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In Honor of God and Country: The Clergy of Occupied Virginia during the Civil War

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IN HONOR OF GOD AND COUNTRY:
THE CLERGY OF OCCUPIED VIRGINIA DURING THE CIVIL WAR

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
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In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: RELIGION AND THE WAR</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: THE EARLY ARRESTS</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: THE LATER ARRESTS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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ABSTRACT

The Union army fought two separate battles during the American Civil War. The first was the conflict on the battlefields; the second was the struggle to win back the loyalty of the citizens of the South. In occupied Virginia, this second struggle proved to be the more difficult to win. Confederate ministers often were the most visible protesters for their refusal to say a prayer for President Lincoln during services. The punishments the Union imposed on them only served to rally local communities to the rebel cause; the more the Union sought to control recalcitrant ministers, the more defiant these ministers, and their congregations, became.

This study follows the trajectory of the conflict between southern churches and the northern government from its earliest beginnings to the end of the war. Chapter I focuses on the role of religion in rebellion. It examines the nature of the clergy's role in the community and how that role would inevitably put them into conflict with occupying forces. Either by co-opting them or condemning them, the Union would need to confront the clergy. Chapter II looks at the earliest arrests of ministers. These were not arrests arising from violation of official Union policy, but conflicts that naturally stemmed from the army's struggles to establish control over the occupied territories. Finally, Chapter III addresses the later arrests and the Union's attempts to codify their policies toward the southern clergy. Recognizing that southern ministers posed a threat to maintaining peaceful control over occupied towns, the Union sought to solve the problem through official legislation, only to encounter more resistance than before.

The goal of this study is to provide a context for understanding the role religious leaders play in the morale of an occupied citizenry. The Union was unable to establish hegemony in the towns it occupied because it was unable to co-opt the support of the clergy. Instead of successfully prosecuting the war, the Union need to spend valuable time and energy prosecuting southern ministers.
IN HONOR OF GOD AND COUNTRY:

THE CLERGY OF OCCUPIED VIRGINIA DURING THE CIVIL WAR
INTRODUCTION

It all began with a simple prayer. On the morning of 9 February 1862, the bell of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church called the citizens of occupied Alexandria to Sunday service. Due to its proximity to Washington, Alexandria was one of the first Virginian cities that the Union occupied during the Civil War, but services at St. Paul’s had continued without disturbance. The congregation that day was comprised mostly of townspeople, probably a mixed group of secessionists and unionists, but several Union soldiers from the Eighth Illinois Cavalry sat conspicuously dressed in uniform in the front of the church near the chancel. Officiating the service was Rev. Kersey J. Stewart, a respected minister of the town who was related by marriage to Robert E. Lee, one of Alexandria’s elite citizens.¹

Rev. Stewart had made his way through much of the service and arrived at the Litany. The Episcopal Litany, a tradition dating back to the religion’s roots in the Roman Catholic Church and that continues to this day, is a series of prayers or supplications offered by a speaker for various different causes. Several of these prayers are specific to the congregation or the particular service, but many of them are prescribed by the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer and are repeated every Sunday. No record tells how many of the congregation realized that Rev. Stewart skipped a particular prayer that day. The omission of one line could easily be missed. Undoubtedly some noticed. They may have shook their heads in disapproval, but more likely silently agreed with the reverend’s decision.

One man certainly noticed Stewart’s omission, and he, Capt. Farnesworth, one of the Union soldiers, quickly rose to his feet and approached the chancel. As Stewart remained kneeling and proceeded with the Litany, Farnesworth spoke over him, reciting the omitted prayer. It is unlikely the captain had the words perfectly memorized, but if he had, he would have called out:

O Lord, our heavenly Father, the high and mighty Ruler of the universe, who doest from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth; most heartily we beseech thee, with thy favour to behold and bless thy servant, The President of the United States, and all others in authority; and so replenish them with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that they may always incline to thy will, and walk in thy way: Endue them plenteously with heavenly gifts; grant them in health and prosperity long to live; and finally, after this life, to attain everlasting joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ our Lord.2

Concluding the prayer, Farnesworth turned toward Stewart, still reciting the Litany, and ordered his arrest on the grounds of omitting the prayer for the president of the United States. Stewart rose from his knees and advanced to the chancel rails. Loudly enough for others to hear, Farnesworth announced: “I arrest you by the authority of the United States, as a Rebel and a Traitor.”

“And I,” Stewart quickly retorted, “summon you to answer at the judgment seat of the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords for interfering, by force of arms, with his Ambassadors, while in the act of presenting the petitions of His people at His altar.”

For a moment, Stewart’s rebuke silenced the church. Farnesworth was only temporarily stunned, however, and soon ordered two of the soldiers to seize the minister. They entered the chancel, and one drew his revolver while the other wrenched the prayer

2 Taken from The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the Use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Together with the Psalter, or Psalms of David. (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1843), 26.
book from Stewart's hands. One of the townsmen produced a revolver of his own and stepped into the chancel to challenge them, but Farnesworth, not wishing to be responsible for a gunfight in a church, ordered all pistols to be put away. The reverend refused to submit, and the two soldiers carried him from the altar and out of the church by way of the main aisle. Unable to change clothes, Stewart continued to wear his religious vestments as the soldiers led him through the streets of Alexandria to the military authorities.³

What is most noteworthy about this arrest is not that it was an exceptional occurrence, but precisely the opposite, it was the first of several. Before the war would end, Virginia clergymen from all of the major Christian denominations would be imprisoned for similar acts of disloyalty. Union officers in Virginia would also order arrests of ministers in Fredericksburg, Martinsburg, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Upperville, Williamsburg, Winchester, and Windsor. The reasons for arrest would vary, but they centered on the charges of treason and disloyalty. Incidents like the one in St. Paul's Church were not common, but they occurred often enough to suggest a greater motive.

Ministers were not the only southerners who clashed with Union laws during occupations, and historians have been reluctant to see the clergy's plight as unique. As a result, the subject of ministers in occupied towns has remained on the periphery of historical research for some time. The historiography of occupied cities has been traditionally filled with case studies, usually along the western front of the war. Gerald M. Capers's study of New Orleans and Walter T. Durham's studies of Nashville are among the leading works in the field. Because these cities were larger than their

³ This account is based on a version of the story printed in the Alexandria *Local News* on 10 Feb. 1862, which was signed by several witnesses from the congregation. It was reprinted in *The Southern Churchman*, 14 March 1862.
Virginian counterparts, the sources are more abundant, making them attractive topics. Neither author saw anything unique about the Union’s treatment of the clergy. Capers saw the arrests of ministers as part of the harsh reign of Gen. Benjamin Butler, and he included their accounts in the same chapter as Butler’s closing of the presses and the schools. Durham felt the arrests of Nashville clergy were merely a product of Military Governor Andrew Johnson’s draconian rule. Recently, historians have turned their attention to Virginia communities but have continued to understate the role of religion. Daniel E. Sutherland’s study of Culpepper County makes only a passing mention of southern ministers’ tribulations. Carol Kettenburg Dubbs’s study of Williamsburg discusses the forced closure of the Bruton Parish Church but with no detailed mention of the impact this had on the town’s religious community. All of these case studies relate the ordeals of the church during the Union occupation, but they tend to treat the abuse of the clergy as symptoms of northern vindictiveness or have pigeonholed it with other wartime measures. While these assessments may be partially true, none of these studies has considered either the role of religion in southerners’ lives or the impact that Union religious oppression may have had. Stephen V. Ash is one of the few historians of the occupation to recognize the Union’s fear of secessionist ministers, but he argues that there were simply not enough cases to warrant much attention.

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Why is it, then, that all of these historians are so quick to dismiss Stewart and his cohort? The sporadic nature of the arrests may be one explanation. A skipped prayer in one Virginia town earned a smirk from a soldier. In Williamsburg, it shut a church down. In Alexandria, it put a minister under arrest. At first, all action taken against these ministers was by the orders of local authorities, and the punishment, if any, differed from place to place. Nothing would suggest these individual cases were part of a broader scheme. Across the entire occupied South, however, arrests occurred too frequently and involved too many different people to be mere exceptions. A greater explanation must exist.

If it all ended with Stewart, then the historians would be correct. His transgression was minor, the omission of a single sentence from a church service. His ultimate punishment was equally small. Stewart was brought to Gen. Montgomery, the military governor of Alexandria, who immediately berated his officers for acting without his orders. Montgomery notified Washington, D.C., and was told to release his prisoner immediately. Stewart left the Alexandria prison, still in church vestments, after just four hours of detention.7

It did not end there, however. Stewart’s arrest was merely the opening salvo. Ministers continued to defy the Union. Episcopal priests would continue to omit the prayer for the president of the United States. Church authorities would even recommend changing it to a prayer for the Confederate president, Jefferson Davis. Baptist ministers would pray for the defeat of their northern oppressors. Presbyterian ministers would violate the Union’s loyalty oaths. Clergy would open their churches on Confederate fast days and refuse to open them on Union fast days.

7 *The Southern Churchman*, 14 March 1862.
The occupying armies would continue to create regulations to maintain control over the towns. Ministers would be held as ransom for prisoners of war. Churches would be closed and church records would be carried away or destroyed. Detention periods would increase; one minister would be held for over a year. Other clergymen would be further humiliated by being locked to a ball and chain and forced to sweep city streets.

As the occupation wore on, the towns became unified in their support of their clergy while the Union began writing into official policy their practice of controlling churches. Communities would send care packages to incarcerated clergy and petition the government to ensure their release. The southern religious press, originally an organ for union between North and South, would call for the Confederacy to fight to the bitter end. The clergy of the major Protestant religions would band together and write an open letter to the nations of the world to support the Confederacy’s cause. On the northern side, responsibility for the arrests would ascend the chain of command. This chain would eventually lead to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who by 1864 would approve the removal of all Confederate clergymen from their pulpits and replace them with northerners. Southern religion became a tool of subversion and a target of oppression; in Virginia by the war’s end, it was an integral part of the relationship between the occupiers and the occupied.

This study will follow the trajectory of this conflict between southern churches and the northern government from its earliest beginnings to the end of the war. Chapter I will focus on the role of religion in rebellion. It will examine the nature of the clergy’s role in the community and how that role would inevitably put them into conflict with
occupying forces. Either by co-opting them or condemning them, the Union would need
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posed a threat to maintaining peaceful control over occupied towns, the Union sought to
solve the problem through official legislation, only to encounter more resistance than
before.
CHAPTER I: RELIGION AND THE WAR

Early in the war, Harper’s Weekly reported on a resolution introduced into the New York State legislature that would invite members of the clergy to address the assembly about the rebellion. One legislator objected, arguing that, while he would be glad to hear the clergy’s views on the Sermon on the Mount, “when they came out of a pulpit to preach politics to the Assembly, they duly interfered with the members in the discharge of their constitutional duties!”

Many others certainly shared this opinion that the clergy should mind religious matters and leave the war to politicians and generals, but in the case of occupied lands it could never be accepted. In towns where war disrupted everyday life, including religious services, there was no doubt that the clergy would become involved. In towns where military and political leaders had fled or lost power, the spiritual leaders would necessarily fill that role. Because of the clergy’s position in occupied towns, a conflict between the Union army and the ministers of the Confederacy was inevitable.

Religious leaders played a particular role in society and fit into the Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci’s category of “traditional intellectuals.” Traditional intellectuals, Gramsci argued, were thinkers who drew their beliefs from ideals and codes independent of the surrounding social life. As their name suggested, their authority came from traditional standards and, in the case of the clergy, from scripture and church history.

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8 Harper’s Weekly, 1 March 1862.
Gramsci saw a second group, which he called “organic intellectuals,” opposed to them. Organic Intellectuals were thinkers whose ideas and morals stemmed from the needs of the social class to which they belonged. Examples of organic intellectuals often included social activists and political economists but could come from any occupation. While a traditional intellectual addressed consistent and eternal themes, an organic intellectual usually focused on more current concerns. When these current concerns conflicted with traditional morals, as often they do, a struggle resulted.9

Gramsci pointed out, however, that intellectuals were not always fixed into either category. Most traditional intellectuals actually began as organic ones, as was the case in the evangelical churches of Virginia. These denominations gained strength during the First Great Awakening. They rose to suit the needs of the non-elites who were underrepresented by the traditional intellectuals leading the Anglican Church. By the time of the Civil War, however, the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian Churches constituted the largest three denominations in the state and relied less on their organic origins. Following the theory, once organic intellectuals came to power, they began to rely more on traditional ideas to maintain that power, lest a new social wave remove them.10

Understanding these power struggles is helpful to understanding the role of clergy in occupied towns. Union occupying forces did not simply strive for military dominance but for hegemony, which theorist Terry Eagleton defined as the “strategies by which a

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dominant power elicits consent to its rule from those it subjugates."¹¹ Because the war was fought with the notion of returning the South to the Union, the occupation could not merely rely on coercion: the Union needed to win over the allegiance of Confederate citizens. Religion was an important factor in establishing this hegemony. Church-goers maintained a dual allegiance to the government and to their church. If the church took a contrary stand, a struggle for the support of the people emerged. Because most Virginians would gladly side with their local clergy over a northern military governor, it was essential to Union hegemony that the clergy not speak out against the occupation.

Not only was the cooperation of the clergy vital, it was also very difficult to obtain. Assimilating traditional intellectuals such as the clergy was one of the greatest obstacles to any group trying to achieve hegemony. Because their ideas were based on set codes and customs, traditional intellectuals could not be as easily won over as their organic counterparts, who could be sated by providing for the needs of their social class.¹² For the occupying Union army, the clergy represented the old South that they were trying to stamp out. Even if an individual minister was not feverishly outspoken in his support of slavery or secession, he represented a system of beliefs that supported these ideas. The solution was simple: if the clergy could not be won over, and it was quickly proven that they could not, then they would need to be silenced if the North was to have any chance of assimilating occupied Confederate towns back into the Union.

Americans have recognized the importance of the clergy to hegemony since the nation's birth, and the Civil War was not the first conflict to compel clergy to take a stand. During the Revolutionary War, ministers supported both sides of the conflict from

¹¹ Eagleton, 115-116.
¹² Hoare and Smith, 10.
the pulpit. On 20 July 1776, the Continental Congress called for a day of fasting and prayer as the nation declared its independence, and ministers had no choice but to comply and show their support or decline and reveal themselves to be loyalists. Those who chose the latter found their churches “thereupon shut up.”13 Fearful of the damage loyalist ministers could have on the cause of independence, Patriots resorted to severe tactics to silence them.

The punishment varied with the ardor with which the clergyman held to the loyalist clause. Clear cases of treason, like that of Rev. Moses Dunbar, who was hung for receiving a captain’s commission in the British army, were dealt with through legal channels. Less overt support of the tory cause was usually met with vigilantism. Rev. James Nichols of New Cambridge and Northbury, Connecticut was tarred, feathered, and dragged through a brook for his loyalist preaching even though acquitted of treason in a trial. One tory minister, Rev. Thomas Barton of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who closed his church “to avoid the fury of the populace,” described the fate of his less cautious colleagues: “Some of them have been dragged from their houses, assaulted with stones and dirt, ducked in water, obliged to flee for their lives, driven from their habitations and families, laid under arrest and imprisoned.” In total, five tory ministers died from treatment sustained at the hands of Patriots.14

The situation during the Revolution is not perfectly analogous to that of the Civil War, but certain similarities are clear. The case of Rev. John Beach of Newton, Connecticut, for example, bore a sharp resemblance to that of Rev. Stewart; both

ministers rebelled from the pulpit, and both used the Litany to do so. In July 1776, the Continental Congress instructed the clergy to omit the prayer for the king from the Litany and, in its place, called for a prayer for the Commonwealth. Beach refused to comply and was dragged from his chancel by patriots who threatened to cut out his tongue. Only a burst of prayer from the minister convinced the patriots to show mercy. As with Stewart, a seemingly small act of defiance invoked a threat of violence, suggesting that both the Union and the patriots feared the power such an act possessed.\textsuperscript{15}

Both the patriots and the Union were fighting to achieve hegemony, and both groups recognized that any clergy in opposition would present a serious hurdle. They believed that the clergy had the power to control the populace and blamed them for resistance to their causes. When the townspeople of Hebron and Hartford voted against aid for the closed port of Boston during the Revolution, Patriot governor Jonathan Trumbull blamed the exhortations of Rev. Samuel Peters.\textsuperscript{16} In the same way, when several elderly women of Baltimore expressed sympathies for the Confederate cause, the \textit{Baltimore American} was quick to blame the women’s minister.\textsuperscript{17} If an occupied town was resistant, the clergy were to blame. In the eyes of the occupiers, southern religion went hand in hand with southern secession.

The main reason the North associated the southern clergy with secession probably lay with the fact that the three largest churches in the South had already seceded from their northern counterparts over the issue of slavery. Even today, many historians see the break up of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist Churches as a key factor in the

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\textsuperscript{15} Cary, 106-107; Noll, 105.
\textsuperscript{16} Cary, 90-92.
\textsuperscript{17} “The Effects of the Heresy of Secession on the Church,” \textit{Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser}, 18 February 1863.
coming of the war. Historian William Warren Sweet has been the foremost proponent of this theory, arguing that the split between the churches was “the chief cause of the final break” of the Union, as well as a main cause for sustaining that break.\textsuperscript{18} Historian C. C. Goen demurs slightly, arguing that the schisms broke key cultural bonds shared between the North and South and made secession a much more palatable idea.\textsuperscript{19} All historians seem to agree that the religious schisms of the antebellum period, in one way or another, would sharpen the divide between the North and the South.

The earliest, and most complicated, of the splits took place in the Presbyterian Church in 1837. Unlike the schisms that were to follow, the 1837 split was not a division between the North and South. The two factions, the Old School and the New School, had been involved in a power struggle for some time, contending for control over the General Assembly. The two differed on several doctrinal issues about Calvinist orthodoxy and some practical ones about mission work. When one group came to power, it would undo the reforms made by the other. The New School, however, found its strongest support in New England and many of its leaders were abolitionists. At the same time, the Old School held a strong majority in the South; most of its leaders were, if not proslavery, at least anti-abolitionist.\textsuperscript{20}

Historians disagree about the extent to which slavery effected the 1837 schism. Some, like Ernest Trice Thompson, stress the doctrinal differences and long standing disagreements to downplay slavery’s impact. Others, like C. C. Goen, see slavery as the

\textsuperscript{19} C. C. Goen, \textit{Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War} (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1985).
deciding factor. Both historians agree, however, that Old School southerners were concerned that a New School-dominated assembly might push the church to take an antislavery stance. As a result, several southern synods threatened to form a separate assembly. This placed Old School northerners in an awkward position. As a group, they were not concerned with the issue of slavery, but if it caused the southern synods to secede, they would lose essential votes needed to keep the New School from gaining power. In the end, their distaste for New School ideas exceeded any qualms they had over slavery, and they joined their southern counterparts in voting to split from the New School in 1837.\textsuperscript{21}

Though Thompson denies slavery as a northern New School concern in 1837, there is no argument among historians over the rise of New School antislavery sentiment in the two decades that followed the schism. No longer forced to compromise with the southern Old School contingent, New School abolitionists gained sway in the General Assembly, much to the few remaining southern synods’ dismay. In 1846, the New School passed several resolutions against slavery, and now the southern New School congregations found themselves in an awkward bind. Doctrinal differences still separating them from the Old School, and becoming more and more convinced of a northern tyranny, the southern New School synods voted to separate from the North in 1857. Whether it was a primary or secondary factor, slavery, by the start of the Civil War, had helped sunder the Presbyterian Church into three separate sects.\textsuperscript{22}

The schisms in the Baptist and Methodist Churches were less involved and there are no doubts about the extent to which slavery played a role. Until 1830, the Baptist

\textsuperscript{21} Thompson, 380-394; Goen, 68-78.
\textsuperscript{22} Thompson, 540-550.
Church as an institution officially opposed slavery. This tradition stemmed back to the church’s rise during the Great Awakening, when the church appealed to small southern farmers who could not afford slaves. By 1830, however, the church had expanded to include many wealthier members and the institution of slavery had tightened its grip on the South. As southern Baptist churches moved to embrace slavery, northern Baptist churches more ardently supported ending the institution. In 1835, English abolitionists Francis Cox and James Hoby riled southern tempers on a visit to the United States, and in New York in 1840 northern Baptists formed the American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention, whose goal it was to clear the Baptist missions of any slaveholders. The church leadership struggled to remain neutral for fear of alienating either region.23

In 1844 maintaining neutrality became impossible. Georgia Baptists set up a test case to challenge northern attempts to deny slaveholders’ callings as missionaries. They nominated to the Board of the General Convention a well-respected Georgian slaveholder named James E. Reeve. The board ignored the nomination, refusing to decline or accept it, in a desperate attempt to pass no judgment. Later that year the Baptist State Convention of Alabama pressed the issue with a series of resolutions challenging whether slaveholders could be appointed as foreign missionaries. No longer able to remain silent, the board denied the Alabama resolutions and announced that: “we could never be a party to any arrangement which would imply approbation of slavery.”24 The board had made its decision, and the South would have no part in it. The following year, 1845, the slave

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states voted to break off from the Baptist Church and form the Southern Baptist Convention.\textsuperscript{25}

The conflict in the Methodist Episcopal Church followed similar lines. Like the Baptists, the church had maintained an antislavery stance until the nineteenth century when the cotton gin increased the value of slaves, giving greater authority to southern slaveholders. The church was able to maintain a truce between southern slaveholders and northern abolitionists by turning a blind eye toward southern slavery until the issue exploded in 1844. That year the General Conference heard the appeal of a traveling minister who was suspended by his conference for refusing to manumit slaves he obtained through marriage. The special committee called to hear the case fought to a standstill and sadly reported to the conference that it could not come to a decision. In the meantime, it was discovered that James O. Andrew, who had been elected as a bishop in 1832, had acquired slaves of his own through marriage. Although he had been preparing to resign, Bishop Andrew was convinced by southern delegates to refuse to step down.\textsuperscript{26}

With a separation imminent, church leaders attempted to resolve the matter through a partial schism. The North and South would have separate General Conferences to govern them but remain united in name. By this point, however, southern fears of northern tyranny were too strong; southern delegates rejected the resolutions. Over the course of the next year, southern state conferences voted to separate from the General Conference, and in 1845 they banded together to form the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} McBeth, 381-391; Goen, 90-98.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 82-96.
It would be easy to use this evidence to overstate the importance of these three schisms. There are limits to their significance. One must note, for example, that most congregations in the border states of Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, and Delaware voted to split with the southern churches, but the states remained with the Union during the war. Religious secession did not necessarily lead to political secession. Additionally, the Episcopal Church, which only split after secession, would see its ministers arrested in the same number and its churches closed at the same rate as its schismatic rivals.

At the same time, the simple statistics are hard to deny. According to the 1860 census, in Virginia at the start of the decade there were 1403 Methodist churches, 787 Baptist churches, and 290 Presbyterian churches (almost all Old School). These denominations easily ranked first, second, and third in the state, and the Episcopal Church ran a distant fourth with 188 churches. The overwhelming majority of churchgoers in the state at the start of the Civil War were members of a denomination that split from its northern counterpart in support of protecting the institution of slavery. The Union soldiers stationed in Virginian towns knew that the local clergy, either explicitly or implicitly, had rejected their northern churches. These ministers no longer shared a religious bond with the young soldiers they were forced to admit into their services. Even if the differences were primarily in name and policy, the religious separation of northern and southern churches would go a long way in retarding the Union’s ability to achieve hegemony in occupied towns.

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The bridge between schism and secession in Virginia was not immediate, however, and it took time to grow. As the nation's sectional crisis deepened, religious leaders, like the population at large, were still split over what they believed to be the best course of action. A few ministers openly supported the war, but the dominant sentiment in Virginia seemed to be one of peace. In September of 1860, Richmond’s Central Presbyterian warned that secession would result in a “horrible civil war.” In the days following Abraham Lincoln’s first election, The Religious Herald, a Richmond Baptist newspaper, called for a day of fasting and prayer for maintaining the Union. A week later it printed the Maryland Baptist Union Association’s call for peace. In December, the paper printed, in full, President-elect Lincoln’s speech for unity, devoting much of its front page to the speech because of the “troubled state of the nation.” Not all voices were calling for peace, but most in Virginia were.30

Once secession proved imminent, the Christian churches supported it fully. Their belief was that secession was legal and the split should be peaceful, like the amiable parting of ways between Abraham and his brother Lot in Genesis, or like that between the northern and southern churches. When the war followed, southern churches defended the conflict, and viewed it as an unavoidable consequence of northern aggression.31 The churches did not lead the way in the forming of the Confederacy, but neither did they ever fully resist.


In 1861 the newly independent southern Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist Churches, along with the southern districts of the Episcopal Church, all met in their respective assemblies and announced their loyalties to the Confederacy. The Roman Catholic Church, because it was under the Vatican, could not follow the Protestants’ lead, but that did not stop several priests from vocally supporting the Confederate cause. At the very least, the decision to officially join the Confederacy, like their earlier decision to split from their northern counterparts, would make the southern churches targets for northern armies.

Just as the war had a divisive effect on relations with the North, it had a unifying effect amongst southern denominations. Religious differences in Virginia quickly became blurred. Early in 1861 the Religious Herald warned that “sectarianism is to be feared,” and the faithful headed the call. When Union forces closed the Zoar Baptist Church, its congregation was invited to hold its services in Presbyterian and Episcopal houses of worship. To fill the shortage created by clergymen enlisting as army chaplains, congregations would often invite ministers from different denominations to preach. Cloe Tyler Whittle, a citizen of occupied Norfolk, wrote of the newfound sense of unity in her diary: “This afternoon there was no service in the Episcopal churches so we... went to the Presbyterian church. I really enjoyed the services. I thought of how weary I have usually been on attending a Dissenting Church, but this evening I felt we are all one in Christ.” Joseph Packard, an Episcopal minister in occupied Alexandria, recalled...
performing baptisms and funerals for Methodists, Lutherans, and Presbyterians.\textsuperscript{36} In the most telling display of unity during the war, the southern Old School and New School Presbyterian churches, which had split in 1837, disregarded their differences over Calvinist orthodoxy and reunited.\textsuperscript{37} The shared experience of the war would bring the churches of the South closer together, particularly in occupied regions.

Ministers played an important role in building that unity in a variety of ways. One of the more famous examples, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, demonstrated how the clergy stirred support for the war. A Presbyterian fire-eater from New Orleans, Palmer was known for his warlike sermons in support of the conflict. Diarist Mary Chesnut wrote about the feelings he could invoke: "What a sermon! The preacher [Palmer] stirred my blood, my very flesh crept and tingled. A red hot glow of patriotism passed over me. Such a sermon must strengthen the hearts and the hands of many people. There was more exhortation to fight and die than meek Christianity."\textsuperscript{38} Ministers in occupied Virginia towns were rarely as forward; not only did such preaching risk arrest or the closing of their church by the Union, it would also threaten to alienate unionist members of the congregation. Some, like Presbyterian minister A. H. H. Boyd from Winchester, took that risk. Unionist Julia Chase bitterly complained about him in her diary: "I think

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] Religious Herald, 6 Aug. 1863. For a more complete discussion for this reunification, see Eugene D. Genovese "Religion in the Collapse of the American Union," Miller, et al., eds., 78-79.
\end{footnotes}
if he would dispense with Politics from the pulpit, it would be better for the community.”

Most of the clergy chose to be more conservative in their exhortations, at least during the early years of the war. Cloe Tyler Whittle recorded the more temperate sermons in Norfolk. Episcopal minister Erskine Rodman’s sermon on “Let the dead bury the dead” offered spiritual advice for dealing with the death of loved ones during the war. A few months later, N. A. Okeson preached on the “sublime meaning of suffering.” Rather than calling the congregation to war, these clergymen focused on sustaining morale in those weathering the greatest trials. Historian W. Harrison Daniel suggests that the Union arrested more moderate ministers out of frustration over being unable to arrest radicals like Palmer. There is probably some truth to this, but it is also possible that northern officers saw the equally important need that these moderates filled: encouragement for oppressed communities. In many ways, moderate clergymen were as dangerous to the Union cause as the fire-eaters.

Regardless of the methods they used, southern clergymen quickly became the bedrock of morale during the war. Diarist Sallie Putnam eulogized them for their efforts in her Richmond diary:

“The ministers of the gospel of the different religious denominations in the city, will be held in lasting remembrance. They sustained our fainting hearts by their prayers, and example, and through the trials ever accumulating in numbers and heaviness, during four years war. . . . Nor was the Episcopal Church alone noted for the zeal and devotion of its clergy. The ministers of the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and the

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40 Whittle, 28 Dec. 1862, 22 March 1863.
Roman Catholic Churches strengthened the hands and warmed the hearts of their people by wise counsel and tender sympathy."\(^{42}\)

By the time of Rev. Kersey Stewart’s arrest, religion had taken on a new meaning in occupied Virginia. Religion was a national affair; the churches in the North, for the most part, were no longer the same churches as in the South; the differences between Baptist and Methodist and Old School and New School were no longer as important as the fact that they all supported the Confederate cause. The South was fighting God’s war, and in the center of it was the clergy. Politicians in the legislature might not have recognized the authority of ministers on war matters, but in the occupied towns of Virginia, the clergy were the only leaders they still had. They were not merely respectable figures, but they were key to the confidence of the home front.\(^{43}\) With this understanding, the reasons for the Union arrests of the clergy begin to unfold.


\(^{43}\) The importance of the clergy to morale has been a central theme in the historiography of Southern religion during the war. See Beringer, et al.; Miller, et al., eds.; William Warren Sweet, *Methodism in American History* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1933). Oddly, none of these studies focuses on the role of ministers in occupied towns, an area where morale was most greatly challenged.
CHAPTER II: THE EARLY ARRESTS

In 1862 Union strategy shifted in two ways that would greatly affect the lives of the Virginia clergy. First, in February, by order of President Lincoln, the supervision of all cases of treason against civilians was taken out of the hands of William Seward and the State Department, and placed under the purview of the War Department, headed by the newly appointed secretary, Edwin M. Stanton. Second, with the failure of George McClellan’s Peninsula Campaign, the Union abandoned its attempts at marching its army straight into Richmond. Instead, it developed an enclave strategy focusing on controlling occupied towns. Military governors were placed in charge of each occupied area, and these towns would serve as Union outposts for future raids. The towns in Virginia were of particular importance because of their proximity to the rebel capital. Union control of towns such as Fredericksburg and Williamsburg, both within fifty miles of Richmond, certainly were causes of Confederate concern.44

The combination of these two events led to an explosion of civilian arrests in occupied Virginia. Under Seward, most civilian arrests for treason had occurred in Maryland, where martial law had been declared to keep order. Now, under Stanton, the arrests in Maryland dropped sharply, and arrests in occupied towns grew. Of the civilian arrests for treason in the first year of Stanton’s administration, over seventy percent were made in Virginia alone. Rev. Kersey Stewart’s arrest was one of them.

As Stanton and the Union tightened their hold on southern cities, southern citizens chafed and struggled.⁴⁵

Despite the increase in arrests, Stanton and his generals found themselves terribly unprepared for the job. The Union had no established rules for maintaining order in occupied towns, and Stanton established no regulations for what constituted treasonous behavior. The numerous charges of treason were as much a sign of the Union’s inability to control the towns as they were a sign of their determination to do so. Stanton may have shaped the overarching framework, but it was local military leaders who decided which civilians to arrest. General Sherman admitted as much: “It is almost impossible to lay down rules, and I invariably leave the whole subject to the local commanders.” This policy left little room for consistency. Lieutenant-Colonial William B. Sipes complained about this to his superiors: “The system that has been in operation was no system at all, for under it in one county citizens would be arrested and imprisoned by scores while in the adjoining county parties equally guilty would go unmolested.”⁴⁶

As a result, although the Union consciously created a policy based on controlling occupied towns, the early arrests of the clergy were not a conscious part of that policy. Instead, this suppression developed organically out of the needs of local military officials to maintain control and the anger that disobedience by southern ministers inspired. There was no Union policy to arrest ministers, but local officers

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⁴⁵ Neely, 76.
were charged with keeping the peace. These officers, individually, made the decision that the clergy stood in the way of that charge. Stewart’s arrest, ordered without the authority of the military governor, was just the first example of this.

One strategy local authorities hoped would discourage Confederate sentiment was to arrest the town’s prominent citizens upon arrival of the Union army. Arrests could not be made without cause, however. Union officer David Edward Cronin recalled how the arrests of several leading citizens of Williamsburg by military governor Colonial David Campbell were overturned “on technical grounds that there was no material charge against them as peaceful citizens.”

Under these rules, ministers made perfect targets. They were respected leaders of the community who obviously had a positive influence on morale. At the same time, their high public visibility and their role as boosters of the Confederacy made them susceptible to charges of treason. Episcopal and Presbyterian ministers were even more susceptible because of the prayer for the president of the United States in their liturgy. Their religious and political principles put them square in the path of Union officers determined to keep Confederate morale in check.

The issue of the prayer became a lightning rod for Union retaliation. It was a public snub to United States control. Although it was only a symbolic act of rebellion, the Union occupiers knew what power that symbolism could have. In New Orleans, Benjamin Butler ordered the carving of Andrew Jackson’s anti-secession toast, “Our Federal Union: It must be preserved,” into the president’s statue in the

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French Quarter. In Nashville, Andrew Johnson requested that all houses display American flags on Independence Day.\textsuperscript{48} Adept at using symbolism themselves, Union officers would not be blind to the clergy’s use of it.

The decision to change the prayer was one of the first made by the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Confederate States of America after its formation at the start of the war. Originally, many ministers replaced the president of the United States with the governor of Virginia or whichever seceded state in which they preached. In time, bishops encouraged using the president of the Confederate States of America. The money-strapped South did not have the funds to reprint their prayer books, so ministers either made the change by hand or simply verbally made the switch at the time of reading.\textsuperscript{49}

In occupied towns, this became a more delicate matter. At first, Virginian Episcopal ministers did not want to provoke their occupiers, but they were unwilling to say a prayer for the U. S. president out of principle. Most ministers chose Stewart’s path and omitted the prayer completely. As the Union army had no official policy in response to this decision, many military governors, including General Montgomery in Stewart’s case, were satisfied with this compromise. Others still felt it unacceptable. Just as the southern states had no right to secede from the Union, they reasoned, the southern churches had no right to secede from their northern counterparts. By refusing to follow the prayers as guided by the \textit{Book of Common Prayer}. . ., these ministers, some northerners felt, were guilty of treason. Somehow, disloyalty to one’s

\textsuperscript{48} Nelson and Sheriff, Chapter 4; Capers, 92.
\textsuperscript{49} G. MacLaren Brydon, “The Confederate Prayer Book,” \textit{Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church} 17 (1948): 339-344. Some ministers’ decision to leave no written trace of the prayer’s omission would save them from arrest when their belongings were searched.
church was construed as disloyalty toward one’s country.\textsuperscript{50} The specious nature of this argument suggests a deeper motive for their reaction. One possibility is a real fear of the power these ministers had; another is anger at the religious offence northerners perceived the clergy was committing. In most cases, there was probably a mixture of both, but a perceived threat or offence was certainly felt. Stewart was treated lightly, but in many cases, this symbolic act of defiance resulted in very concrete repercussions. In the case of Rev. Thomas Ambler of Williamsburg, his refusal to read the prayer resulted in the temporary closing of the Bruton Parish Church. In the case of Rev. Dr. Ovid A. Kinsolving in Upperville, it resulted in his incarceration.\textsuperscript{51}

The case of Kersey Stewart further suggests that these early arrests were not calculated attacks but a more visceral response to a perceived threat. Captain Farnsworth’s actions suggest both premeditation and personal indignation. Farnsworth stated that he arrived with the expectation of hearing a pro-Confederate prayer. When none was offered, he used his personal discretion to take issue with the omission of the prescribed prayer. Afterward, Farnsworth claimed his orders came from a Mr. Moreton, a detective who was present at the arrest, and Moreton claimed to be acting on orders from Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{52} The facts that these orders did not come through the military governor and that officials in the capital overturned the arrest should cast doubt on Moreton’s claim. Regardless, Farnsworth and Moreton certainly used their own

\textsuperscript{50} Brydon, “The Diocese of Virginia in the Southern Confederacy,” \textit{Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church} 17 (1948): 384-411.
\textsuperscript{51} Cary, Harriette, Diary entry from 11 May 1862, Manuscripts and Rare Books Collections, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. A partial transcription of this diary can be found in Cary, Harriette, “Diary of Miss Harriette Cary, Kept by Her from May 6, 1862, to July 24, 1862,” \textit{Tyler’s Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine} 9 (1928): 105-115; Brydon, “Diocese of Virginia.”
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Local News}, 10 February 1862, reprinted in the \textit{Southern Churchman}, 14 March 1862.
discretion during the incident, and the dramatic way in which Farnesworth conducted the arrest suggests his strong personal opinion about the matter. These would become characteristic of the early arrests: personal discretion and strong indignation.

The arrest, in Fredericksburg, of Baptist minister William F. Broaddus further demonstrated early tensions between southern clergy and the Union army. Broaddus was, and still is, one of the most respected Baptist ministers in Virginia history. He earned his fame for his missionary work during the Second Great Awakening, and a full-size mural of him preaching adorns the library of the Virginia Baptist Historical Society.53 As proof of his standing, when Fredericksburg fell to the Federals in April of 1862, the town council chose Broaddus as one of the six townsmen to meet with the enemy about the surrender. On 29 July of that year, he was walking down the street when a Union officer stopped him and placed him under arrest by order of General Rufus King, the military governor of the town. Broaddus was taken to King’s office, where he may have met with the general. After a wait of over an hour, he was put on a boat to Washington, D.C., where he was detained with six other residents of Fredericksburg in the Old Capitol prison.54

The Union officers told Broaddus and the others that the Union was holding them hostage and would ransom them for four men held by Confederate authorities, Southern unionists arrested for treason. Broaddus and others may have been part of a sweep to gather townspeople for exchange. They detained Broaddus and the others for two months

and paroled Broaddus twice to Richmond to negotiate the conditions of his own release. Finally, on 27 September, Broaddus returned to his congregation as a free man. On the surface, his arrest would appear to be a simple political maneuver.

The situation in Fredericksburg was anything but simple, however. The initial occupation after the April surrender had been noticeably peaceful until local unionists complained to Washington that Provost Marshall General Marsena Patrick was too lenient toward rebel sympathizers. These complaints had earned Patrick a censure from Stanton, and the occupation became considerably less pleasant for the town's secessionists. In light of this, the arrests were not merely motivated by the need for hostages, but they also appear to be part of an attempt to break town morale. The circumstances behind Broaddus's arrest are even less clear.

A week before his arrest, Broaddus had caught the attention of several soldiers during the Sunday service. The Richmond Dispatch reported: "Rev. Dr. Broaddus... had the boldness on Sunday week, to offer prayers for the welfare of the Confederacy, and the recovery of our wounded soldiers, adding, at the same time, a petition for the forgiveness of our enemies." This, apparently, caused great displeasure for several uniformed soldiers in the pews. The soldiers had taken no action by the publication of the article, but the paper suggested that punishment might be pending. The event had been important enough to warrant an article in a secular Richmond paper, so it obviously was

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56 Hyman, 171.
57 Richmond Dispatch as printed in the Religious Herald, 31 July 1862. Broaddus had already been arrested by the time the Herald received the story. News of the 29 July arrest was not reported in the paper until the following week and the Herald claimed the prayer was the cause.
not a common occurrence; his preaching and the subsequent arrest were too close together to be coincidental.

Broaddus's arrest, therefore, is a complicated issue. It is not even clear who was ultimately responsible for ordering it or the reason for its order. The soldiers present at the service must have reported Broaddus, so as with Stewart's arrest, the impetus was an outraged local authority. Unlike Stewart's arrest, the War Department appeared to approve of the action and even used it for political purposes. Many of the Fredericksburg arrests were ordered directly by the U.S. War Department. A letter from Assistant Secretary of War P.H. Watson specifically named fourteen citizens to be arrested for ransom after Broaddus and the original six. The order, he wrote, came directly from Secretary Stanton.58 It is unclear whether a similar letter was written earlier approving of Broaddus's arrest, but it is not unlikely. It is also unclear, however, how much the War Department knew about the individuals whose arrests they authorized. Probably, they left the decision of who should be held hostage to General King. At the very least, this signals a tacit approval by the government in Washington.

This also points toward an understanding by the Union of the unique situation in occupied towns. Three days before Broaddus's arrest, the War Department released General Order No. 90, which established as policy that military chaplains could not be taken as prisoners of war, presumably because they were noncombatants. This, too, was from Stanton's direct order.59 Therefore, a minister who encouraged soldiers into battle could not be arrested, but a minister who asked his congregation to pray for those soldiers

could be. A different set of rules applied in occupied towns than those of standard military procedure.

Broaddus’s arrest provoked impressive signs of support for the minister. Gifts and packages were sent to the Old Capitol prison on a regular basis, and prominent church members made the trip up to Washington in attempt to gain an audience with him. (Federal officers allowed only fifteen-minute interviews.) Fellow clergymen from Maryland even risked charges of treason by writing Broaddus letters of support.60 At the same time, forty-seven citizens of Fredericksburg wrote to Jefferson Davis, imploring him to free the unionist hostages in order to secure Broaddus’s release.61 Upon his return to Fredericksburg, Broaddus reported on the effect his arrest had on the community: “The whole affair seems to have drawn our several family circles much nearer, and created a bond among them which I trust will never be broken. May we all prove ourselves worthy of a country in whose behalf we have permitted to suffer wrong!”62 The minister’s arrest, admittedly, did not provoke mass resistance in Fredericksburg, but it did rally the community behind him.

Few of the early actions taken against churches in occupied towns severely hurt the morale of the people. In some cases, as in Fredericksburg, they appeared to strengthen it. The ministers set an example by showing they would not be intimidated. Both Broaddus and Stewart continued to support the Confederate cause throughout the war. In 1863 members of the “Confederate Clergy” signed an “Address to Christians Throughout the World, by the Clergy of the Confederate States of America,” in which they defended the South’s right of secession and appealed for international support. Both

60 Broaddus, diary.
62 Broaddus, diary entry on 27 Sept. 1862.
Broaddus and Stewart signed the letter. In Williamsburg, after the Bruton Parish Church was closed because of Rev. Ambler’s refusal to say the prayer for the president, the rector risked arrest by opening his own house to secret prayer meetings. The Union briefly allowed the church to reopen, only to close it again in 1863, according to David Cronin, “on account of disloyal utterances from the pulpit”; this time, it remained closed for the rest of the war. Ambler still would not submit to Union authority, and eventually enlisted as a chaplain in the Confederate army. Williamsburg’s Presbyterian minister, Rev. Samuel Blair displayed similar rebelliousness. After the Union closed his church, he refused to hide his prayer meetings and would kneel at his front window in full view of all and pray for the Union’s defeat. Several months later, he was arrested and charged with cutting Union telegraph wires. In Alexandria, Joseph Packard preached in the Odd-Fellows’ Hall after St. Paul’s Church was closed for refusals to say the president’s prayer. When the Union denied him use there, he found a third location. Not every minister rebelled, but far too many did to be considered exceptions. They resisted Union attempts to stem small acts of defiance and continued to provoke their occupiers’ ire.

Had the Union practice of arresting ministers been codified in policy, or had there been any consistent policy for that matter in the handling of occupied towns, Secretary Stanton might have recognized the counterproductive nature of such attempts. Far from
quelling rebellion, the arrests only provoked outrage in these Virginia communities. Because these arrests grew organically out of the acts and perceived needs of individual officers, however, no evaluation was ever made of their effectiveness. Instead, Stanton received more and more complaints about the troublesome clergy, and the Union’s response would become more severe. Over the years that would follow, the Union, through practice and policy, would begin to define its stance against rebellious clergymen, although with no better results than they had elicited with the early arrests. In an increased attempt to establish hegemony, the Union would actually undermine it.
CHAPTER III: THE LATER ARRESTS

By 1863, after a year of arrests, not much had changed in the relations between the Union and southern clergymen, but each side had become more willing to accept the role it played. The Union continued to arrest ministers for acts of defiance, and the clergy remained adamant in the face of such arrests. Articles in southern newspapers reporting these arrests grew in number, but these reports became shorter and less detailed. The struggle had become commonplace. Underneath the surface, however, Union officers were more frustrated than ever over their inability to silence these rebellious ministers. Over the next two years, the punishment for defiance grew in severity and scope. More and more, the Union held ministers as ransom for political prisoners and closed churches for disloyal utterances. The practice of removing defiant ministers became official Union policy through a series of general orders from the War Department and local occupying armies. It was only then that the ineffectiveness of this battle became apparent. Members of Congress protested the Union’s seizure of church property, and the War Department overturned several punishments handed down by occupying generals. When the arrests became policy, it became clear that such tactics were hurting, not helping, the goal of Union hegemony.

For the most part, newspapers in the North paid little attention to this aspect of the war. Rarely did the arrests of southern ministers earn space in their pages. When they did, reporters blamed the clergymen. In 1862, Harper’s Weekly and the New York
Herald shared a story about the arrest of Protestant ministers in Tennessee. The article referred to them as “obstinately rebellious” and “impenitent rebels,” but the reporter wrote little else. Newspapers gave greater attention, however, to the subject of disloyal ministers when the arrests took place on northern soil.

Confederate loyalties ran strong in Baltimore, Maryland, where Lincoln declared martial law to keep the peace. In February 1862, local authorities became concerned when members of the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church expressed disgust that someone had placed two American flags behind the preacher’s stand at their meetinghouse, a rented assembly hall. In response, the commanding officer in Baltimore, Major General Schenck, issued an order to the general superintendent of the hall: “You will hereafter cause constantly to be displayed in a conspicuous position at the head of the hall a large size American Flag.” The church responded by moving their meetings to other locations, including the privately owned schoolhouse of Rev. John H. Dashiell. This did not satisfy General Schenck, who issued a second order that the flag must be displayed in any location where the church would worship. Different accounts exist as to the events that followed.

According to Rev. Dashiell in a notice he posted a day later, he returned to his schoolhouse on Sunday, 15 February, to find an American flag nailed to the front door. Having no idea whence the flag came, he removed it “lest it should, by the oddness of the thing, attract around the door a crowd.” According to the following morning’s Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser, the flag was placed on a second story

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70 McPherson, 524.
71 Ibid., 525.
window. Dashiell, according to the paper, “kicked out a pane of glass, tore down the flag and destroyed it,” after which he “entered a carriage and rapidly left the place.”\textsuperscript{72} Several days later, Dashiell changed his story in a letter to the \textit{American}, creating a third account. This time, he said the flag was nailed next to a second story window and that the window had been nailed shut by the person who had posted it. Dashiell claimed to have broken the window with his umbrella handle while attempting to pry it open, and he rejected the accusation that he destroyed the flag.\textsuperscript{73} Despite these differences, none of the accounts explained who placed the flag on the premises, and all ended with Dashiell’s arrest for disobeying General Schenck’s orders and disloyalty to the Union.

Although Dashiell was quickly released on parole, the arrest sparked a flurry of debate over the Union army’s treatment of ministers. Strict laws on censorship ensured that most published articles on the subject were in favor of the Union, but letters of protest written to the general and Maryland’s Governor A. W. Bradford show that Dashiell had strong support. At issue, they claimed, was the freedom to worship as one pleased and the rights of private property. Editors of the \textit{American} and many of those who wrote to the paper saw it as an issue of treason. Their comments prove that this was not seen as an isolated event and that the citizens of Maryland understood what was going on south of the border. One writer made specific mention of those who “refuse to pray for their civil rulers.”\textsuperscript{74} The case of John Dashiell suggests that, although it was not at the forefront of public debate, citizens of the North knew about the Union’s struggle with the clergy and held opinions on both sides. When it did not affect their everyday life, however, northern citizens seemed relatively indifferent.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser}, 16 February 1863.
\textsuperscript{73} McPherson, 532-533.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser}, 19 February 1863; McPherson, 524-533.
Meanwhile, in occupied Virginia everyday life continued to be affected by this struggle. Vestry minutes, records kept of meetings involving the leading members of the church, recorded damage to church buildings at the hands of the occupying army. In the First Baptist Church in Suffolk, pews were destroyed and window sashes stolen.  

The Battle Run Baptist Church had its furniture confiscated by the invading army as well. Carmel Baptist was sacked by the Union and their records burned. These attacks were probably not directed at these buildings because they were churches, but they show that church buildings were afforded no special treatment. Other acts seemed specifically designed to insult southern congregations. A Massachusetts Dutch Reformed pastor, who commandeered the Episcopal church in Suffolk, used the building to hold services for freedmen; the basement of the church became a saloon for the Union soldiers. In South Carolina, the Union used a Protestant church in Hardeville as a stable, turning the altar over for use as a trough. Similar cases were reported in Virginia. After the war, 173 churches would ask for reparations from the government for damage done. The arrests of the clergy also continued. In Windsor, Episcopal minister Putnam Owens was arrested, as was Rev. Packard in Alexandria. It appeared as if the Union army had declared war on southern Protestant churches.

At the same time, an unspoken understanding was formed between the North and South as to what actions would be deemed acceptable. Southern clergy, for example, seemed to have no objection when churches were closed to be used as hospitals for Union

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75 Vestry minutes, First Baptist Church, Virginia Baptist Historical Society
76 Vestry minutes, 16 Sep. 1862, Battle Run Baptist Church, Virginia Baptist Historical Society
77 Vestry minutes, Aug. 1864, Carmel Baptist, Virginia Baptist Historical Society
78 Religious Herald, 31 July 1862.
81 Religious Herald, 9 Aug. 1862; Packard, 281.
or Confederate soldiers.\textsuperscript{82} In Williamsburg, Revs. Martin and Blair, the latter released from his arrest for cutting telegraph lines, even volunteered to serve as nurses in their converted church buildings.\textsuperscript{83} There was already an unspoken understanding of what treatment was acceptable and what was not.

In the western mountains of Virginia, the conflict brought only more struggles between church and occupation forces. In Winchester, a town occupied by the Union army several times throughout the war, holding southern ministers hostage became standard practice. Occupying forces arrested Rev. A. H. H. Boyd of the Laudon Street Church in April of 1863 for refusal to swear an oath of allegiance. They released him after ransoming him for a political prisoner.\textsuperscript{84} In January of the following year, Union officers arrested him again and held him hostage along with another Winchester citizen, Ed Moore.\textsuperscript{85} Boyd and Moore protested this second arrest, arguing that the man for whom the Union ransomed them for was a prisoner of war and not a political prisoner, violating standard military practice. This man, William Dooley, was a southern unionist arrested for recruiting Blacks for the northern cause. The men were paroled pending investigation. In a letter from the Union headquarters in Harper’s Ferry, Brigadier-General Jeremy Sullivan denied the men’s claim but wrote that only Boyd should be re-arrested. He gave no reason for why he specified Boyd, and in April 1864 the army arrested Boyd for a third time, and he remained imprisoned in Wheeling, West Virginia,

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\textsuperscript{82} Brydon, “The Diocese of Virginia,” 391.
\textsuperscript{83} Coleman, 7.
\textsuperscript{85} Laura Lee, diary entry on 23 Jan. 1864, Manuscripts and Rare Books Collections, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.
until exchanged for Dooley. As with Broaddus, Boyd’s vocal defiance made him a target for ransom, but in Boyd’s case, the Federal government clearly ordered his arrest. In fact, the army singled out Boyd for arrest by the Union army multiple times; they specifically targeted ministers. Just as with earlier arrests, Boyd’s imprisonment only seemed to provoke him to more defiance. Throughout his trials, Boyd enjoyed the support of the townspeople, who cared for his family when the Union turned them out of their house and wrote letters to Richmond begging intervention. Even as the arrests intensified, the resilience of the community held strong.

Eighteen sixty-four marked a turning point in the Union’s struggle with southern churches. It would begin with the highest official in the U.S. War Department entering the conflict. The punishment of the clergy would reach new levels in Norfolk and Portsmouth. Most importantly, the efforts would be finally codified into the Union’s policy of occupation. The year marked a last concerted push to gain hegemony by stifling religious support for the Confederacy, an effort that many would feel went too far.

In the final weeks of 1863, Secretary Stanton issued a series of proclamations directed at the churches of the occupied South. By Stanton’s order, Assistant Adjutant General E. D. Townsend announced that all houses of worship without ministers loyal to

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87 Woodworth, 113.
the Union were to be placed under the control of their northern counterparts. As the southern churches no longer considered themselves affiliated with those in the North, this was bound to offend. This also marked the first time that Stanton made any proclamation about southern churches as a whole. Obviously, the recalcitrant ministers proved so irksome to the occupying army that the War Department felt it had no choice but to intervene; this implies that the problem was larger than many historians have admitted. With Stanton’s intervention, no longer could it be argued that the defiance of ministers was a marginal issue.

In the Virginia tidewater towns of Norfolk and Portsmouth, the resolution did little to stop the Union’s problems. In October of 1863, General Benjamin F. Butler was, once again, placed in charge of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina. Butler had already earned recognition during his first command in Virginia, when he began the practice of confiscating slaves as contraband. He was also known for his strict rule while military governor of New Orleans. There he had arrested several ministers for omitting the prayer for the president and had them sent to prison in New York. President Lincoln, who had ordered Butler’s return to Virginia, could only have expected that the general would use similar tactics to control the population in Norfolk and Portsmouth. When Butler arrived in Ft. Monroe, his reputation had preceded him.

It did not take long for Butler to live up to that reputation. On 11 February, his military governor of Norfolk and Portsmouth, Brigadier General E. A. Wild, issued General Order No. 3:

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89 McPherson, 521-522.
91 Capers, 182.
All places of public worship in Norfolk and Portsmouth are hereby placed under the control of the provost marshals of Norfolk and Portsmouth respectively, who shall see the pulpits properly filled by displacing, when necessary, the present incumbents and substituting men of known loyalty and the same sectarian denomination, either military or civil, subject to the approval of the commanding general. They shall see that all churches are open freely to all officers and soldiers, white or colored, at the usual hour of worship, and at other times, if desired; and they shall see that no insult or indignity be offered to them, either by word, look, or gesture on the part of the congregation. The necessary expenses will be levied as far as possible, in accordance with the previous usages or regulations of each congregation respectively.\textsuperscript{92}

This order effectively challenged Stanton’s earlier proclamation that placed churches in the hands of northern denominations. Under General Order No. 3, the military government would keep control over all churches and army chaplains would replace disloyal ministers. The order also implied that church members could be punished for so much as a “look” given to Union soldiers. These were certainly the strictest regulations given to churches yet.

The reaction of the southerners was, predictably, outrage. The Religious Herald, a paper that began the war calling for peace, now declared:

Fanatical intruders thrust themselves into the pulpit (as a northern writer expresses it) ‘to preach Union sentiments’—to glorify the treason of John Brown and the usurpation of Abraham Lincoln, and to do this in the name of our fathers—in the name of the Son of God.... Surely, our people, as with one heart will war to the end; war until independence is triumphantly achieved, or—death gives us its peaceful refuge from the oppressor.\textsuperscript{93}

The religious rhetoric of peace had given way to calls for war to the end.

It was not long before Wild ordered his first arrest. In late February, Episcopal minister John H. Wingfield, Jr. was arrested for being an “avowed Secessionist” and for refusal to respectfully offer the prayer for the president. As punishment, Wild ordered

\textsuperscript{92} McPherson, 542.

\textsuperscript{93} Religious Herald, 3 March 1864.
him to clean the streets of Norfolk and Portsmouth for three months. Adding to the insult, Wingfield would be shackled with a ball and chain. The citizens were enraged and demanded that Wingfield be spared this treatment.94

The punishment, and the outcry it caused, was unprecedented, forcing Butler to intervene. He remitted Wingfield’s work detail and commanded the minister be sent to Ft. Monroe. The most interesting aspect of the order was the reason for remittance: “His punishment is remitted, not from respect for the man or his acts, or because it is unjust, but because its nature may be supposed to reflect upon the Christian Church, which by his connection with it, has been already too much disgraced.”95 It is interesting that Butler’s argument casts him as the defender of religion and Wingfield as the threat. Butler’s motivation for issuing this order is highly questionable, though, mainly because he soon after sentenced a different minister to hard labor. Most likely, the public outcry was creating unwanted attention. Francis H. Pierpoint, the Union’s restored governor of Virginia, was already heavily criticizing Butler for his handling of the citizens of Norfolk.96 Butler certainly did not want to give Pierpoint further reason to complain to Lincoln. Regardless of his intentions, it marked the first time since General Montgomery freed Stewart that the punishment of a minister was overruled. The Union army would no longer hold free reign over Virginia’s ministers.

While Butler and Wild exchanged telegrams and letters over Wingfield’s arrest, a second arrest raised the attention Butler desperately tried to avoid. At some point in March, Presbyterian minister James D. Armstrong was arrested for violation of his oath

95 McPherson, 553.
of allegiance, which was prescribed by General Order No. 49 of 10 December 1863. Armstrong, like many before him, refused to say the prayer for the president and was outspoken about his pro-Confederate feelings. Butler had Armstrong put to hard labor, an amazing judgment considering that the matter with Wingfield was still unsettled. Armstrong had powerful allies.

Armstrong’s sister, a New Yorker named Ann Stilliman, had a connection with the U. S. Secretary of War, and wrote Stanton to complain about her brother’s treatment. Stanton ordered an investigation of the arrest and informed Butler that all future arrests were to be reported to him. Butler defended himself in a letter to Stanton and argued such limits would be so time-consuming as to cripple his governance. As for putting Armstrong to hard labor, his only other options, he explained, were to send Armstrong to the South to spread his treasonous ideas or send him to jail, where he would drain Union resources. Butler did not mention Wingfield’s remittance at all.

The investigation into the arrest was led by Judge Advocate General J. Holt, who reported his findings to Stanton in a letter on 30 April. Armstrong, according to Holt, did not commit “overt acts of positive disloyalty,” with the exception of hosting prayer meetings on Confederate fast days. He violated his oath “in sentiment and feeling [rather] than in open expression.” Holt went on to rebuke Butler for adjudicating the case himself and ruled that Armstrong be tried by a military tribunal or sent beyond enemy lines. The ruling took the matter out of Butler’s hands.

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98 Ibid.
99 McPherson, 542-543.
What happened to Armstrong after Holt's investigation is unclear, but several things are worth noting about the judge’s decision. First, for the second time in two months, a high-ranking officer’s punishment of a minister was overturned, reaffirming that Union officials could not punish the clergy with impunity. Second, the definition of treason continued to be more sharply defined, adding “feelings” to the list of punishable offenses, which already included so-called looks. At the same time that officers were being held more accountable, the attack on clergy continued to intensify. Third, and most importantly, it supported the trend of taking the authority for the arrests away from individual officers and centralizing it in the War Department. The war with the clergy would now be waged from the Secretary of War’s desk.

Norfolk and Portsmouth were not the only sources of growing criticism. By 1864 northerners in high positions were complaining about the arrests of southern ministers. Archbishop Kendrick of Baltimore wrote to the government to intercede for a Catholic priest arrested in Martinsburg. A judge from the fourth circuit in Maryland, D. Weisel, wrote Lincoln asking him to end the arrests in Winchester, where ministers on both sides were being held as ransom (A. H. H. Boyd was, for a forth time, one of the hostages). In the eyes of a growing population of northerners, the arrests had gone too far.100

Even in the United States Senate there was a growing concern about the Union’s treatment of Confederate churches. Senator Lazarus W. Powell of Kentucky led the charge. During the war, he was a vocal critic of what he saw as unjust violations of citizens’ civil rights. He spoke out against Lincoln’s decision to suspend the writ of habeas corpus in Baltimore, Grant’s expulsion of Jews from Kentucky, and the

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government’s interference in the elections of recaptured states. Stanton’s orders appropriating Confederate churches particularly rankled the senator.\textsuperscript{101}

On 31 March 1864 Powell introduced a resolution to direct Stanton to share all information about the army’s control over southern houses of worship. The issue was tabled, and Powell was not satisfied. On 5 April he spoke out after the senate tabled another attempt to bring the issue to the floor: “It seems every time I attempt to take up this resolution something else is interposed to prevent. It has already occurred five times.” Powell renewed his efforts in July when he proposed a new bill. This bill would have made it illegal for the Secretary of War, or any person under him, to take possession of a house of worship, dismiss a minister thereof, or assign a minister thereto. Anyone found guilty of such an offense would be charged with a misdemeanor and barred from holding any office of honor. The bill was referred to the Judiciary Committee where, presumably, it was killed.\textsuperscript{102}

Although neither of these bills was successfully passed, they suggest a growing unrest with the War Department’s handling of southern churches. Powell was not alone in feeling Stanton had overstepped his authority, and the roll call of supporters is proof. Ten other senators supported Powell’s 31 March resolution. Predictably, most were from border states, but they showed that discontent crossed party lines; three were Democrats, four were Unionists, and the remaining three were Republicans.\textsuperscript{103} After the 1 July bill was proposed, no further arrests appeared in the records. It is unlikely that they ceased completely, but at least they were severely curtailed. As the war wound down, President

\textsuperscript{101} Kentucky General Assembly, \textit{Biographical Sketch of the Hon. Lazarus W. Powell, (of Henderson, KY.)},... (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Yeoman Offices, 1868), 60-81.


\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
Lincoln intervened and began to return churches occupied by Stanton’s proclamation to the control of their southern congregations; the president expressed concern that they were ever removed from southern control.104 The battle between northern armies and southern churches was ending.

Well after the war was over, during the first Cleveland administration, Congress offered reparations to the seminary in Alexandria, Virginia, occupied by the Union during the war. A humorous story related by Rev. Joseph Packard showed how tensions over religion had by then eased. Representative W. H. F. Lee, who sponsored the appropriation bill, was asked if the seminary professors were loyal and prayed for the president of the United States. Lee responded with a smile, “they prayed for all the sinners.”105

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It all began with a simple prayer. It ended with a simple joke. The years in between, however, were marked by fierce tension and an escalating struggle over religion and free speech; a struggle, between southern churches and the Union army, never fully articulated but no less real than if it had been; a struggle for hegemony over the occupied South. To deny the role religion played in occupied towns would be to overlook an unspoken dialogue that continued throughout the war. At the earliest stages, small acts of symbolic defiance and brash actions of retribution were the weapons of choice. Stewart omitted a prayer and was spectacularly arrested. In time, it became woven into the daily script. Ministers would continue to show defiance, and the Union would hold them hostage for political prisoners. While the rest of the Confederacy’s morale appeared to

105 Packard, 266-267.
fall, the support for religious freedom in occupied towns thrived. The Union attempts to control the clergy became fiercer and part of military policy, but southerners steeled themselves in defense of their churches. Even "the Beast" Benjamin Butler could not break the will of his captives. In the end, it was the Union that begged off, after facing criticism from its own people. Although the Union managed to occupy much of the South, it was never able to control the Confederate religious spirit.

The clergy of Civil War Virginia are an important lesson in the study of the role of religion in establishing hegemony. Union officers were right to fear the power that ministers held, and their reactions were understandable. However, their response was ineffective, and its futility was obscured by the occupying armies' disorganization. By arresting the offending ministers, the Union only succeeded in making them rallying points for the morale of the Confederate community. In an attempt to secure hegemony, the Union lost all chance of it.

The importance of this lesson did not end with the Civil War. As the United States assumed the role of world power during the twentieth century, it continued to struggle to achieve hegemony in countries around the world. The modern administrations seemed no better prepared to handle religious leaders than their predecessors. One must only look at the photographs of Buddhist monks immolating themselves in Vietnam for a modern example of religious leaders undermining American hegemony. As the new century unfolds and United States forces occupy the Muslim countries of Afghanistan and Iraq, the arrests of Kersey Stewart and his cohort serve as an important warning to the government; the religious convictions of an occupied land's
citizenry cannot be overlooked, nor can they be silenced by military might. Armies may capture land, but they cannot capture loyalty.
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**Vestry Minutes**

Vestry minutes contain a record of the church business meetings, attended by a church’s prominent laypeople. Most of the records from the war were destroyed, but the records from the years following often contain valuable information about damage to church property caused by the Union.

Battle Run Church. Vestry Minutes. August 1864. VBHS

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