolina in January 1862. The following month, Union forces gained dual victories. The first was in eastern North Carolina. At the same time, Union strikes in the west led by General Ulysses S. Grant seized Forts Henry and Donelson. After these setbacks, Rufus’s view of the war began to darken considerably. Walter began a series of letters hoping to boost the morale of his sulking brother. Among these letters, Walter shared his reasons for volunteering.\footnote{Barney, \textit{The Making of a Confederate}, 61.}

Walter, like many southern men, became convinced that Lincoln’s proclamation amounted to coercion, and that southern men could never submit to such an insult. Submission was equal to dependence, which emasculated and dishonored men. “I could never submit to Yankee rule,” Walter wrote Rufus in 1863. “Liable to be elbowed out of the road by them or to see my mother or my sisters insulted by their wenches who would flaunt the highways with them. I would rather lose all my property, loathe in a dungeon, die.”\footnote{Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, 27 September 1863, Lenoir Family Papers.} This was the world Walter imagined would materialize if men like himself allowed the South to submit to the North. In this imaginary world, men like Walter could be pushed around, deprived of all independence, forced to watch the degradation of their women. The terrifying future Walter envisioned was based on the
world that black slaves inhabited. Simply put, Walter believed that submission would turn southern men into slaves that were dependent and feminine.

Walter wanted to reconnect with a brilliant past; the war offered him a chance to do so. He wanted to prove himself worthy as an heir of the Revolution, a faithful custodian of liberty. “Remember that your grandfather fought through an eight years war,” he wrote Rufus in 1862. “[A] few infant colonies struggling against the richest and most powerful and war like nation on earth, exposed to constant dangers, but that he survived it all.” Walter did not have to look that far back for inspiration from previous generations; he could look to his father as well. “Your father once buckled on his sword in the fearful task of making war upon the same mighty nation, but he too survived it and lived to ripe old age.” Looking back to previous generations provided guidance to Walter; it made him feel worthy of his patriarchs. But it could also provide counsel, because his father and grandfather had waged war and survived to tell about it. Reconnecting with his predecessors provided Walter with a store of confidence.

Walter’s confidence was also buoyed by the belief that he was enlisting to fight in a just and righteous cause. He believed, like so many other southern men, that the South was being invaded and they were simply protecting their liberty and homes. “Ours is now the righteous side of this controversy while that of our adversaries is unholy,” Walter wrote his mother in 1862. If the cause of the South was just, consequently the

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56 Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, 20 February 1862, Lenoir Family Papers.
57 Ibid.
58 McPherson, For Cause and Comrades, 21.
59 Walter Lenoir to Selina Louise Lenoir, 2 March 1862, Lenoir Family Papers.
cause of the North was unjust. Walter considered the invading enemy soldiers as evil, and therefore they would not be allowed to win. God would not allow it.

Religion was a prominent feature in Walter’s decision to enlist and go off to war. His conversion experience had left him with a fervent belief in Christianity. Walter’s belief in God, and his belief that the cause of the South was righteous complemented each other. In his mind, God would not allow an unjust enemy of a righteous people to succeed in subjugating them. “You read the Bible and you know that God rules the world,” he wrote Rufus in 1863. “He is just and merciful, and he can’t be on the side of the wicked. He is always on the side of the just…it is our duty to hope, that it will be apparent to human observation in the ordinary way that he will favor us.”60 Walter ardently believed that God favored the South and would not allow the North to win. This belief invigorated his courage, and uplifted his confidence.

Walter was fortified with boundless optimism, buoyed by his conversion experience that hardened him into a ceaseless Confederate soldier. Prior to the war he was not a conventional southerner; he had spent considerable time in the northern states and admired them for their industrialization, so much so that he had planned on moving to Minnesota prior to the war. Walter was ambivalent toward slavery; he had considered owning slaves to be evil and eventually vowed to never own a slave himself. This may seem strange considering that Walter was the heir to a planter family, but he most likely never dealt with the evils of slavery personally. He was the master’s son, so he rarely was witness to the heinous acts of disciplining irate slaves. He was also a resident of the

60 Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, 17 August 1863, Lenoir Family Papers.
Upper South, where slaveowners were more in the business of selling slaves to fund economic diversification. But all of these conflicting emotions were consolidated into radical southern pride when Walter felt that North Carolina was threatened with an invasion and subjugation.61

Walter’s confidence was lifted by the support and cheer of his family. He believed that he was fighting for his country, and for his family. His nightmares of the submission of the South involved his mother and sisters being abused by Yankee invaders. He, like so many other southern men, needed the absolute support of his family to remain confident of the final results of the war. He wrote his despondent brother Rufus in an attempt to lift his spirits and convince him of the righteousness of their cause. But his attempt to lift the spirits of Rufus must be viewed as an attempt to lift his own spirits and boost his own confidence. His lawyer-like arguments for Rufus to be more optimistic were likely similar to the case he had laid out in his own mind to remain confident.62

Because of this fact, Rufus’s consistent pessimism agitated him. “I have been perhaps too much exercised about my dear brother Rufus, whom I regard as a sort of prisoner chained at home, by the softest of fetters,” Walter wrote his Mother in 1862. “His last letter to me was a little of the bluest.”63 Walter believed Rufus was manacled at home by his feminine fears, unwilling to enlist in the war or even remain confident of the Confederate cause. But Rufus’s despondency was curable; Walter encouraged him to enlist. “I do not think the contingency will come upon you; but if it should come be ready

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63 Walter Lenoir to Selina Louise Lenoir, 2 March 1862, Lenoir Family Papers.
for it…Make the choice now, and if you make it in accordance with your convictions of duty you will soon I hope find your self a much more cheerful and hopeful man.”

According to Walter, enlisting would make a man out of Rufus, and would help to cure his incessant sulking.

Walter made this particular recommendation drawing from his own experience. In the wake of the death of his family, Walter’s conversion to a Confederate soldier suddenly gave him a purpose in life. He felt he was fighting a just and righteous cause; he felt that God was with him, he felt like a man. But he also had begun to hear rumors that local citizens had begun to question Rufus’s loyalty to the Confederate cause. In the back of his mind, Walter most likely despaired about Rufus’s loyalty as well. He maneuvered to kindle Rufus’s masculinity and sense of duty. “I feel my determination increasing as the prospect darkens,” Walter wrote Rufus in 1862. “When I remember that adversity only serves to develop the better qualities both of men and nations I can not but believe that your manly and loyal nature will be aroused by the calamites of our country.”

Rufus Lenoir never enlisted to fight in the Civil War, despite the advice from his brother. Walter however, went off to fight along with thousands of eager southern men who were determined to take part in the action before it was over. “A Southern soldier’s ambition consists in the fervent hope that he be afforded the earliest practicable chance of crossing bayonets with the mercenaries of a despotic tyrant,” a young Georgian

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64 Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, 27 September 1863, Lenoir Family Papers.
66 Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, 20 February 1862, Lenoir Family Papers.
wrote a friend in 1861. Walter, and other southern men like him, enlisted believing that
the war would not significantly damage their personal independence and individuality.
For common men, individuality and independence were prized possessions not to be
bartered away. As Confederate General John B. Gordon marched his men through
Atlanta to a camp on the outskirts of town, he could not help but admire their
individuality. “The march, or rather straggle…was a sight marvellous to behold and never
to be forgotten,” Gordon remembered. “Totally undisciplined and undrilled, no two of
these men marched abreast; no two kept the same step; no two wore the same colored
coats or trousers. The only pretence at uniformity was the rough fur caps made of raccoon
skins.” These men expected to maintain their individuality and independence
throughout the conflict.

Men enlisted with the belief that they would continue to control their own
destiny through the conflict. They held a fervent conviction that their fate rested on their
inner qualities. As long as they responded to challenges with courage and honor, the
markings of masculinity, they would continue to control their own fortune. Many men
even believed that the courageous man would be spared in battle. The Civil War would
test these men in ways they could never have imagined. It would challenge everything
that constructed their world, even the foundations of masculinity itself.

67 Thomas Owen, 12 November 1861, quoted from Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 84.
69 Gerald F. Linderman, Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil
In April 1861, sixteen-year-old David E. Johnston joined the 7th Virginia regiment and became a soldier like thousands of fellow Virginians.\textsuperscript{70} In one sentence Johnston brilliantly expressed his decision to become a soldier juxtaposed with the sad reality: “Great anticipations! Fearful reality!”\textsuperscript{71} Indeed, the war would become a “fearful reality” for most of these men.

\textsuperscript{70} David E. Johnston, \textit{The Story of a Confederate Boy in the Civil War}, 31.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 6.
CHAPTER IV

JOSHUA CALLAWAY AND THE WAR

EXPERIENCE FOR THE COMMON SOLDIER OF THE CONFEDERACY

Joshua Callaway was not among the thousands of southern men who eagerly flocked to participate in the nascent Civil War. Instead, Callaway was perfectly content with staying home in Alabama and letting more ambitious young men run to their deaths. There he would remain until 1862, when he finally felt impelled to join the conflict, that ultimately took his life. While his tardiness in enlisting may not seem typical of many southern men during the initial year of the conflict, the experience of Joshua Callaway became typical of many Confederate soldiers in the Civil War. He entered the war eager and determined to test his manhood and his courage. But the horrors and gravity of the struggle quickly unraveled his initial convictions, and the enormity of the conflict wore him down, mentally and physically.

Joshua K. Callaway, the second to last child of Reverend Joseph and Temperance Callaway, was born on September 2, 1834, in Georgia. In 1850, the Callaways, including both parents and five children, made their way to neighboring Alabama, where they settled in Coffee County. In 1857, Joseph and Temperance passed away within days of each other. Near the time of the death of his parents,

Joshua made his first step into manhood by asking young Dulcinea Baker to be his wife.\(^2\)

Joshua did not have a steady income, nor did he own any extensive land or slaves in Coffee County. Consequently, Joshua did not object to moving with his wife’s family to a little town called Summerfield, in Dallas County, Alabama. Joshua quickly took work as a teacher at Centenary Institute. The couple became the proud parents of a baby girl, Amelia Temperance Callaway, on April 2, 1858. In 1860, Dulcinea gave birth to a second daughter, who, like thousands of children in the nineteenth century, did not survive infancy. Joseph J. Callaway, the couple’s final child, was born in January 1862, after the War Between the States had erupted.\(^3\)

In that same month, several prominent men from Alabama began a campaign to raise additional regiments of Alabama volunteer soldiers in response to Governor Andrew B. Moore’s passionate plea for more men. Many southerners, including the governor, had heard the whispers from Richmond that the Confederate government would soon issue a draft. In order to avoid the humiliation of being forced to volunteer, Governor Moore urged Alabamians to enlist. “No man of true patriotism, or of a proper degree of personal or State pride, will stand still in such an hour of danger, and suffer himself forced into the defense of his country, his property, and his family,” he stated.\(^4\) Coercion into the armed forces would have been extremely dishonorable to most southern men. Just as southern honor demanded that men protect their homes and families from an invading enemy, it also demanded that they volunteer for military service rather than

\(^2\) Hallock, ed., \textit{Callaway}, xii.

\(^3\) Halleck, ed., \textit{Callaway}, xiii.

\(^4\) Ibid., xiii.
suffer conscription. To remain home was to risk being labeled dishonorable, effeminate and cowardly by the community.\(^5\)

Certainly by this time not all southerners felt this way. Many had heard that recruitment efforts were underway on the homefront, and they did not wish their friends and family to be subjected to the hardships of soldier life. “Men are going home to get recruits,” James Boyd, a Georgian, wrote to his brother. “Do not let them persuade you of it. They may tell you great stories about how well we are fixed up here. But do not let them excite you into it. If you were to happen to be drafted, you would not be disgraced by it…don’t go until you are drafted or Ma tells you to go.”\(^6\) For Boyd, conscription was not dishonorable, but he certainly held the minority view among southern men.

Joshua likely reveled in the birth of his son and then pondered his precarious position on the southern homefront. Obviously he had trepidations about joining the conflict, but the impassioned plea of Governor Moore and the peer pressure to enlist undoubtedly had their effect. So on March 29, 1862, Joshua Callaway joined the thousands of men who volunteered to become actors in the nation’s greatest tragedy. In Perryville, he enlisted in Company K of the newly formed Twenty-Eighth Alabama Infantry Regiment. Thus began the greatest test young Callaway would ever face, a challenge that would push him to the brink of humanity, and test his physical and mental limits.\(^7\)


\(^6\) James Boyd, 16 February 1862, quoted in Lane, ed., *Dear Mother*, 97.

\(^7\) Hallock, ed., *Callaway*, xiv; and James H. Walker and Robert Curren, eds., *Those Gallant Men of the Twenty-Eighth Alabama Confederate Infantry Regiment* (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2007), 317. Walker and Curren mistakenly name Joshua Callaway as John W. Calloway. But cross-referencing revealed it was indeed Callaway. Additionally, his death is not recorded in *Those Gallant Men*. 
Joshua enlisted just weeks before the Confederate Congress did indeed issue the first draft in American history. After hotly debating for several weeks Congress passed the Conscription Act on April 16, 1862. This compelled all southern men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five to join the army. By volunteering weeks before the Conscription Act, Joshua salvaged at least a pretense of free will.

Support for the Confederate cause weakened after the Conscription Act, especially among states’ rights supporters. But none of that mattered to Joshua. He was just a poor nonslaveholding Alabamian with little regard for abstract notions such as states’ rights. He was fortunate enough to miss the carnage at Shiloh, after which General P.G.T. Beauregard requested troops to fill the void made by massive casualties in the battle. Joshua and Company K left Selma on April 10, and arrived at Shelby Springs, where they remained three days. Once there, they moved to Mobile, Alabama, where they stayed for three more days before boarding rail cars to leave for Mississippi. Company K arrived in Corinth, Mississippi on April 23, 1862.

Joshua, like many Confederate soldiers, was initially enthusiastic about his new life in the military. He was attracted to the camaraderie of the all-male fraternity that soldier life afforded him. “I am enjoying myself finely,” he wrote Dulcinea from camp. “I had much rather be here than teaching school.” The military afforded him an escape from the monotony of his life in Summerfield. Likely, it offered him an escape from the feminizing influence of his wife as well. He was excited about his new profound sense of

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duty and obligation to the Confederacy. It gave him an invigorated sense of purpose and a new meaning about his life: “I have no greater desire than to be permitted to return to you, but my first duty is to my country, then to you & if I die in the struggle, be assured I die for you & our little ones.”\(^{11}\) While he felt duty-bound to serve his country, it was obvious why he was fighting. His inspiration was his family, and it would remain so throughout his tenure in the army of the Confederacy.

But why would Joshua fight for the Confederacy? Beyond the obvious reason of avoiding the humiliation of the draft, he fought for many of the traditional values of most Confederate soldiers. For example, he convinced himself that he was defending the righteous ideals of liberty and independence. “There is trouble before us no doubt,” he wrote Dulcinea. “Long hard marches, cold weather and perhaps hard fighting. But our watchword is victory, our motto is independence & liberty.”\(^{12}\) But Callaway also fought to uphold the social hierarchy of the South, which at first glance did not seem to benefit a poor, nonslaveholding white man like him. A closer look, however, reveals that Joshua sought to benefit from the dark side of the South, namely racial and male superiority. He certainly felt that African-Americans were of less value than white men, and this afforded him the chance to act as a bully, especially while he foraged the countryside for food. “I started back and on the way I came upon a negro milking some cows,” Joshua wrote Dulcinea from Mississippi. “I stopped & tried to buy some milk, but she refused to sell it. I then took the bucket from her with about 3 quarters of milk in it right warm.”\(^{13}\) Joshua

\(^{11}\) Joshua Callaway, 19 May 1862, in Halleck, ed., *Joshua Callaway*, 17.


\(^{13}\) Joshua Callaway, 2 June 1862, in Halleck, ed., *Joshua Callaway*, 25.
made this statement with a chilling matter-of-factness that expressed absolutely no regret for his actions. This was the society he wanted to preserve, a society ruled by white men.

Joshua, like so many Confederate soldiers, was not prepared for the realities of waging war. The majority of the Confederate army consisted of volunteers, including regular farmers, laborers, and ordinary citizens. They believed that they would be able to wage war while keeping their personal independence and interests intact. But once they joined the military, autonomy ceased to exist. In his anxiety over this loss, Joshua compared the disappearance of his freedom with the only other similar experience he knew, slavery: “I am quite well…except that it grinds me to think that I am compelled to stay here. I’ve got a dozen masters, who order me about like a negro.”14 Military tactics dictated that men needed to be able to work as a cohesive unit. This required a strict chain of command that had to be obeyed at all times. Officers believed that superior training and discipline were essential in ensuring military success.15 The common soldiers’ hatred of authority frustrated their superiors. “The idea of their being brought together and having to submit to inconvenience to prepare them for service is something they cannot see the use of,” one officer vented about his men.16

The death of independence was just the first shock in a number of distressing experiences that turned Joshua’s world upside down. Disease ran rampant through the

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16 William Dorsey Pender, 26 April 1861, in Hassler, ed., *The General to His Lady*, 16.
Twenty-Eighth Alabama while they were in Corinth, a place that Joshua described as “very disagreeable.” Corin was virtually a swamp, and coupled with the fact that it was probably the first time Joshua was crowded together with thousands of other men made it ideal for the spread of disease. This meant a death sentence for many country boys who had never been exposed to urban diseases, and consequently never developed immunity to them. Less than two weeks after his arrival at Corinth, Joshua described himself as “right sick” with “fever and diarrhoea.”

Camp sanitation did little to alleviate the spread of disease. Civil War soldiers had little knowledge of the importance of personal cleanliness and hygiene. Additionally, physicians in the mid-nineteenth century had no knowledge of microorganisms or bacteria. Consequently, Civil War soldiers often dug their latrines too close to their fresh water source. When their latrines overflowed, human waste flowed into their drinking water. Instead of blaming their water source tainted with fecal matter, they determined the culprits of disease were bad air and noxious gases. Resolved to slow the spread of disease, physicians recommended that camp be purged of all rotting food, believed to be the source of noxious gases. Meanwhile, bacteria continued to wreak havoc in the intestinal tracts of thousands of soldiers.

Diarrhea became a soldier’s constant companion. Civil War physicians often hindered rather than helped soldiers suffering from the disease. Physicians had no knowledge of the human body’s need for fluid homeostasis; adequate hydration was

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17 Joshua Callaway, 5 May 1862, in Halleck, ed., Joshua Callaway, 10.
18 Ibid., 9.
unheard of during the Civil War. Instead, they still relied on the archaic remedy of bloodletting. But more commonly, physicians issued what was referred to as a “tartar emetic,” a combination of calomel, antimony, and potassium. When given to a sick soldier suffering from diarrhea or the flu, it induced violent diarrhea and vomiting that compounded the agony of the patient.

The rampant spread of disease was not limited to Corinth. A young Georgian in Richmond found that “there is a great deal of sickness here,” and he astutely recognized that there were “more men dying with it than ever will get killed in the battles of the Confederacy.” This young Georgian was more astute than he could possibly have imagined. Civil War soldiers were twice as likely to die from disease than they were from wounds suffered on the battlefield.

Disease proved to be a destructive experience, both physically and mentally. It sickened men enough to force them out of the ranks, effectively crippling the fighting force of a regiment. Joshua reported in Corinth that the Twenty-Eighth Alabama “could muster only about 100 or 200 men.” While Callaway may have been exaggerating, it certainly was not unheard of for a third or even half of a regiment to be sick at one time. This was terribly disheartening to men who believed they could control their own fate. Neither toughness nor courage could protect a man against dysentery or typhoid

20 Ibid., 126.
21 Ibid., 48.
22 Benjamin Moody, 22 May 1862, quoted in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 121.
23 Rutkow, Bleeding Blue and Grey, 310.
25 Rutkow, Bleeding Blue and Grey, 126.
fever. The literal helplessness disease caused began to crack the mental foundations of men.²⁶ It began to chip away at the mystic view of warfare, for there was nothing glorious about a man slowly dying of an infected intestinal tract, or gurgling his last breath as his lungs filled up with fluid.

Contributing to the unhealthiness of Confederate soldiers was their poor diet. Throughout the war, the Confederate government had serious problems trying to supply their troops. Historian Bell Irvin Wiley blames poor rations on distribution rather than limited supplies. The railroad system was inadequate for wartime needs, the Confederate government had a continuous lack of funds, and commissary officers were notorious swindlers.²⁷ Fruits and vegetables were scarce. Joshua reported that in his camp “vegetables are almost out of the question.”²⁸ Soldiers received a handful of flour, and salted beef that was so poor “we can scarcely eat it.” The abysmal condition of his food prompted Joshua to become homesick and despondent. “I would give a good sum to be home a few days to eat some of your cooking,” he wrote Dulcinea from Corinth. “The thoughts of your biscuits…makes my mouth & eyes water.”²⁹ Joshua was certainly not alone in this complaint. Southerners across the Confederacy continually complained of poor rations. Edwin H. Fay, a cavalryman from Louisiana, wrote to his wife that the army fed them beef that was so poor “even our negroes will not eat…a dog will hardly smell

²⁷ Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 97,
it."\(^{30}\) While making breakfast, one Georgia soldier found humor in an otherwise bleak situation: “after making a fire and bringing water, we pause. The question arises what shall we have: bread and meat or meat and bread?”\(^{31}\) But this young soldier was certainly an anomaly. Hunger and malnutrition dampened men’s energy and zeal, marching became a chore, and fighting became next to impossible.

Corinth was a rough initiation for Joshua Callaway and the Twenty-Eighth Alabama. There he endured the death of his personal independence, he was forced to choke down meager rations of horrible quality, and his physical constitution was racked with disease. Corinth was also the site of Joshua’s first taste of battle. He, like most early soldiers, was excited about the thought of participating in his first battle. “[T]here is great rejoicing in camp at the prospect of a fight,” he wrote prior to his arrival in Corinth.\(^{32}\) The desire to participate in a battle was a common feeling for inexperienced recruits. Edwin H. Fay admitted to his wife “I am spoiling for a fight,” while Jack Felder wrote that his company in the 4\(^{th}\) Georgia Volunteer Regiment was “wanting a fight in the worst sort.”\(^{33}\) This was the chance for the company to test themselves, to prove to themselves and to the community of men that they were courageous soldiers worthy of the title.

Soldiers suffering from the effects of naiveté believed that battle would be organized and sensible. They believed in a natural order that would determine who would

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\(^{31}\) Cornelius McLaurin, 9 July 1861, quoted in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 26.

\(^{32}\) Joshua Callaway, 18 April 1862, in Halleck, ed., Callaway, 7.

\(^{33}\) Edwin H. Fay, 21 April 1862, in Wiley, ed., This Infernal War, 34; Jack Felder to his Brother, 13 June 1861, quoted in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 16; and Henderson, ed., Confederate Soldiers of Georgia, vol. I, 635.
live and who would die. The most courageous were thought to be at the least risk of
dying.34 “You beg me, my dear Wife, not to expose myself, but I have always believed
the most daring came off with the fewest wounds,” Edwin H. Fay wrote his wife before
his first battle.35 These men seemed certain that the brave would survive a battle, while
the weak and cowardly would die. Courage and manliness offered early recruits the
promise that they could control their own fate; as long as they acted like men they would
survive.36

Joshua received a harsh education about the effects of too much courage in the
face of battle. Near the end of the Twenty-Eighth Alabama’s tenure in Corinth, Joshua
was out on picket duty on May 28. He was among three hundred men assigned this duty
that particular day, and they quickly brushed with Union pickets. They had a brief
firefight with the enemy, who soon forced the Confederates to retreat. While they
grudgingly gave ground a young soldier named Elias Barron “was walking along very
deliberately and one of our boys told him if he did not get behind a tree he would get
shot.” Joshua watched as the young soldier “smiled & replied ‘I am not afraid of them’
and in a minute a ball struck him in the [groin] and wounded him, I fear, mortally.”37
This lesson could not have been more clearly articulated: too much courage bordered on
foolishness. Joshua learned quickly that bravery was not enough, even the most daring
man like young Elias Barron would not be protected from the bullets of the enemy.

At the end of May, General Beauregard decided to leave Corinth, much to the relief of Joshua and the Twenty-Eighth Alabama. During the seven-week encampment at Corinth during April, and May, 1862, at least 18,000 men reported ill at one time.\textsuperscript{38} Indeed, as many Confederate soldiers died from disease and exposure in Corinth as perished in the battle at Shiloh.\textsuperscript{39} “I shudder when I think of the suffering and death that I witnessed at Corinth,” Joshua wrote Dulcinea late in the summer of 1862. “I hope we will never be stationed at such another place.”\textsuperscript{40}

Throughout the summer of 1862, the 28\textsuperscript{th} Alabama changed camps several times in the state of Mississippi. They camped near Tupelo, and then moved to Saltillo, before reaching Tennessee in August.\textsuperscript{41} They marched in intense heat, kicking up clouds of dust so dense that Joshua reported “to breath[e] was almost suffocation.”\textsuperscript{42} During their constant movements, Joshua wrote frequently to his wife and admired her positive attitude. “I am glad that you feel so cheerful as you seem to do.” Joshua praised his wife’s “strength of mind & stability of character” that allowed Dulcinea to remain “above despondence.”\textsuperscript{43} Dulcinea’s isolation from the horrors of war enabled her to retain her optimism and her belief that the war would not significantly change her husband. Indeed, ideas about what made a man remained constant on the southern homefront during the

\textsuperscript{38} Walker and Curren, eds., \textit{Those Gallant Men}, 28.
\textsuperscript{39} Wiley, \textit{Johnny Reb}, 247.
\textsuperscript{40} Joshua Callaway, 13 August 1862, in Halleck, ed., \textit{Joshua Callaway}, 49.
\textsuperscript{41} Halleck, ed., \textit{Callaway}, 48
\textsuperscript{42} Joshua Callaway, 13 July 1862, in Halleck, ed., \textit{Joshua Callaway}, 42.
\textsuperscript{43} Joshua Callaway, 19 June 1862, in Halleck, ed., \textit{Joshua Callaway}, 33.
While Joshua could have chided his wife and ridiculed her ignorance, her opinion about his conduct mattered very much to him. Dulcinea’s letters had a dual effect upon him. He admired her confidence, but her letters made him feel ashamed at his own growing pessimism. “I almost grumble, sometimes, at my own want of courage when I read your letters,” he wrote her. Dulcinea would slowly become Joshua’s reason for remaining in the war. His loyalty to the Confederate cause was weakening, but his loyalty to Dulcinea kept him from acting disgracefully. If he acted shamefully, he risked dishonoring himself in her eyes, and that remained a primary motivation for him to continue the fight.

Life certainly did not get any easier for Joshua. That summer, the Army of Tennessee, to which the Twenty-Eighth Alabama belonged, changed commanders from Beauregard to Braxton Bragg. Famous as a strict disciplinarian, General Bragg was not well liked among commanders and regular soldiers alike. Joshua certainly felt the General’s authoritative stranglehold. “We are all nothing more than the subjects of a military despotism now, and we have no right to think,” he wrote Dulcinea. The anxiety associated with his lost independence continued to plague him throughout his career as a Confederate soldier. In September 1862 Bragg initiated an ill-fated invasion of Kentucky that lasted through October and compounded Joshua’s misfortune. “We have marched nearly seven hundred miles,” he wrote Dulcinea during the Kentucky assault. “And consequently we are now naked, bare footed, dirty, filthy and lousy (with body lice only)

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beyond description.” The hard marching broke him down physically as well, as exhaustion opened the door for illness. Joshua became so sick that he wrote Dulcinea: “The whole company thought I would die. I thought myself my time had come.” His fellow soldiers had him put in a wagon so he could conserve his strength as his body waged a war against disease. But unfortunately for Joshua, wagons were not equipped with springs, causing passengers to be violently thrown around the bed. Joshua wrote: [I]t seemed every jolt would take my life. I wept, cried, prayed, [and] thought of home.”

The Twenty-Eighth Alabama was withheld from several important battles during the Kentucky operation, which did not seem to bother Joshua very much given his physical agony. His regiment was not involved in either the battle of Munfordville on September 16, nor the battle of Perryville on October 8. In November, Joshua was still sufficiently sick enough to receive a furlough, and he went home to recuperate. He remained home throughout December 1862. During his absence, his regiment fought at the battle of Murfreesboro, which cost the Twenty-Eighth Alabama 116 men killed, wounded or missing.

Joshua returned to the Twenty-Eighth Alabama in January 1863. He was physically rejuvenated from his recovery during his furlough, but he was filled with

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49 Ibid., 63.
50 Rutkow, Bleeding Blue and Grey, 92.
51 Ibid., 63.
52 Halleck, ed., Callaway, 58-59; and Walker and Curren, eds., Those Gallant Men, 28-29.
53 Halleck, ed., Callaway, 67; and Walker and Curren, eds., Those Gallant Men, 317.
54 Walker and Curren, eds., Those Gallant Men, 30.
trepidation concerning his future with the Confederacy. Depression had begun to set in due to the reality of serving in the army. “[Y]ou have no idea how sick I am of this abominable war. You can’t form any idea how much I would give to be at home,” he wrote Dulcinea from Tennessee in March.\textsuperscript{55} His recent furlough had not alleviated his intense homesickness that left him sad and despondent. But Joshua refused to remain dispirited. Throughout 1863 his fragile mind fought back against his incessant depression, and he tried desperately to remain optimistic. He performed a psychological balancing act, vacillating between despondence and confidence. After the Confederate defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, Joshua confided to Dulcinea that “when we reflect that the yankees have taken every place that they have tried on the Mississippi…the future does indeed look dark and gloomy.” Before he dropped into the depths of despair, he comforted his wife that “we are not whipped by any means,” assuring her that he was confident of their ultimate success and there was still fight in him.\textsuperscript{56}

The first six months of 1863 found Joshua Callaway and the Twenty-Eighth Alabama relatively inactive; they spent most of their time encamped near Shelbyville, Tennessee. Joshua considered camp life “dull beyond endurance,” and he increasingly felt himself looking homeward.\textsuperscript{57} Apart from entertaining himself with regimental footraces, Joshua spent his nights lying on his back staring at the stars and contemplating Dulcinea and his children. Imagining his wife sitting on the porch watching the sun slowly set, he reflected “it is a source of great comfort to me to look at the moon at night

\begin{footnotes}
\item[56] Joshua Callaway, 11 July 1863, in Halleck, ed., Joshua Callaway, 111.
\item[57] Joshua Callaway, 15 March 1863, in Halleck, ed., Joshua Callaway, 74.
\end{footnotes}
and think perhaps you are at that moment looking at the same object.”

The war was an all-out assault on his body and mind, threatening to wipe out his very existence. Joshua sustained himself by thinking of his family and a way back to them. He was no longer fighting for freedom or independence; nationalistic aspirations became lost to the common soldier in the confusion of war. Instead, Callaway was fighting for his family, and a chance to return to them honorably. Consequently, letters became everything to Joshua. He kept his favorite letters to remind him of home and constantly demanded more letters from Dulcinea: “I am not exactly satisfied, my dear, with your writing. I want a letter from you at least twice a week, and if you can’t get paper write on anything.”

For most common soldiers letters became all important to buttressing their spirits. Theodorick Montfort, a thirty-eight-year-old lawyer from Georgia, constantly thought of and wrote home to sustain himself in the face of the atrocities of war. But he soon found himself at Fort Pulaski, near Savannah, surrounded by Yankees and cut off from any communications with his family. As he began to slip into depression and despair, Montfort sought to uplift his downtrodden spirits by domesticating his surroundings, creating a substitute family to ease his mental anguish. “I really feel attached to my guns & so do the men. My guns feel to me as part of my family,” Montfort wrote his wife in a letter that had little opportunity of reaching her. “I hope &

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59 John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 45; and Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 244.
expect to be as faithful to my guns (or Petts) as I would to those whose names they represent-& if it should be my fate to fall it shall be in their midst. If I survive neither my (Petts) or those who in honor they are named shall feel ashamed or dishonored by me.”

Montfort needed his family, and when it was taken from him, he began to lose his mind. Common soldiers like Callaway and Montfort could lose sight of the lofty war goals that preoccupied generals and politicians. They could not sacrifice their lives for abstract ideas such as independence or states’ rights. Instead they found something tangible to fight for, such as family, fellow soldiers, ambition, or the chance to go home.

After a summer filled with setbacks, Joshua received a furlough in August 1863 and found his way to his family. In September he returned to an Army of Tennessee that was disorganized amid the excitement of a battle on the horizon. Braxton Bragg was attempting to lure William S. Rosecran’s Army of the Cumberland into a trap during the month of September, but failed on several attempts. Bragg’s intentions were not lost upon Joshua. “[W]e all imagine there is some terrible marching and fighting ahead,” he wrote Dulcinea from Georgia.

Psychologically, Joshua was at his lowest when he returned to the Twenty-Eighth Alabama from a furlough, and this time proved to be no different. “I am beginning to feel lost,” Joshua wrote Dulcinea before the Twenty-Eighth left Tennessee for Georgia. Returning to the army painfully reminded him of all that he loved about home and all that he hated about being a soldier. The long days of hard marches made him feel

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62 Theodorick Montfort, 23 February 1862, in King, ed., Rebel Lawyer, 56.
like a machine, and men began to blend together, their individuality disappearing in the malaise of soldier life. “You can hardly tell one man from another. Everybody’s hair, whiskers, skin and clothes are the same color,” he confided in Dulcinea.⁶⁶ This became disconcerting to men like Joshua, who once again felt the war threatening their very masculinity as it attempted to swallow everything that had made them men. Having already devoured their personal liberty, and their ideas of courage, the war now moved to smother their individuality.⁶⁷

For Georgian Lafayette McLaws, his individual self began to dissolve almost immediately upon enlisting. In late June 1861, he boarded a Virginia bound train that soon filled with 116 volunteers from Lowndes County, Georgia. Because it was summer, the boys removed their shirts, followed by their shoes and “the fetid odor was tremendous,” McLaws wrote his wife.⁶⁸ The mass of half-naked, stinking young men were all around him, and he began to lose himself in the sights, smells, and sounds of the crowd. “From that time,” McLaws wrote, “there was an end of all individuality.”⁶⁹

Whatever doubts Joshua had about his tenure with the Army of Tennessee were quickly quashed when battle forced itself upon the Twenty-Eighth Alabama. On the morning of September 19, patrols from the Army of Tennessee and the Army of the Cumberland bumped into each other and began the battle of Chickamauga.⁷⁰ After fierce

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⁶⁸ Lafayette McLaws, 24 June 1861, in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 21.
⁶⁹ Ibid., 21; and Berry, “When Mettle Meets Metal,” 14.
⁷⁰ McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 672.
fighting, the day closed with minimal gains to both sides, at extreme human costs. The evening of the nineteenth, General James Longstreet arrived from the eastern theater to take command of Bragg’s left wing, to which the Twenty-Eighth Alabama belonged. The morning of September 20 was supposed to begin with an early morning attack that started on the right wing, commanded by General Leonidas Polk. But after Polk dragged his feet, Bragg ordered Longstreet to initiate an all-out attack on the Union forces.71

For most men, the moment immediately preceding battle was often the worst. One soldier remembered a “profound silence pervaded the entire army” right before the fight as nervous men contemplated their fate.72 As soon as battle began, most men felt temporary relief from the nervous anticipation. Adrenaline poured through their veins, giving them boundless energy and zeal. The same soldier remembered that as firing began “it appeared as if our troops had received an electric shock, which aroused their enthusiasm to its highest pitch.”73

The temporary relief men felt was soon replaced by horror and shock at the experience of battle. War was an all-out attack not only on their bodies, but their senses. They were choked and blinded by the smoke, deafened by the roar of muskets and artillery, and sickened by the sights and smells of misery and death.74 Many men had trouble defining war for those who wanted to know; there was something indescribable about the experience. “I can’t describe my feelings when the battle began,” one soldier

73 Ibid., 50.
frankly told his wife. Others used meteorological vernacular to relate the experience of battle, which made sense considering many southerners were farmers. One soldier described warfare as a “hurricane of combustibles,” while Joshua Callaway likened the combat at Chickamauga to a “thousand thunderstorms all turned loose together.”

Joshua was struck by the duality of control and chaos that existed together during the fighting at Chickamauga. As the Twenty-Eighth Alabama advanced its members upon Union forces on the morning of September 20, the men quickly caught sight of the enemy and “as soon as the firing commenced all order and control was lost.” As the Army of the Cumberland began to break and retreat, the Alabamians gave chase and “away they went like a gang of mad tigers or demons.” They soon encountered stiff resistance as Union General George H. Thomas, who became known as the Rock of Chickamauga after the battle, organized a last ditch effort to slow the Confederate pursuit on a strong position called Snodgrass Hill. As the Twenty-Eighth Alabama advanced they came under heavy fire. “[T]he carnage was awful,” Joshua wrote. “Men were shot down all around me. I was indeed in the very midst of death.”

General John B. Gordon described the utter loss of self-control during warfare as “so

75 Shephard Pryor, 4 October 1861, in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 74.
76 Copley, the Battle of Franklin, 51; and Joshua Callaway, 24 September 1863, in Halleck, ed., Joshua Callaway, 134.
78 Ibid., 136.
80 Joshua Callaway, 24 September 1863, in Halleck, ed., Joshua Callaway, 137.
unexpected, so strange and terrible,” because men who normally acted courageously, could be deprived of all valor at a moment’s notice.81

But amid all of this appalling chaos, Joshua felt a redemptive sense of emotional control. This was psychological compensation for all the indignities he had undergone as a Confederate soldier. The war had unraveled everything that had made him a man, and in this single moment, he was able to reclaim it. “In the very midst of all this terrible thunder, blood, carnage, [and] slaughter…I felt perfectly calm and secure, knew all that was passing around me. Never lost my wits a single moment. And I am proud to say that I don’t think I did anything of which you or I or any of my friends need be ashamed,” he wrote his wife.82 Joshua remained on his course of returning to his wife honorably, with no shame added to his name. The Confederate Army of Tennessee won the battle of Chickamauga with an astonishing loss of 16,986 men, roughly twenty-five percent of Bragg’s fighting force. It became the most costly battle for the Confederacy in the western campaign.83

Battle deaths and the subsequent burials presented unique challenges to the mind of the southern man. Most Americans believed that the proper way to die was to expire at home, surrounded by family who could assess the state of mind of the individual at the time of death to ascertain his spiritual condition. This was the good way to die. But in warfare, men could be blown apart by artillery, or killed instantly as a round passed through the brain. Sudden deaths were especially disconcerting to southerners because

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81 Gordon, Reminisces of the Civil War, 44.
83 McWhiney and Jamieson, Attack and Die, 8.
they challenged the correct way to die. One Georgia soldier was “terribly shocked” when an officer was struck and “his head was half shot off, his brains all flew about four feet and mostly fell in a pile. His cap was not found and his skull flew in every direction.” What was shocking about this kind of death was not only its violence and frequency, but that it robbed the deceased of any chance of having final communication with family members. Men feared this fate awaited them as well.

Burial presented another problem for those who remained alive. The sheer number of dead lying on the field of combat was horrific, and they had to be buried. Americans had convictions about the proper way to be interred; the coffin was the mark of decency. Necessity, however, dictated that most war dead did not receive coffins. So instead burial became an act of improvisation. Close comrades would often take charge, bury their deceased friend, and mark his grave for future identification. Others were not as lucky and were entombed in mass graves, which appalled the living. When North Carolinian George Lee arrived upon the battlefield after Manassas, he wrote: “The first object that met our gaze was a grave in which fifteen North Carolinians were buried. We next came to a Yankee who had only a little dust thrown over him.” Most men like George Lee thought all soldiers, Rebel or Yankee, deserved a respectable burial. They were sickened by the lack of decency given to the dead because their own mortality hung

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84 Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 10-18.
86 Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 18.
87 Ibid., 71-74.
in the balance. “It made me shudder to think that perhaps I may be buried that way,” George Lee wrote his mother.89

It must be stated, however, that warfare remained very complex and ambiguous. While men were horrified by the destruction that combat visited upon their bodies and minds, there was an indefinable attraction that some men felt toward battle. Georgian Frank Coker was resting on a hill near Richmond when the sound of musket fire broke out, pulling his emotions in opposite directions. “A heart that is alive and sensitive to pain and suffering cannot listen to it [sounds of battle] but with continual aching,” Coker wrote his wife. “Yet there is an excitement, a charm, an inspiration in it that makes one wish to be where it is going on.”90 Reasons for this attraction varied, but likely morbid curiosity drove some, while others had engaged in games of warfare since childhood. They had been ingrained with a masculine affinity toward warfare.91

Combat presented scenes of extreme violence and heartbreak. When faced with such scenes men often resisted and repressed them. The result was known as hardening, in which they felt indifferent and unaffected by scenes of brutality and death. After seven months of service Edwin H. Fay noticed the change in himself. “I have become perfectly hardened,” he wrote his wife. “I care for nothing now.”92 Some men welcomed hardening as a means of coping, while others worried about the emotional implications of the devaluing of human life. Joshua Callaway certainly worried about his humanity, writing that he was “hardly allowed to sigh at the fall of our friends and

89 Ibid, 47.
90 Frank Coker, 3 July 1862, in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 156.
91 Rotundo, American Manhood, 36.
92 Edwin F. Fay, October 18 1862, in Wiley, ed., This Infernal War, 173.
relatives; and if we do happen to shed a tear secretly, it is soon dried up to make room for
some one else. We never will have time to contemplate and comprehend the horrors of
this war until sweet, delightful peace is restored to us & we can take a retrospective
view.” Joshua, like so many soldiers, distanced himself from the death and suffering of
the war in order to cope mentally. But in distancing himself from all of the pain, he felt
himself drifting away from what made him human and that frightened him.94

Joshua was not alone in this fear. As he helplessly watched a friend succumb
to illness, Theodorick Montfort was horrified by how desensitized to death men had
become. “The better feelings of men become deadened & destroyed in the army,” he
wrote his wife after he buried his comrade. “Human life is not considered of much
importance by the men & death attracts the attention of no one-unless it is some personal
friend or relative.”95 Some men refused to join the ranks of the “deadened” and sought to
preserve their humanity. Georgian Benjamin Abbott rushed into the battle of
Chickamauga with bitter hatred toward the Yankees who had invaded his country. But as
he walked amid the enemy wounded he found he could not refuse the desperate plea from
a young officer of the North who “was mortally wounded and suffering very much.”96
Abbott washed the dying officer, buried him, and marked his grave by carving his name
into an improvised headboard. He believed “it was not the place to discuss right and
wrong: it was simply a question of humanity.” Ultimately, Benjamin Abbott was one of

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93 Joshua Callaway, 20 July 1862, in Halleck, ed., *Joshua Callaway*, 44.
94 Stephen Berry, “When Metal Meets Mettle,” 15; and Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 58.
95 Theodorick Montfort, 9 November 1861, in King, jr., *Rebel Lawyer*, 33.
96 Benjamin Abbott, 26 September 1863, in Lane, ed., *Dear Mother*, 273.
many men who struggled to maintain his decency, concluding “we cannot yet be barbarians.”

As they struggled, fought, shivered, and starved, some men began to realize that the war had irreparably altered who they were. Some could no longer recognize themselves. After the battle of Cold Harbor, one soldier wrote his sister: “I have seen such a hard time recently that I hardly look like myself.” Following the traumatic death of his brother, North Carolinian Walter Lee wrote his mother: “I don’t believe I am the same being I was two weeks ago, at least I don’t think as I used to and things don’t seem as they did.” For many, the burden became too great to bear and they left. It is estimated that over 100,000 soldiers deserted from the ranks of the Confederate army during the war. Desertion was often a culmination of intense hardships involving starvation, disease, disbelief, and a desire to reclaim a prewar identity.

Joshua Callaway certainly thought about desertion during the last months of his life. Throughout his tenure as a soldier, he had fought a psychological battle, balancing depression with optimism. As October 1863 turned into November, his despondence began to outweigh his hope. “My patience is worn entirely out with the war…I am as sick of the war as any man who deserted,” he wrote Dulcinea. But he

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97 Ibid., 276.
98 Charles Sander, 8 June 1864, in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 298.
100 Ella Lonn, Desertion During the Civil War (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1928), 231.
remained committed to returning to his family without shame. “But do not you think I have any notion of a similar course. No, never.”

On November 18, the Twenty-Eighth Alabama was bivouacked at Missionary Ridge, outside Chattanooga, Tennessee. While on picket duty, Joshua convinced several men to accompany him to climb to the top of Lookout Mountain near the Confederate line. He wrote his wife the next day that as he stood there upon the mountain he “could not help feeling a spark of ambition, a desire to make my name as immortal in future history and as classic as that of Lookout Mountain.” But as he marveled at the view of the Chattanooga Valley, a general departing his headquarters on the valley floor distracted him. Suddenly, he was forced back to reality. Comparing the tiny general with the mountain, Joshua wrote: “I could not help smiling at his impetuosity and sighing at his insignificance. He reminded me of an ant trying to shake the earth, and my ambition cooled off and I would be perfectly content to be at home with my wife and never be thought of after I die.” The weight of the war had crushed his conviction in the Confederate cause. It placed enormous strain on his ambition as well. Simply to carry on, Joshua placed his wife at the center of his career as a Confederate soldier. His war continued to be about staying alive and returning to his family with no dishonor attached to his name.

But the war had other plans for Joshua. Six days later, Union forces advanced upon Missionary Ridge. Confederate forces positioned themselves on a tactically

disastrous position, and almost as soon as they clashed with the Federals, the Confederate line collapsed. As Joshua tried to rally his company to fight the advancing Yankees, a bullet burst through his intestines. His companions picked him up and carried him with the retreating Confederates. Suddenly, Joshua begged his friends to lay him down and to let him die. Dying, abandoned, and alone, Joshua Callaway’s last moments were undoubtedly given to his family. The war had psychologically engulfed him, and on November 25, it swallowed his life as well.104

104 Halleck, ed., Callaway, 166-168.
CHAPTER V

RELIGION AND THE COMMON SOLDIER OF THE CONFEDERACY

Many southern men endured enormous physical and psychological trauma during the Civil War. These men dealt with that trauma in various ways, which for some, included becoming religious. Recently, noted historian Gerald Linderman has questioned the importance of religion to the common soldier of the Confederacy. Linderman asserts that the horrors of war destroyed the “untroubled confidence that faith would extend the mantle of God’s sanctification over all their activity. It was indeed difficult to see God’s hand in combat and to remain convinced that it was driving the war forward in order that good might ensue.”


This argument well describes the attitudes of many southern soldiers who felt disillusioned as the war continued. Georgian William Stillwell, for example, despaired after Gettysburg: “When I think of the thousand[s] of mangled forms of human beings crippled…I am compelled to cry out, ‘Oh, God, how long will Thou afflict us, how long shall the horrors of war desolate our once happy country?’ Is the strength of God weakened or is his arm shortened?”

2 William Stillwell, 13 August 1863, in Lane, ed., *Dear Mother*, 260.
entered the conflict with strong convictions of faith that were shattered, along with their minds and bodies.³

But there was a large number of men who entered the war with little or no religious interest, who experienced a strengthening of faith in the divine. Religion served to fill the void created by the identity crisis of becoming soldier. Soldier life could deprive some men of independence, individuality, humanity, courage, and optimism. Religion could give the soldier another cause to believe in, something else to fight for. Faith often became a new component of their identity. Additionally, religion could give meaning to an otherwise chaotic existence. Superimposing the will of God upon the rampant loss of human life endured in the conflict gave meaning for those who survived. Faith also promised a reunion with comrades and family if a man died in the conflict. It became extraordinarily important to many men.⁴

Prior to the Civil War, southern Baptists and Methodists had considerable trouble convincing men to join the ranks of the faithful. Women were always the cornerstone of membership in nineteenth century churches. The reasons for this vary, but chief among them was the unique masculine fear of feminization. Additionally, men sought to control their wives and disapproved of any private activity, such as attending church. Other men thought church distracted women from their daily duties of being a

⁴ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 180.
wife and mother. Some men were jealous of the close relationships preachers achieved with their feminine audience and suspected foul play.5

Ministers preached to a crowd of increasingly female church members, and as religion became more feminized in the early nineteenth century men’s attendance dwindled. “From natural temperament, and the circumstances of her daily life, she is more sensitive than her husband to the appeals of religion,” forty-one-year-old North Carolina preacher Aldert Smedes declared in a sermon. “[M]ay the Christian wife often become the minister to her husband’s salvation.”6 It seems fairly obvious that women dominated the audience during this sermon. Religion had quickly become the domain of women; extreme piety and consuming morality were not the concerns of men.7 Female congregations, separated from concentrations of men, money, and power, surrounded ministers. Because of this, men viewed preachers as emasculated.8 While men primarily did ministerial work, it was a profession that conferred lower status on them. Because ministers did not engage in agriculture or plantation work, or throw themselves into commerce, men viewed them as strange and feminine. Emasculated ministers and large congregations of women deterred substantial concentrations of men from becoming devoted.9

7 Kimmel, Manhood in America, 175-176.
8 Rotundo, American Manhood, 205.
9 Ibid., 205-206, and Mathews, Religion in the Old South, 103.
Southern men, however, were not deterred from the church because of slavery. In fact, most southerners believed that proslavery thought and religion complemented each other. They believed that Christianity explicitly condoned slavery, as an essay in the September 1850 issue of *De Bow’s Review* argued: “The Bible teaches clearly and conclusively that the holding of slaves is right; and if so, no deduction from general principles can make it wrong, if that book is true.”10 The southern conviction of the compatibility of Christianity and slavery led southern Methodists and Baptists to split from their northern counterparts. This ecclesiastical schism occurred in 1844-1845 and has been interpreted as a precursor to the Civil War.11

When the secession crisis and the subsequent war broke out, men identified their cause as righteous and believed they were protected by God’s aegis. Religious language was infused into the Confederate cause to bolster its appeal. “We have assembled to usher into existence the permanent government of the Confederate States…under the favor of Divine Providence,” Jefferson Davis proclaimed in his inaugural address.12 The belief that an omnipotent being buttressed the Confederacy was extremely important to the common soldier of the South. Ordinary men believed their country was being invaded, which gave them an honorable justification to go to war. Since their mission was principled, something that southerners presumed, God would not

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11 Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 162.

abandon them. Walter Lenoir felt comforted by this conviction. “[W]e have abundant proof in the Bible, and in the course of events that God prospers the righteous cause,” he wrote his mother in 1862. This conclusion bolstered Walter’s confidence and helped him to volunteer to join the war. It would continue to aid him while he endured tremendous privations as a soldier fighting in Virginia. No longer was religion viewed as feminine, fighting men were beginning to become devout Christians as war began.

Remaining pious proved challenging for many southern men. During the long months of idleness in camp between short periods of extreme action, men often passed the time by drinking, swearing, gambling, and carousing, all of which religion condemned as sinful. “Camp is a peculiar place [with] all sorts of men and dispositions of men,” one soldier wrote. “Now, while I write, there is a variety of amusements in hearing, one party playing at leap frog and singing spiritual songs, some dancing, some cursing, some reading the Bible, some drinking whiskey and all sorts and more evil than good.” Camp tested the resilience of many men to remain true to their newfound piety.

One of the many men who felt strained by camp life was William Dorsey Pender. Pender was born in North Carolina in 1834, the son of a genteel patriarchal planter. He graduated from West Point in 1854, and married Fanny Shepperd in 1859. In 1860 Pender resigned from the United States Army, and in August 1861, he became

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14 Walter Lenoir to Selina Louise Lenoir, 2 March 1862, Lenoir Family Papers.
17 J.H. Graham, 16 January 1862, in Lane, ed., *Dear Mother*, 95.
colonel of the Sixth North Carolina. His experience in combat was punctuated by an initial thrill to participate in warfare. Pender watched as Confederate forces skirmished with Federal troops during the rebel retreat from Yorktown in May 1862. His regiment was not engaged and he lamented: “I did not have a chance to test my courage.” The next month, Pender and his regiment were involved in the battle at Seven Pines where the Sixth North Carolina led the assault on the left. Less than a month after his first brush with action, Pender was disillusioned. He wrote his wife Fanny: “I am sick of soldiering and especially the fighting part, particularly as I have no desire to be killed.”

Pender’s relationship with Fanny grew in importance to him. Fanny was a strong woman, who respected her husband’s will, but she was not afraid to rebuke him. While it is clear the two cared deeply for each other, their relationship, like any marriage, was occasionally tumultuous. When Pender repeatedly requested more letters from Fanny, she responded: “Remember, Mr. Pender…I never sit down to write a letter that I do not have to get up half a dozen times to perform some little service either for the baby or someone else. And often, I attempt to write with both children screaming in my ears and indeed, indeed I never intended to neglect you.”

Pender also made frequent allusions to both girls that were infatuated with him and flirtatious encounters he engaged

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19 Ibid., 181.
22 William Dorsey Pender, 25 June 1862, in Hassler, ed., The General to His Lady, 159.
23 Fanny Pender, 30 June 1861, in Hasler, ed., The General to His Lady, 43.
in. Fanny quickly put an end to his foolish boasting: “I never expected to hear you admit that you had been flirting…nothing you have ever written in this whole of our married life-ever pained me so acutely or grieved me so deeply.”  

Yet despite these marital conflicts, his wife remained crucial to his psychological well-being. Pender cared deeply for her and as the war cooled his ambition, his desire to return to his wife burgeoned. “I have almost come to feel that you are a part of my religion,” he wrote her in fall of 1862. “My dear wife you have no idea of the excellent opinion I have of your goodness and sweetness. You are truly my good Angel.”

As his wife grew in importance, so too did religion. He had never been religious prior to the war, nor were his parents. Faith could provide a sense of community, not only among believers in camp, but for those on the homefront. Pender sought to join this religious community, which could provide consolation for the isolation from his family. He wrote to Fanny: “I begin to hope, honey, that some day I may be able to go up and kneel with you and receive that, which I look upon with so much awe, and which must be the greatest comfort, of any of the visible acts of acknowledgements of the true Religion.” He thirsted for a religious experience, which could provide him with relief from the loneliness of soldier life.

Pender joined the community of the faithful on October 7, 1861 when he was baptized in front of his regiment. While he was understandably happy, his letter to his

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24 Ibid, 44.
25 William Dorsey Pender, 24 October 1862, in Hassler, ed., The General to His Lady, 185-186.
27 William Dorsey Pender, 11 September 1862, in Hasler, ed., The General to His Lady, 58.
wife also affirmed his trepidation of trying to be a Christian in an army camp. He wrote Fanny: “Help me my wife for you know how hard it is to do right and how many temptations surround me.” 28 The state of his soul and his quest to become more religious continued to disturb Pender. He never felt that his conduct mirrored the Christian standard of appropriate behavior. Camp life presented so many opportunities to act sinfully, something Pender well understood. “It is so hard to be a Christian,” he wrote Fanny a month after his baptism. 29 He endured a human struggle, vacillating between hope for his eventual salvation, and guilt for his failings. “Fanny, I do thirst after righteousness but am too indolent and weak to gain. Of late I have almost despaired of ever becoming a Christian,” he wrote in November of 1861. “I try but fail to arouse myself to that earnestness that one should have. I make good resolutions only to be broken.” 30 He struggled for the remainder of his life to rise above his shortcomings, and he yearned for a religious experience that would affirm his acceptance into a greater community.

Revivals grew in popularity in the South in 1863 especially following Confederate setbacks. Troops encamped together after military defeats or unimaginable privations would engage in mass meetings of intense religious fervor. This contributed to a sense of community among revivalists. 31 Joshua Callaway became caught up in the revivals that struck the Army of Tennessee in the late summer of 1863. Callaway wrote

28 William Dorsey Pender, 7 October 1861, in Hasler, ed., The General to His Lady, 77.
29 William Dorsey Pender, 18 November 1861, in Hasler, ed., The General to His Lady, 95.
30 William Dorsey Pender, 22 November 1861, in Hasler, ed., The General to His Lady, 98.
his wife: “I believe I wrote you that we have a prayer meeting nearly every night.”

These meetings certainly gave him a sense of belonging, and served to assuage his deep depression. Like Pender, Callaway became a religious fanatic, writing his wife: “It’s the all absorbing subject with me.” But his obsession with religion stemmed not from a desire for community, but for salvation. Salvation gave him the promise of eternity and helped to diminish his fear of death. In his mind, death now became a choice. “I Bless God that…I can now go into the fight without that great dread which has hitherto haunted me,” he wrote Dulcinea. Religion became a foundation of his confidence, because he firmly believed that he would live on, even if his physical body did not.

For other men, religion promised an eternal family reunion, reuniting family and friends that had been torn asunder by the Civil War. Georgian James Gray was distraught after his brother Augustus Gray was paralyzed by a bullet and died two days later. “I cannot tell you how bad it hurts me to part with him,” he wrote his sister. But his faith gave him consolation in the face of his loss. It promised an everlasting gathering, which helped to mend his broken heart. “He can never return to us any more, but I will try to go to him, and I hope you all will do the same,” Gray wrote his father.

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32 Joshua Callaway, 2 September 1863, in Halleck, ed., Joshua Callaway, 130.
33 Joshua Callaway, 11 October 1863, in Halleck, ed., Joshua Callaway, 146.
34 Joshua Callaway, 17 September 1863, in Halleck, ed., Joshua Callaway, 133.
36 James Gray, 12 June 1864, in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 302.
37 James Gray, 15 June 1864, in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 302.
helped to inspire many men to modify their behavior according to the Christian standard, so they could see their family again.38

As the war progressed it brought both successes and failures. During the failed campaigns men tried to stay positive by remaining faithful regarding the goodness of God. They hoped that their faith would eventually reward them with victory. Imposing God’s design on the nature of events gave order and meaning to all the suffering, death, and destruction of the war.39 “It does not appear in all that God’s favor is withdrawn or that his almighty arm will fail to support us,” Walter Lenoir wrote his brother after the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg. “Our very disasters may be blessings sent from him in disguise; they most assuredly will prove so to those that love him.”40 When Dulcinea Callaway wrote Joshua to pray for peace, he agreed to do so but speculated: “I am disposed [to] let the Good Lord decide upon what terms we have it. We have been pray[ing] for peace upon our own terms for three years and the prospect becomes more gloomy. Now let us accept it on his terms and trust his goodness to do us well.”41 Lenoir and Callaway both were willing submit to the will of God. Men were not supposed to submit to the will of anybody, but the war had become so desperate they were willing to appear emasculated in order that religion could give purpose to their lives. This was the power that religion held with some men.

Historian Drew Gilpin Faust asserts that religion could help men deal with the trauma of battle. Warfare was deeply confusing; death was not ordered and deserving but

38 Faust, This Republic of Suffering, 180.
40 Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, 27 September 1863, Lenoir Family Papers.
41 Joshua Callaway, 26 October 1863, in Halleck, ed., Joshua Callaway, 155.
rather chaotic and often meaningless. Religion could give order to the disorder of battle and, for some men, could relieve their combat related anxieties.\textsuperscript{42} One of these men was James Williams. Williams was born in Ohio in 1837 and spent most of his youth in the North. In 1858 he ventured to the Deep South to work as a clerk and help the family pay off some debts. In 1860 he married Eliza Jane Rennison, a Georgia belle, and moved to Mobile, Alabama. He had effectively cemented himself as a southerner just months before the secession crisis broke out.\textsuperscript{43}

After some delay, Williams volunteered in October 1861 and became a soldier in the Twenty-First Alabama Infantry Regiment. His inspirations to remain a soldier were his wife, his fear of feminization, and his ambition. His wife Eliza, or Lizzie, as Williams affectionately called her, came to encompass everything good and pure about home. She became something to which he wanted to return. “You are the only one for me in the whole world,” Williams wrote Lizzie. “You are all that is good and lovely-and when this war is over I will go back to you again…I love my wife and I love my country-and though the latter calls me to leave you darling it can never make me forget you.”\textsuperscript{44} When Williams dreamt of home, he saw Lizzie, and she represented everything decent that he wanted to fight for and preserve.

He was motivated to fight by an ever-present fear of emasculation. Williams strongly felt that a true man should fight if there were danger present. He needed

\textsuperscript{42} Faust, “Christian Soldiers,” 88.
\textsuperscript{44} James Williams, 12 November 1861, in Folmar, ed., \textit{From That Terrible Field}, 5.
onlookers to know that he was involved and acting manly. “I must be where I can hear
the click of arms, and the roll of the drums or I would not think that I was any better
soldier than the cowardly stay-at-homes that I so heartily despise,” he wrote Lizzie.45
When the young Alabamian encountered southern men who had remained on the
homefront he was incensed. His fear of appearing feminine and cowardly manifested as
rage toward men who did not fight. As he marched through Memphis, Tennessee his eyes
met a group of men who had not enlisted. He wrote Lizzie: “Crowds of young men, pale
faced, white handed, perfumed, bedressed, and white shirted stood on the walks and
stared upon us—oh! How my blood boiled to see the cowards and traitors gaping at us as
we filed…to meet the enemies of our country and theirs!”46 His need to appear manly
certainly fueled his desire to remain a soldier. His fear of feminization translated into
outrage at those who did not fight.47

His thoughts were often occupied by dreams of ambition. This helped to
preserve his confidence and keep him from becoming depressed and disillusioned. A
military self-made man of sorts, he was determined to rise through the ranks based on
merit. “[B]y faithfully and fearlessly discharging my duty I will rise in rank; and serve
my country better, while I gratify the ambition; without which no man can be a good
soldier,” he wrote Lizzie. “I am proud to think that I owe my position neither to money or
influential friends.”48 Ambition assisted in keeping him in the ranks. Religion did not.

45 James Williams, 15 December 1861, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 11.
46 James Williams, 9 March 1862, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 45.
47 Kimmel, Manhood in America, 36.
48 James Williams, 28 June 1862, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 93.
Williams was not a religious man. It did not appeal to him, nor did the practitioners of religion. As he wrote to Lizzie from camp in Fort Gaines in December 1861, the voices of psalm singers rang out “making night hideous with their horrid nasal twang butchering bad music.” In addition to criticizing their voices, he blamed the church for starting the war. “If it had not been for them [psalm singers] I would never have been soldiering here from Dauphin Island,” he wrote Lizzie. He concluded that he would never want to trust his life to a religious man, singing psalms in the night. “[I]f I had to go off with a few men on a dangerous expedition to-night I’d rather take an old granny than any of them [psalm singers]-Give me a jolly good ‘sinner’ to stand by me when the hour of danger comes!”49

The hour of danger came on April 6, in southern Tennessee when Williams and the Twenty-First Alabama participated in the bloody Battle of Shiloh. The battle went well the first day as Confederates led by Albert Sidney Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard pushed General Grant’s Union forces back to the Tennessee River. The second day, however, was dismal. Grant had been reinforced in the night and soundly defeated the Confederates.50 The Confederates entered the fight with over 40,000 soldiers. More than 9,000 of them fell dead or wounded on April 6 and 7, 1862.51 For Williams, Shiloh was an indescribable experience that left a permanent scar in his mind. “[I]t will take me months to describe what I saw on that terrible field,” he wrote Lizzie

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49 James Williams, 20 December 1861, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 13.
51 McWhiney and Jamieson, Attack and Die, 8.
just a day after the battle. Several days after the battle he was still wrestling with his thoughts, trying to deal with the ghastly memories. “[T]he terrible scenes of the two days…are indelibly fixed in my memory,” he wrote Lizzie.

By the end of April 1862 James Williams was beginning to display symptoms of acute Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Civil War soldiers were not able to escape the psychological repercussions of warfare. Exposure to combat produced many stress reactions that would be characterized as PTSD today. These reactions included intrusive recollections, flashbacks, nightmares, intense anxiety, depression, and psychotic episodes. For Williams, his reaction to combat came in the form of disruptive and frightening nightmares. “I’ve had great and exciting times at night with my dreams since the battle; some of them are tragedies and frighten me more than ever the fight did when I was awake,” he wrote Lizzie two weeks after Shiloh.

But religion provided solace to William’s troubled mind. He came to believe that God had protected him. The idea that an omnipotent deity was watching over him gave him comfort and set his mind at ease. “As for myself I feel that I will again be protected by Him who guides every little unseen missile,” he wrote Lizzie. As battle seemed imminent at Corinth, he again wrote Lizzie: “The God who shielded me before, yet watches over us all.” His newfound piety did not last long. But while it lasted it

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52 James Williams, 8 April 1862, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 53.
53 James Williams, 11 April 1862, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 55.
54 Dean, Jr., Shook Over Hell, 87.
55 James Williams, 20 April 1862, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 60.
56 James Williams, 4 May 1862, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 73.
57 James Williams, 12 May 1862, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 77.
provided a rhyme and reason to warfare. Suddenly, the chaos of battle made sense. He had survived because God watched over him, a comforting thought to the young Alabamian. He did not mention having any more nightmares in his letters to his wife. Religion played a key role in quieting the tempest in his mind.\textsuperscript{58}

For some men, the shield of God was not figurative. Georgian Blanton Forston witnessed an event that convinced him that religion could literally protect the faithful. “Private Lawrence of our company was shot in the left breast,” Forston wrote his father from Kennesaw Mountain. “The ball lodged in his Bible, thereby saving his life…He is a devoted Christian.”\textsuperscript{59} Although scenes like this were rare, they convinced the onlookers that God’s aegis was not metaphorical. These men came to believe that if they learned to love God and serve him faithfully, they could be protected.

James Williams seemed that he was on a course similar to that Joshua Callaway traveled. After Shiloh his military ambition was satiated and he was ready to return to his civilian life in Alabama. War proved to be disenchanting even to Williams. He had a chance encounter in camp with a friend named John Pippen and during their conversation he and John “agreed that our military dreams were now realized.” James continued: “We were fully satisfied with our military experience; and if the war were now to come to a close we would joyfully return to our homes.”\textsuperscript{60} Then, in July 1862, the Twenty-First Alabama was ordered to Mobile Bay, where its members would remain for the duration of the war. Soldier life in Mobile Bay was comfortable and easy. “All’s quiet

\textsuperscript{58} Faust, “Christian Soldiers,” 88.
\textsuperscript{59} Blanton Forston, 24 June 1864, in Lane, ed., \textit{Dear Mother}, 308.
\textsuperscript{60} James Williams, 25 April 1862, in Folmar, ed., \textit{From That Terrible Field}, 66.
as usual,“ he wrote Lizzie in July 1863. “Two or three blockade running steamers are out.”\footnote{James Williams, 13 July 1863, in Folmar, ed., \textit{From That Terrible Field}, 116.} In addition to spending lazy days watching ships, Williams had a healthy selection of fresh fish to eat. “[A]t dinner today we had-baked red fish-pompin-blue fish and trout-a flounder for breakfast-all of them the very finest fish that swim in the bay,” he wrote Lizzie in July 1863.\footnote{James Williams, 20 July 1863, in Folmar, ed., \textit{From That Terrible Field}, 117.}

Williams did not have to undergo the unimaginable hardships of exhaustion and starvation that Joshua Callaway and thousands of other southerners endured. He did not suffer through the anxiety of a broken identity, or lament the loss of his humanity. Consequently, his masculinity was not affected. He greeted rumors of battle with the exuberance of an early recruit. “Rumors are plenty that we are to be sent into the field again…I hope that there is some truth in the report-it is time that I was striking a blow for the cause,” he wrote Lizzie in September 1863.\footnote{James Williams, 29 September 1863, Folmar, ed., \textit{From That Terrible Field}, 123.} His idleness in Mobile Bay fueled his masculine urge to be involved and prove his courage, despite having proven himself at Shiloh. Therefore, Williams had no need for religion.

For those who did have to endure the deprivations of war, a fervent conviction in the benevolence of God’s plan helped them deal with the uncertainties and chaos of soldier life. But for some men, a strong faith in the will of God could become fatalistic.\footnote{Watson, “Religion and Combat Motivation,” 51.} Elisha F. Paxton was a thirty-five-year-old Virginian who served as a Brigadier General in the Army of Northern Virginia. His belief in God’s will was so strong that he was ready and willing to submit to any fate, even death. His letters were filled with dark
broodings of his potential death, something he saw as inevitable. “Many of us must go
down in the struggle, never to rise again. Such may be my fate. Sometimes I try never to
let my hopes fix upon anything beyond the war, such is the uncertainty of surviving it,”
Paxton wrote to his wife Elizabeth in 1863. His depressing missives continued until his
death at the Battle of Chancellorsville. “Sooner or later we must separate in this life, and
it will be whenever God so wills it. Despondency and despair under such circumstances
is foolish and sinful. Far better to be…ready to do our duty and submit in patience to our
fate, whatever it may be,” he wrote his wife. This was the dark side of religion. For
some men, like Elisha Paxton, it could lead to a startling complacency regarding their
own mortality. Faith could easily give way to defeatism.

When religious men died, the living often served as interpreters of their last
moments. In the absence of family, comrades looked for small signals regarding the
spiritual state of the deceased. If there was no demonstration, friends often invented clues
about the dead soldier’s spiritual health. When Elisha Paxton died at Chancellorsville, a
companion wrote to his wife Elizabeth: “As soon as he [Paxton] was struck he lifted his
hand to his breast pocket. In that pocket I knew he kept his Bible and the picture of his
wife, and his thoughts were at that moment of heaven and his home.” Paxton’s friend
interpreted his last moments as a religious experience. His final breath was devoted to

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66 Ibid., 98.
68 Faust, This Republic of Suffering, 21.
what was most important: family and the afterlife. More than twenty years later, a letter from a former comrade to Paxton’s son, John, revealed the true nature of his death:

“Suddenly I heard the unmistakable blow of a ball... in an instant your father reeled and fell. He at once raised himself, with his arms extended, and as I bent over him to lift him I understood him to say, ‘Tie up my arm’; and then, as I thought, he died.”

Paxton died a sudden death on the battlefield that challenged the ideal Christian death. In the absence of any discernible signs of religious faith, the living often invented a death for their comrade steeped in spiritual meaning. This gave comfort to the family of the deceased. It also gave comfort to the soldiers that remained alive, assuring them that death was not the end.

As the conflict became more desperate and Confederate setbacks became more numerous, some men began to despair. There seemed to be no divine will amid all the suffering, which nothing could justify. One Confederate complained: “It seems the Lord has turned His face from us and left us to work out our own destruction. It seems like death must be our portion.” Others focused the blame not on God, but upon the evil and sinfulness of the Confederacy. Shifting accountability inward helped to explain the defeats and privations southerners were suffering, while still maintaining belief in an omnipotent being. “[The] sins of the people have rose like a dark cloud between us and God... how can we expect Him to bless such a people as we are,” one Confederate wrote to his wife.

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71 Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 21.

72 J.M. Davis, 6 July 1864, in Lane, ed., *Dear Mother*, 312.

73 William Stillwell, 13 August 1863, in Lane, ed., *Dear Mother*, 260.
This internal blame was a psychological tactic that could even help explain a wound. At the Battle of Ox Hill on August 31, 1862, Walter Lenoir was wounded. A minié ball ripped through his right leg between the knee and ankle and shattered both bones. Amputation was the only recourse to stop the spread of infection. Physicians had neither antibiotics nor any conception of a sterile environment to combat infection. They used blood-soaked rags as bandages, the same scalpel would be used in dozens of operations.74 So Lenoir and his right leg parted ways forever, and he was sent to Middleburg to recuperate.75 While he lay in agony, he tried to reconcile his physical torture with God’s will. His answer was to blame himself: “I have been most powerfully impressed all the while in viewing my sufferings as part of God’s dealings with me as a sinner.”76 His sufferings could have challenged his worldview of God as the supreme architect, but he chose to blame himself instead. “Although his chastisements which I have brought upon myself seem very fierce, his mercies & his loving kindness…have seemed more overwhelming still, though all undeserved,” he wrote to his mother while recuperating.77 Self-blame maintained the belief in the goodness of God’s design.

Prior to the war, religion was a feminine influence. Preachers were viewed as emasculated. Congregations consisted almost entirely of women. Most southern men had no interest in joining a church, and many rebelled against Evangelical movements in the

74 Rutkow, Bleeding Blue and Grey, 64.
75 Barney, The Making of a Confederate, 85; and Walter Lenoir to Selina Louise Lenoir, 13 September 1862, Lenoir Family Papers.
76 Walter Lenoir to Selina Louise Lenoir, 13 September 1862, Lenoir Family Papers.
77 Ibid.
The American Civil War was a massive assault upon the bodies and minds of the men who fought it. So much so that southern men who had previously been indifferent or even disdainful of religion flocked to the church. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust conservatively estimates that 150,000 southern soldiers became Christianized during the Civil War, with many more observers who never became baptized.79

The catalyst for the widespread acceptance of religion was the hardship of war. Disease and hard marching broke men down physically and mentally. Assaulting their bodies and minds, the combat experience tore down soldiers’ initial convictions about warfare and their notions of masculinity. The common soldier could not share the views of commanders or those from the homefront; the nature of war simply did not permit him to do so. He existed in a wildly chaotic physical and emotional environment. Instead, soldiers found something important to them, and that became their mission. Family, ambition, and fellow soldiers all became key reasons to fight.80

Religion became central to the psychological and emotional well being of many soldiers. It provided a community of worshippers that could assuage feelings of isolation. It supplied soldiers with the promise of an afterlife, helping them become less fearful of death. The assurance of God’s design provided order to an otherwise chaotic environment of combat. For those who did not experience prolonged exposure to marching and combat, religion did not become necessary to their identity. Men like James Williams, who leisurely served out his tenure as a soldier in Mobile Bay, were able

to maintain their pre-war identity. Without the hardships of marching, starvation, and battle to assault their minds and bodies, they did not need any assurances of an afterlife. But, for soldiers in combat, religion often proved necessary to their existence on the front.
CHAPTER VI

WHAT THE WAR WROUGHT

In four years, the Civil War claimed the lives of 620,000 Americans. Close to 260,000 Confederate soldiers never returned home. One in five southern men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five were dead when the fighting ended.¹ For those that did return home, there were no victory parades as there were for their northern counterparts. Instead, they returned to a defeated and dishonored South. Many southern cities lay in ruins. The infrastructure and economy of much of the South were likewise in shambles. In the making of such defeat, southern men were forced to redefine who they were.² Pre-war notions of warfare, manhood, and even identity often crumbled under the horrible and confusing nature of combat. After an extended period of soldiering, many men could no longer recognize themselves, physically or emotionally. “I have no opportunity of judging my appearance,” James Williams wrote. “I did see the reflection of a dirty dust begrimed face once or twice in a glass since I have been here.”³

Southern manhood prior to the war was complex and sometimes ferocious. Because white men defined citizenship in antebellum southern society, social expectations of them were high indeed. Southern manliness was deeply imbued with

² Dean, Jr., *Shook Over Hell*, 181; Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 188.
honor, which served as a code of conduct for white men. They prized and violently defended personal independence. Their hypersensitive fear of dependence, stemmed, in part, from the presence of slaves, who constantly reminded white men of what it meant to be dependent. Women, too, were dependent, hence the fears of feminization that plagued many white men in the South. Finally, men were expected to maintain vigilant control over their emotions, even during harrowing experiences that ranged from the death of a family member to a violent duel. These traits—honor, independence, and self-control—largely characterized antebellum southern masculinity.4

When sectional tensions exploded, southern men employed masculine language to underscore the authenticity of secession. Secession was controversial and initially popular mainly with young men in the Upper South, and most white southerners in the Lower South states. But the bombardment of Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s subsequent proclamation calling for troops had a galvanizing effect on southern men. It served as a conversion experience, transforming many southern Unionists to die-hard Confederates. Southerners viewed the proclamation as a threat. It seemed to threaten subjugation, which they imagined would turn them into slaves. Benjamin Moody, a private in the Thirty-Fifth Georgia Volunteer Infantry, wrote his wife: “I know that it is hard for you to do without me, but I think that is better for you to do that than for our country to be subjugated and our children trampled in the dust forever.”5 Southern men also viewed

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their cause as righteous and supported by God; therefore they could not lose. “I look forward to a large engagement,” William Dorsey Pender wrote his wife in July of 1861. “Let it come and may God defend and strengthen the just. If we are worsted then we can try it again and again and the result will be the same. They cannot conquer us.”

But the righteous ideals of the Confederate cause quickly fizzled for the common soldier under the weight of combat. Warfare seemed like it was going to wipe men off the face of the planet; death came from multiple directions and was seemingly uncontrollable. Invisible bacteria and microorganisms assaulted the soft organs of their bodies, inflaming their intestines and drowning them in fluid. Tumbling masses of hot lead and roaring artillery ripped into their tender flesh and in some cases, separated men from their bodies. Psychologically, men strained under the pressure. They felt their individuality vanish, and their humanity often followed. They worried they had become unthinking, unfeeling killing machines. “I am not worthy to live,” Edwin H. Fay complained. “I am unfit to die. My heart has become harder than the nether Mill Stone. I have no love for anything.” Under these circumstances, liberty and independence became dull, abstract words that were not worth dying for. Instead, men found something else to fight for. Married men idealized their wives and became obsessed with returning home. “I hold my first duty is to my family, my country is secondary,” Fay wrote his

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6 Barney, The Making of a Confederate, 35, 35, 52; Carmichael, The Last Generation, 123, 139, 141, 145; Berry, All That Makes a Man, 168; Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 134; Kimmel, Manhood in America, 34; McPherson, For Cause and Comrades, 17; and Wiley, Johnny Reb, 18.

7 William Dorsey Pender, 9 July 1861, in Hassler, ed., The General to His Lady, 47.

8 Keegan, The Face of Battle, 45; Berry, All That Makes a Man, 244; Linderman, Embattled Courage, 250; and Berry, “When Metal Meets Mettle,” 14.

9 Edwin H. Fay, 24 July 1863, in Wiley, ed., This Infernal War, 302.
wife. 10 Joshua Callaway wrote his wife Dulcinea: “I didn’t know how I did love my D. till I was separated from her…I find that the longer I stay away the worse I want to see you.”11 Men were supposed to stifle dramatic emotions. But many men found they no longer wanted to repress their feelings after prolonged exposure to combat.

Many men grew close to their comrades, physically and emotionally. Those who shared quarters together also often shared food, blankets, letters, secrets, and fears, until they felt like brothers. A strong emotional bond between soldiers was a highlight of twentieth century combat, but fraternal bonds existed in the Civil War as well. “Poor John Henry,” Georgian Edward Davenport wrote his mother about a fellow soldier. “I always divide my articles with him. John is a good boy, and he feels as near to me almost as a brother.”12 Other soldiers felt a strong affinity toward their regiment. Regimental pride ran surprisingly deep within many men, including James Williams. “I do not wish to leave my own regiment; indeed, I do not know that I would accept a place in any other; I helped it win an honorable name, and to leave it would seem like selling my birthright for a mess of pottage,” he wrote his wife Lizzie.13

As the war became more desperate and the setbacks became more numerous, religion increased in popularity among Confederate soldiers. Prior to the war, religion was mostly the province of women and allegedly effeminate preachers. But many common soldiers hungered for the promise of salvation given a near guarantee of death on the front or in a hospital. The notion that an omnipotent God could protect them on the

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10 Edwin H. Fay, 23 June 1862, and 11 September 1862, in Wiley, ed., This Infernal War, 97, 153.
11 Joshua Callaway, 21 June 1863, in Halleck, ed., Callaway, 98.
12 Edward Davenport, 8 January 1863, in Lane, ed., Dear Mother, 211.
13 James Williams, 22 April 1862, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 62.
battlefield proved attractive. This not only gave some men confidence prior to a battle, but provided an answer to the soldier who survived and did not understand why.14 “Let not, I pray you, adversity separate you and yours from the love of our blessed Lord and Master,” one soldier wrote his wife near the end of the war. “Cling to Him and trust in Him to the last with a true heart and full assurance of hope. His promises cannot fail, look constantly forward to the time when He will come and take us to our long and happy home, where suffering can never be known.”15

Because active participation in combat presented an environment that was physically and emotionally unstable, men sought something tangible for which to fight, whether it was family, fellow soldiers, ambition, religion, proof of their manhood, or any combination of these reasons. Men simply could not die for abstract ideals. Perhaps this is a theme not peculiar to the Civil War, but one common to soldiers in most conflicts. Scholars have observed, for instance, that even in a war such as World War II, with a clearly defined enemy and an explicit ideological confrontation between democracy and fascism, the common soldier was primarily motivated by a loyalty to comrades and a desire to stay alive.16 Indeed, some Confederates fled, but many more remained and tried to see the conflict through to the end. For those who remained, their greatest wish was always to go home and live in peace.

14 Faust, _This Republic of Suffering_, 180; Mathews, _Religion in the Old South_, 103; Kimmel, _Manhood in America_, 175-176; Watson, “Religion and Combat Motivation,” 34; and Faust, “Christian Soldiers,” 83.

15 G.B. Gardner, March 1865, in Lane, ed., _Dear Mother_, 347.

In March of 1862, a woman sought out Colonel William Dorsey Pender in a desperate attempt to find her husband, whom she had heard was wounded. But sadly, her beloved had died a few days prior to her arrival. “She walked out here from town-two miles-through the rain and mud,” Pender wrote. “I sent her back in the ambulance and gave her $5-I knew I should spend it better that way than any other…I am a poor comforter.” Pender empathized with the widow because she poignantly reminded him of his own mortality and those he would leave behind. And while he had accrued a reputation for exceeding valor, he certainly felt that the possibility of death was always present. “I am not so brave or fearless, I wish this war could end without another shot being fired, but I will continue as long as it or I last,” he wrote Fanny. If he believed in nothing else, he believed in himself. But his death would have consequences, a widow and fatherless children, who might wander through the rain and mud hoping beyond belief, only to find a stiff corpse. “Many is the poor heart that will be broken by this war,” Pender wrote Fanny after sending the widow home. “May God spare yours is my daily prayer.” His prayer was not answered. Instead, his life, along with the lives of over a quarter million Confederates, was claimed by the war.

17 William Dorsey Pender, 30 March 1862, in Hassler, ed., The General to His Lady, 130.
18 William Dorsey Pender, 6 June 1862, in Hassler, ed., The General to His Lady, 152.
19 William Dorsey Pender, 30 March 1862, in Hassler, ed., The General to His Lady, 130.
CHAPTER VII

EPILOGUE

Walter Lenoir

Walter’s life was forever changed after Lincoln’s post-Fort Sumter proclamation converted him to an ardent supporter of the Confederate cause. His life was forever changed a second time, when on August 31, 1862, a speeding ball tore through his right leg. After his leg was amputated, he endured a painful journey to Middleburg, Virginia, to recuperate. Once there, Walter was hesitant to enter the doors of a hospital. “It seems to me quite certain that I would have died in the hospital,” he wrote his mother.¹ Luckily for Walter, a private citizen procured a solitary room for his recovery. He stayed in Middleburg for several weeks before his brother Tom came for him.²

He returned to North Carolina an amputee and a war hero. But he did not revel in his new accolades for very long. Against the wishes of his mother and sister, Walter decided to move to land he owned in Haywood County, an isolated and mountainous region of southwestern North Carolina. Likely, this was the only course of action that would maintain his autonomy, which was crucial to his manhood. To remain at Fort Defiance, dependent on his mother and sister, would have been emasculating. His new

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¹ Walter Lenoir to Selina Louise Lenoir, 13 September 1862, Lenoir Family Papers.
life in Haywood County was not easy. Walter found his prosthetic leg discouraging: “I have learned enough to know that the best artificial leg will not supply the natural one as well as I hoped, and that I must be more of a cripple…than I allowed myself at first to anticipate.”

He also struggled in his new life as a slaveholder. His slaves undoubtedly found it easy to resist the will of an inexperienced slaveholder who was hindered by a prosthetic leg. He lashed out, frustrated by their disobedience: “I always considered…negroes a pest, mine are dirtier and lazier than even I counted on.” He felt he needed to discipline his slaves but found that he could not bring himself to do it. “I must nerve myself to the very disagreeable task of instituting and keeping up a strict discipline over them,” he wrote in the same letter.

As the war neared its close, Confederate supporters in North Carolina were discouraged by the sinking state of affairs. As southern Unionists led guerilla attacks primarily aimed at planters, Union troops began looting any farm and plantation. Moreover, once the presence of Federal troops was reported in any particular locality, massive numbers of slaves often fled from bondage toward potential freedom. Walter’s brother-in-law, Joe Norwood, witnessed the strife in neighboring Watuga County, writing: “There is a band of robbers & villains who are constantly plundering the people in the night.” Amid all this misery and deprivation, Walter maintained his faith in both the Confederate cause and God’s will. “[W]e are but resolved to do our whole duty for

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3 Ibid., 103.
4 Walter Lenoir to Thomas J. Lenoir, 25 February 1863, Lenoir Family Papers.
5 Ibid.
7 Joe Norwood to Walter Lenoir, 13 August 1863, Lenoir Family Papers.
our country, need our hearts fail us? If we are on God’s side we will know that it is done
in mercy, and for our good, that behind a frowning Providence He hides a smiling face,”
Walter wrote.\(^8\)

Ultimately, the Confederacy surrendered and Walter was forced to reconcile his faith with defeat. He adjusted better than most planters in North Carolina, but he never forgave the North. He never pardoned the Yankees because their guilt was essential to his vibrant identity as a Confederate nationalist, an identity he never relinquished. He spent the rest of his days farming in isolation at Haywood County, and selling his deceased brother William’s estate. After suffering several strokes, Lenoir died quietly on July 26, 1890.\(^9\)

Joshua Callaway

Joshua Callaway’s life ended on November 25, 1863. His last moments, like his final resting place, remain unknown. The war went on without Joshua. The Twenty-Eighth Alabama was so diminished in numbers near war’s end that it was consolidated into Company F of the Twenty-Fourth Alabama. Its members were part of the Confederate Army under Joseph Johnston that surrendered to William Tecumseh Sherman at Durham, North Carolina.\(^10\) Dulcinea took the children and moved to Hays County, Texas, in 1868. She remained in Texas for the rest of her days. In 1875, she

\(^8\) Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, 17 August 1863, Lenoir Family Papers.
\(^10\) Walker and Curren, eds., *Those Gallant Men*, 43.
married John A. Graves, a marriage that produced no children. She passed away in 1883, just short of fifty years old.11

William Dorsey Pender

William Dorsey Pender took part in most of the major battles fought by the Army of Northern Virginia from Cedar Mountain to Gettysburg. At Seven Pines, he received a battlefield promotion from President Jefferson Davis, raising him from colonel to brigadier general. At Fredericksburg, a round hit his left arm while he was rallying his men. At Chancellorsville, he was struck in the right arm by “a spent ball which killed a fine young officer standing in front.”12 Pender thought very highly of Robert E. Lee’s performance at Chancellorsville, writing that Lee had “shown great Generalship and even greatest boldness. There never was such a campaign, not even by Napoleon.”13 But he did not save any praise for General Stonewall Jackson. Pender thought Jackson was too harsh and insensitive to the men, claiming that “he forgets that one ever gets tired, hungry, or sleepy.”14

Throughout his experience in the war Pender struggled to act in accordance with his new Christian faith while also discharging his duties as an officer and a man. “It is very hard, Honey, even to have the outward appearance of religion, let alone the all important inner. I know I trust in God more implicitly than I did. I try to go to him for everything, but the sinner predominates so much in me that it is hard to do anything

11 Halleck, ed., Callaway, 168.
12 William Dorsey Pender, 7 May 1863, in Hassler, ed., The General to His Lady, 235.
13 William Dorsey Pender, 7 September 1862, in Hassler, ed., The General to His Lady, 173.
right,” he wrote Fanny. Camp life challenged Christian ethics, and Pender was continually agonized by his own shortcomings that failed to live up to the Christian standard of behavior.

His contemporaries considered Pender a brave man and a dutiful officer. He received several promotions and numerous citations for courage and zeal during combat. But like many men, Pender felt his inner self crumbling under the weight of the conflict. The war tempered his ambition for honor and accolades. “I pray sincerely as I can-night and morning—for a speedy close to his war,” he wrote Fanny. “I am tired of glory and all its shadows for it has no substance. We work, struggle, make enemies, climb up in rank and what is the result-nothing.” But he charged through his depression, buoyed by the love of his wife, his trust in religion and a strong faith in himself.

After Jackson’s death at Chancellorsville, Lee reorganized the Army of Northern Virginia into three corps, and he appointed Pender major general of a division. Soon afterward, Lee decided to invade Pennsylvania, a decision that would prove ominous for both Pender and the Confederacy. At Gettysburg on the afternoon of July 1, 1863, Pender assaulted Seminary Ridge with his new division. His attack succeeded but not without consequences; he lost 1700 men, meaning roughly forty percent of his soldiers fell dead or wounded. On the morning of July 2, as Pender prepared his men for a second day of fighting, a shell fragment struck him in the left thigh. He was forced to retire before Lee made his famous assault on Cemetery Ridge, which resulted in the

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15 William Dorsey Pender, 28 November 1861, in Hassler, ed., The General to His Lady, 104.
defeat of the Army of Northern Virginia.17 Two weeks later, Pender’s thigh began to hemorrhage a second time and his surgeon was forced to amputate the leg. He survived only a few hours after the operation and died on July 18. A friend reported his last words as the following: “Tell my wife that I do not fear to die. I can confidently resign my soul to God…My only regret is to leave her and our two children.”18 Years later, a veteran of the Army of Northern Virginia recalled participating in a conversation with Robert E. Lee and Ambrose Powell Hill after Gettysburg. During that conversation Lee made it abundantly clear how he felt about Pender: “I ought not to have fought the battle of Gettysburg; it was a mistake,” Lee claimed. “But the stakes were so great I was compelled to play…and we would have succeeded had Pender lived.”19

James Williams

By the summer of 1864, Williams had risen to the position of colonel, and was commanding Fort Morgan at the mouth of Mobile Bay. The Confederates expected a Union attack and Williams welcomed it. “I am delighted that I have command of my pet fort for another fight and am fixed up to make a good one this time,” he wrote Lizzie.20 His idleness at Mobile Bay had dampened his earlier infatuation with religion, and he was an open nonbeliever once again. His command was a few hundred feet from a cemetery in Mobile and he remarked that it was “a good location for a soldier who is anxious for Christian burial.” He continued: “I wouldn’t prefer a lot in the consecrated

20 James Williams, 1 August 1864, in Folmar, From That Terrible Field, 135.
ground to any hasty field trench! I don’t mean to require either very soon. “21 His promotion brought with it extra responsibilities that tore him away from his frequent furloughs to visit his wife and child. This new isolation began to diminish the memory of his family, which depressed him. “It seems long long years since I saw you and I often feel a sort of wonder as to how you look now…sometimes when I think of you I cannot help chafing my bonds a little,” he wrote Lizzie.22

The fight eventually came when Union ships surrounded Fort Morgan and unleashed a terrifying bombardment of the fort. It quickly became apparent to Williams that the fort was lost. “I decided promptly that it would be better to save my command and destroy the fort than to allow both to fall into the hands of the enemy,” he wrote his wife.23 He marched his men out of the fort, and then, at 10:30 pm, an explosion destroyed the stronghold. Williams was suspended from command, pending an investigation, which eventually acquitted him of any charges. From late 1864 into early 1865, the Twenty-First Alabama was forced to retreat in the face of Union invasion. By April 1865, the Twenty-First evacuated Mobile and headed north to Meridian, Mississippi. On April 30, the two armies agreed to a truce and then a formal surrender on May 4. On May 10, the war was officially over for James Williams and the Twenty-First Alabama.24

Williams returned to Mobile where he lived for the rest of his life. He worked a series of odd jobs and participated in various civic organizations. He and Lizzie became the parents of seven children. He died on January 21, 1903 and was buried in the Mobile

21 James Williams, 10 September 1864, in Folmar, ed. From That Terrible Field, 141.
22 James Williams, 3 October 1864, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 143.
23 James Williams, 7 August 1864, in Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 136.
24 Folmar, ed., From That Terrible Field, 156-159.
cemetery, just a few hundred feet from the post where, forty years earlier, he had served in the defense of the city.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., xvi.
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