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Exploded graces: Providence and the Confederate Israel in evangelical southern sermons, 1861–1865

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EXPLODED GRACES:
PROVIDENCE AND THE CONFEDERATE ISRAEL IN
EVANGELICAL SOUTHERN SERMONS, 1861-1865

by

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ABSTRACT

The confidence of Confederate evangelicals in the support of providence inspired southern clergymen to demand the transformation of the independent South into a nineteenth-century covenant nation--a "Confederate Israel." Such a Confederate Israel was needed to impede the spread of liberalism in the South and in the world, and also to serve as prelude to the establishment of the millennial kingdom. Nevertheless, disillusionment--due to military defeat, the spread of moral and political corruption in the Confederate States, and the failure of attempts to reform slavery--compelled clergymen to announce the establishment of a "new covenant" based upon redemptive communal suffering and an eschatological--rather than a political and temporal--vindication of the South in the plans of providence. Such an interpretation permitted the evangelical Confederate Israel to survive Appomattox and was also to provide the ultimate theological basis of the post-war cult of the Lost Cause.
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INTRODUCTION

Distaste and incomprehension are the most common responses of moderns to the study of evangelicalism in the Confederate South. Lillian Smith summed up the attitude of most observers when she wrote that racist white southerners, inspired at least in part by the cult of the Lost Cause, "split...Christianity from southern tradition." Since most scholars are products of a modern, secular mentalité, it demands a particularly wrenching act of faith to attribute religious or ethical sincerity to the Confederate clergy. The result of such skepticism is that Confederate churchmen are often depicted as shallow propagandists. Furthermore, the clergy's passionate defense of southern independence appears dishonest—a flat contradiction of an earlier insistence that the churches not involve themselves in political disputes. Hypocrisy, moral obtuseness, intellectual dishonesty, and sheer stupidity are therefore several of the unflattering attributes that a modern student is tempted to detect in the evangelical Confederate ministry.

Although understandable, such a response nevertheless fails to do justice to Confederate evangelicalism. A careful study of the extant sermons delivered in the South during the Civil War is sufficient to refute the charge that southern clergymen ceased to be sincere Christians the moment they became ardent Confederates. Rather, the war inspired in southern evangelicals an urgent need to produce
a religious defense of the conflict and of the South's part in it.

The purpose of such a defense was threefold. First, it would serve to persuade southerners of the justice of the Confederate cause and of the inevitability of the South's vindication. Second, it would provide the clergy with an opportunity to place before their congregations an evangelical blueprint for the Confederate future. In the process of composing their Confederate apologies, southern churchmen took advantage of the unparalleled opportunity to indoctrinate southern laypeople in the evangelical vision of a Confederate Israel—a southern covenant nation that would be, not simply a nominally Christian nation in the manner of Great Britain or Germany, but a nineteenth-century sacramental community—a source of divine blessing and a mediator of God's graces to mankind. The third, and perhaps the most difficult, of the clergy's war aims concerned theodicy—the use of the war to illustrate the principles that govern God's interventions in history. It is important to keep in mind that during the Civil War, southern churchmen assumed the mantle, not merely of the Confederacy's defenders, but of God's. Furthermore, it is significant to the subsequent history of southern evangelicalism that these twin defenses—of God and of the South—were seen as intimately connected to one another.

If there is a single theological doctrine that pervades and interweaves these three purposes, it is the doctrine
of providence. Southern evangelicals shared a common conviction that God controls the course of events in the most direct and intimate manner. Therefore, the Deity bears the weight of ultimate responsibility for wars and revolutions, including that which convulsed the South during the years 1861 to 1865. Nevertheless, the evangelical God is not an arbitrary or vindictive deity. The source of God's action in history is a providential plan—the ultimate aim of which is the redemption of man and the vindication of divine justice. Human beings, according to the evangelical schema, are simply splendid pawns in the onward march of providence.

Southern evangelical churchmen saw themselves, first and foremost, as the spokesmen and instruments of providence. Furthermore, they were convinced that much of the spirit of the nineteenth-century was inimical to the doctrine of providence. As a result, they saw the South's political independence as necessary to the preservation of that doctrine—and of the traditional Christian world view which it represented—in a hostile world.

The ultimate irony is that the doctrine of providence, and of the South's mission to defend it—so important to the evangelical defense of the Confederacy—eased and shaped the adjustment of southerners to the disappearance of the Confederacy. Although in 1861 most southern ministers were convinced that political independence was necessary to the realization of the South's religious mission, by 1865 many
had come to a new and different understanding. During the later stages of the war, an attempt was in progress to divorce the idea of southern political independence from that of the South's sacramental mission so that the latter could survive the collapse of the former. According to this mature understanding, the sheer fact of the southern stand against the northern Antichrist, accompanied by the willingness of Confederates to endure heroic suffering in the defense of providence, was sufficient to vindicate the place of the South in salvation history. Although the South lost its political independence, this was a small matter in comparison to what it had won: the consciousness of a sacred aura. Furthermore, this consciousness would prove of invaluable assistance in the South's subsequent attempts to resist the encroachments of northern and other assorted "infidels."

Perhaps it would be useful to recall the name that Charles Reagan Wilson gave the Confederacy: "The Redeemer Nation That Died." 3 The sensitivity of southern evangelicals to biblical metaphors, in addition to the fact of four years of horrific bloodletting, inspired in the minds of southern churchmen the intuition that the Redeemer Nation must die in order to be ultimately resurrected.

This thesis is based upon the printed sermons contained in the Confederate Imprints Microfilm Series. All four of the principal evangelical denominations are represented—Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Baptists. Since the presence of a common evangelical mentalité in
these sermons overwhelms any sense of denominational differences, a minimum of emphasis will be placed upon the latter. Furthermore, it is inevitable, albeit regrettable, that the two denominations that placed the greatest emphasis upon a literate, liberally educated clergy, the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians, should be represented in the extant sermons far out of all proportion to their actual numbers in the South. However, this disparity is probably more significant to an understanding of class differences among the evangelical denominations than it is to an appreciation of the evangelical pro-Confederate apology. Nevertheless, whenever it is apparent that the opinions expressed in the sermons are shaped at least in part by considerations of class and education, the fact will be duly noted.
ENDNOTES


2. Furthermore, the serene and undisturbed blindness that many contemporary secular scholars manifest to the nature and the contents of evangelical theology also serves to obstruct a sympathetic appreciation of Confederate evangelicalism. Perhaps it is useful to recall that—several years ago—a scholar such as James W. Silver was able to produce a study of Confederate evangelical documents in which he publicly and proudly claimed that he had "no interest in religion as such"—a statement that is in fact comparable to the boast of a student of the civil rights movement that he has "no interest in race relations as such." James W. Silver, Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1957; rpt. New York, 1967), 8.

Chapter I--"A People Saved By the Lord":  
The Doctrine of Providence

The outbreak of war in 1861 compelled the new Confederate nation to seek the support of the great powers. Nor were the Confederate emissaries to the Court of St. James and the Tuileries the sole southerners so occupied. At the same moment, evangelical southern churchmen were engaged in delicate diplomatic negotiations. These churchmen pursued an alliance between the Confederate States and a remarkable supporter--Jehovah.

The inspiration behind such elevated ambitions was the prevalent southern conviction that providence was partner to secession and southern independence. Such conviction was in turn the product of the South's remarkable conversion to evangelical Protestantism and consequently a source of considerable pride to the evangelical clergy.¹

Nevertheless, Confederate confidence in providence also placed a tremendous burden upon the shoulders of men who considered themselves the custodians of the sacred Scriptures. Scripture makes clear that the providence of God is not arbitrary. Rather, it is the subject of "laws" and "principles" that determine the course of the human drama.

Evangelical southern churchmen were also concerned about the impact of prosperity upon the South during the antebellum period. The materialism and individualism that such prosperity inspired seemed to render many southern laypeople insensible to the cumbersome demands of providence.
It was therefore the duty of the clergy to impress upon Confederate Christians the meaning of the evangelical doctrine of providence—in addition to the demands of providence upon the South—in order to clinch an alliance between the southern nation and the southern God.

The terms of such an evangelical Confederate covenant can be reduced to one simple proposition—the people of the Confederate states promised to defend the doctrine of providence and to meet its moral and spiritual demands, while providence agreed to protect and vindicate the southern nation. The long cherished dream of evangelical southern churchmen that God should establish a new Confederate Israel in the evangelical South depended upon the successful negotiation of such an alliance.

Sunday, July 21, 1861, was the day the Confederate Congress set aside to celebrate the success of southern arms at the battle of Manassas. Upon that memorable sabbath, the Presbyterian Reverend George Armstrong mounted his pulpit and—not unlike evangelical churchmen across the Confederate States—recited in solemn cadences to the members of his Norfolk, Virginia, congregation the contents of the congressional decree calling for a day of prayer and thanksgiving.

On receiving official intelligence of our recent victory at Manassas, the Congress of these Confederate States unanimously

"Resolved, that we recognize the Most High God; the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, in the glorious vic-
tory with which he has crowned our arms at Manassas, and that the people of the Confederate States are invited, by appropriate services on the ensuing Sabbath, to offer up their united thanksgiving and praise for this mighty deliverance."^2

Nor were members of the Confederate Congress the only southerners to attribute the recent victory to divine intervention. Reverend Armstrong observed that "the impression is widespread among our people that God, even the God of our fathers, is with us in the contest in which we are engaged." He further concluded that "the wide extent of such an impression as this, though not conclusive, is strong presumptive proof that it is founded in truth."^3

A deeply moved Reverend William C. Butler—an Episcopal clergyman in Virginia—developed the thesis that southerners possessed a strong—and perhaps an inspired—consciousness of God's support in the war.

This sentiment is prominent in almost every allusion, official or otherwise, to every important, and we might almost say, to every minor event that has occurred during the war. We find it in letters written from camps and battle-fields. It finds earnest expression in State Legislatures and in Congress. It is echoed by the Press throughout the length and breadth of the land. It is on the tongue of our whole people, because it is in the heart of our whole people....And their concurrent voice is heard in language like this, --"God is with us"—"His hand is manifest in our victories."^4

Several months later, Reverend D.S. Doggett—a Methodist in Richmond—concurred that, "Never, perhaps, in the course of national vicissitudes, was there on so large a scale, such[sic] implicit a reliance upon Divine Providence; so general an invocation of the Divine Blessing, as there was, from one end of this Confederacy to the other."^5
Such statements are representative of the manner in which southern evangelicals reacted to the Confederacy's descent into war. Southern churchmen on their part made strenuous attempts to sustain and corroborate these spontaneous outbursts of pious and patriotic sentiments. Thomas Atkinson, the Episcopal bishop of North Carolina, confided to this parishioners in Wilmington that, "It seems to me that no one but an Atheist, or an Epicurean, can doubt that it is God, who rides in this storm, and will direct the whirlwind." Nor was Atkinson reticent to disclose the identity of the war's principal agent. He adjured southerners to "believe and lay to heart, and keep constantly before your minds this most certain truth, that whosoever may be the instruments of our present troubles, God is the efficient author of them."^6

The message that Confederate churchmen attempted to impress upon southerners was that God was not a passive spectator of secession or the outbreak of war. The Heavenly Father did indeed "ride the storm" because the storm was His creation. God, rather than the despised Yankees, caused the slave states to secede and Lincoln to call for troops. Bishop Thomas Atkinson put it in blunt terms. "...GOD is in the war. He brought it upon us. The wickedness and folly of our enemies may have been the occasion of it, but these could not in any proper sense be the cause."^7

Later, such doctrines inspired a crisis of faith in
a Confederate nation that had to learn the meaning of defeat. In 1861, however, the purpose of the clergy was not to console southerners but rather to recall them to a sense of God's sovereignty.

Evangelical southern churchmen—as shall be discussed at greater length in a subsequent chapter—were not entirely pleased at the condition of the evangelical churches in the 1850s. Indeed, many were convinced that southern Christianity was in a state of crisis. Prosperity seemed to erode the southern conviction of dependence upon God. The war therefore seemed a timely—even a providential—crisis. Southern churchmen leaped at the opportunity to use the adversity of the war to renew and purify evangelicalism in the South. The successful accomplishment of such an aim depended upon the clergy's ability to show southerners the sovereignty of God in the war and to convince them that the participants in the conflict were simply the means by which God achieved His purpose. Such an intent was in the mind of the Reverend Joseph Atkinson when he insisted that the glorious men in gray "have been but instruments in the hands of a higher power; channels through which the Divine goodness had streamed forth upon us." 8

Southern churchmen also labored to remind southerners of the potential benefits of a humble reliance upon providence, as well as the dangers of a self-absorbed disregard of divine dispensations. Therefore, they summoned Confederates to the stupendous destiny of "a people saved by the
Lord" at the same time that they warned them that "to place our reliance, in times of national distress, upon anything earthly, save as a means or instrument in God's hands, is as unwise as it is irreligious." 9

Reverend Armstrong, in his Manassas thanksgiving sermon, stated that it was his intention to "place a statement of the Christian Doctrine of Divine Providence, and certain facts in the history of this 'second war of independence' side by side; that we may see just what foundations there are for this impression [that God supported the Confederate States]." Armstrong's synthesis of theological and political concerns is mirrored in most printed Confederate sermons. Nevertheless, in order to pursue such a strategy, it was necessary to present a clear statement of the evangelical doctrine of providence. Several such statements are preserved in the sermons.10

Sylvanus Landrum, a Georgia Baptist, described the doctrine in this manner: "We believe in the overruling and special providence of God; that He is everywhere present and nowhere indifferent,...and that His overruling providence ordereth all things; that He blesses us when faithful to Him, and chastens us for our sins and future good." Reverend Edward Reed was insistent on the point that "nothing exists independently of [the plans of God]." Nor, Reed continued, was man exempt. "Men must work to advance the ends of God, whether righteously or unrighteously, consciously or unconsciously, voluntarily or in-
voluntarily."

Nevertheless, despite such imperial sway, southern evangelicals were consoled that providence was no despot. Reed's statement that men are able "voluntarily" to "advance the ends of God" contains the elements of an important distinction.

Evangelical southern churchmen claimed that the dispensations of providence are the subject of certain "laws." Nor are these laws shrouded in distant mystery. Rather they are, in the words of Deuteronomy, "very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart." God, in His mercy, makes them accessible to a sincere human mind. Furthermore, these laws are clear and simple, so that a devout consciousness of them permits believers to illumine the shadows of uncertainty that darken human events—such events as sectional crises and civil wars. Southern churchmen made brave attempts to impress these facts upon Confederate evangelicals.

J.S. Lamar encapsulated the basic law of providence in these words: "These principles [of providence]...may be summed up in one sentence: That God blesses men and nations for obedience to his commandments, and curses them for disobedience." Further, the laws of providence overrule such secular considerations as manpower and material resources. According to the Reverend A.M. Randolph, "...It is the righteousness of the cause which in the end must decide every contest...no matter what may be the disparity
in numbers and external resources.12

The implied conclusion of the argument is that a direct relationship was present between the humble dependence of southerners upon God and the success of the Confederate nation. J.W. Tucker drew this conclusion in these words, "If God is sovereign we see how it is he can fulfill his promises to his people. He has assured us in his Word, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." The avowed purpose of Confederate sermons was to summon southerners to a humble submission to the laws of providence—a submission that would in turn validate secession and the "calling" of a southern nation.13

The principle theme of evangelical sermons during the Civil War was conversion—the conversion, not of individual southerners, but of the new Confederate nation itself. Evangelical southern churchmen were indeed persuaded that the wrenching psychic displacement of the conversion drama was as necessary to the salvation of nations as it was to that of individuals. Such a conversion should serve to demonstrate the righteousness of the Confederate cause and the preparedness of the evangelical South to assume an independent destiny.

A simple statement of the basic doctrine of providence was not adequate to meet the needs of southern churchmen. To direct an entire nation towards the waters of regeneration, it was necessary to penetrate the surface and plunge
into the depths of the scriptural "science" of providence. What surfaces in the southern evangelical discussion of providence is not simply a series of lectures in theology, but a coherent statement of the southern evangelical mind—the mind that inspired the evangelical dream of a Confederate Israel.

The evangelical conception of a rational universe was based upon the doctrine of providence. Confederate churchmen used providence to diminish southern fears that the world possessed neither purpose nor direction. J.W. Tucker encouraged southerners to accept the consolations of providence when he reminded them that, "There is no safety nor security but in God and his providence." Nevertheless, he also asserted that "faith in providence in order to be satisfying must be rational and intelligent. We must know the grounds of it. We must have a reason for it."14

Southern churchmen did not share the aversion of traditional evangelical pietists to "that old devil reason." They respected the natural inclination of a devout mind to discover the laws of providence and in particular to study "the facts of human history and to seek in them, no less than in the grand marching of the heavens, the manifestations of a rational and providential plan." Therefore, just as most evidence of rational behavior in the world outside the walls of the churches was in the process of dissolution, southern churchmen embarked upon an ambitious attempt to lay "the foundations of a philosophy of
history, which seeks a true internal connection of law or thought, given unity to or expressed by the manifestations of the history of nations."\textsuperscript{15}

D.S. Doggett mirrored the opinions of his clerical brethren when he asserted that, "The true philosophy of history is Divine Providence, and history is the real exponent of events only as it illustrates the interpositions of providence." Indeed, such was the respect of southern evangelicals for the study of history that at times it seems a subordinate source of revealed truth--second in authority only to the Scriptures, since "in the footprints of the past, [God] has written the great principles of his government for man's comforting and edification, fully capable of interpretation."\textsuperscript{16}

Nevertheless, despite such historical reverence, Confederate evangelicals were convinced that the ultimate source for the laws of providence was the Bible. The Bible was "the key to providence, and [therefore] need not greatly err in interpreting current events or in speculations as to the future." Southern evangelicals turned primarily to its inspired pages to discover the place of an independent southern nation in the "philosophy of history."\textsuperscript{17}

Nevertheless, all of Scripture was not relevant to meet Confederate needs. Since the most pressing demand of southerners was to learn the laws that govern the relationship between God and nations, southern churchmen concentrated on the part of Scripture that described the inter-
course between God and a unique people—the chosen nation of Israel.

As Lamar put it, "If history in general is 'philosophy,' the history of the Jews in particular is Providence, 'teaching by example'....Under whatever circumstances these people are contemplated...everywhere and always we behold them in a state and a condition brought about by God himself, and brought about for reasons which he himself assigns." 18

Furthermore, the appeal to the Israelites as Confederate models reflected the concerns of evangelical southern churchmen. "The Jews, with all their folly, ingratitude and perverseness" seemed an apt parallel to the backslidden southerners who faced the sabbath pulpits of the clergy. The use of the biblical paradigm suggests in a subtle manner the deep concern and disillusionment that lay beneath the confident facade of the Confederate clergy. 19

The devotion of southern evangelicals to the historical books of the Old Testament also suggests a second important consideration. Southern churchmen were convinced that providence—and therefore the laws that determine history—was primarily a moral and ethical force. According to Reverend William Rees, God's providential government "consists chiefly in giving to [men] the law of the moral government, that they may know the difference between good and evil; and realizing the reward of virtue and the penalty of evil as incentives to do right and restraints from doing wrong." As Stephen Elliott, the Episcopal Bishop
of Georgia, reminded the members of his Savannah parish, "It is a great mistake to neglect moral power, while we are cultivating physical power."  

Southern churchmen returned constantly to the theme that it is obedience to God, rather than to political parties or commercial interests, that is the appropriate means in order to assume a dominant part in history. "In the divine plan, political changes, commercial interests, forms of government, are secondary considerations, mere instruments to an end—that end the Glory of God and the triumph of truth." Reverend Henry H. Tucker summed up the position of the Confederate clergy when he concluded, "Let me say again; I believe that the quickest and easiest way to terminate this war, is for all of us to be good!" Confederate churchmen continued during the war to appeal to the moral demands of providence in order to counteract the self-absorbed materialism that possessed important sections of the southern population.  

Nevertheless, the concern of southern churchmen was to uncover the place of the southern nation in the plans of providence rather than the places of individuals and, as the story of the nation of Israel demonstrates, "Nations have a collective life and character. God deals with them in their collective capacity....It is true of them, no less than of private men, that those who honor Him He will honor, and they that despise Him shall be lightly esteemed." Furthermore, Benjamin Morgan Palmer—the celebrated Presbyter-
ian--claimed that nations were not held responsible for such individual sins as intemperance and dishonor of the sabbath, "except so far as the government by its unwise or insufficient legislation may be responsible for the same." Palmer also commented that since "nations in their corporate form cannot be subject to the retributions of the final judgment, the divine government must be enforced by temporal sanctions." The implication is that wars and other instruments of political dissolution play a part in the lives of nations similar to the part that the Last Day plays in the lives of individuals.22

Also, since a nation is a corporate entity, or "person," the sins of a nation are often punished in generations long posterior to that which is immediately guilty. "The measure of criminality being at last filled up, the accumulated punishment descends."23

The implication of these and similar teachings is that, although God treats nations as distinct from individuals, the moral and spiritual standards that regulate the interaction between Himself and the latter also govern the former. Also, just as God confers a providential vocation upon individuals, the same is true of nations. The purpose of all such vocations is to promote "His plan of the final establishment of Christ's kingdom of glory in this world." Southern evangelicals were convinced that even "ungodly" governments--such as the Lincoln despotism--played a part in the divine didacticism, since God permitted them to en-
dure—at least in the short term—"in order to render more widely instructive the mockery of its triumph and the story of its fall." 24

This last observation points to the metahistorical dimensions of the evangelical doctrine of providence. In addition to the simple phenomenon of reward and punishment, providence is directed ultimately toward the establishment of the millennial kingdom. Each nation in history plays a unique part in the stupendous culmination, since each "exhibits...one phase of that general idea which is realizing itself through the entire drama of universal history." Confederate churchmen urged southerners to accept "the duty of the new-born nation to consider the part assigned to it in the great drama of History," in addition to "its dependence upon the blessings of Him who 'ruleth in the Kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will.'" 25

Although the Confederate clergy seemed to suggest that it was the primary duty of nations rather than of individuals to promote the millennial kingdom, nevertheless, "every citizen contributes his mite towards the character of the rising edifice." Therefore, each southern evangelical—by submission to the Word of God—contributed to the accomplishment of the southern nation's providential vocation as well as to the inauguration of the kingdom of God on earth. Such incentives acquire an even greater power when we recall that—as shall be discussed in a subsequent chapter—evangelical southern churchmen believed that the Con-
federate States would play an essential part in directing history towards its last stand.\textsuperscript{26}

Southern churchmen were assured they had uncovered the laws of providence in Scripture and fashioned them into a coherent "philosophy of history." The degree of such confidence is seen in the reaction of Bishop Elliott to the news of Lee's smashing success at second Manassas. Elliott was convinced that he had predicted such a success several months earlier. Furthermore, Elliott attributed his confidence--past and present--to "conclusions...deduced through a train of reasoning, from premises distinctly laid down in the word of God, and acted upon again and again in his dealings with the nations."\textsuperscript{27}

Perhaps now we can evaluate the Confederate interpretation of the doctrine of providence. Providence, according to southern evangelicals, was the concrete application to human history of the moral law contained in the Bible. The basic demand of that law is that good be rewarded and evil punished. Since southern evangelicals were seldom hesitant to identify the good or the evil--and seldom keen to question the aptness of their judgments--they therefore claimed to possess rational certainty as to the outcome, not merely of the present war, but indeed of all such crises.

The second basic characteristic of the doctrine of providence is that it is eschatological. In simpler terms, southern evangelicals were persuaded that the dispensations
of providence are meant to serve a particular purpose—the establishment of the millennial kingdom. Based as it was upon such an understanding of providence, the reaction of evangelicals to the Civil War can be reduced to these three simple questions: Whom is the war intended to punish? Whom is it meant to reward? And what is the place of the conflict in man's millennial progress? These questions continued to occupy southern churchmen during four dreadful years of war.

Once Confederate churchmen had made a complete statement of the laws of providence, they proceeded to apply such laws to the present situation of war-assaulted southerners.

Evangelical southern churchmen instructed Confederates that "the first requisite to success against our enemies is reverent obedience towards God." Such statements contained an implicit critique of the Old South. Benjamin Morgan Palmer detected in the mass of southerners "the absence of sufficient trust in the power and grace of Almighty God," accompanied by a presumptuous confidence in the strength of southern character and culture. Reverend Alexander Sinclair considered it necessary to remind southern evangelicals pointedly that the cause of the fall of Israel was "man worship: God, their helper, was practically ignored in their lives; and in strict justice He doomed them to national destruction."28

Reverend R.N. Sledd warned that if southerners persisted in unrepentant reliance upon "southern chivalry"
rather than upon providence, the Lord would "punish our
impudent vainglory by withdrawing His support and cover-
ing us with defeat." Confederate churchmen further de-
cribed the dread penalty of apostasy in an attempt to shatter
southern complacency. Joseph Atkinson declared that many
southerners displayed such "ingratitude and unbelief" that
they threatened to "provoke Him to depart from us." C.C.
Pinckney attributed to Confederates the atheist's blasphem-
ous claim that "'My right hand is God!'" A disturbed Bishop
Atkinson threatened southerners that "God will not permit...a
decaying body, out of which the life and spirit are gone...to
spread disease and death around it, but He will cause it
to be removed."29

The jeremiads of the Confederate clergy concealed a
deep consciousness of the nature of the historical moment.
Southern churchmen were persuaded that the manner in which
the Confederate nation declared its independence was a mat-
ter of profound importance. Confederate evangelicals de-
tected mortal flaws in the fabric of the original American
covenant--flaws that made the dissolution of the Union in-
evitable. As a consequence, southern churchmen dedicated
themselves to what they deemed a sacred cause--to ensure
that the new southern nation entered upon its destiny in
a manner acceptable to providence and therefore in a man-
ner better suited to survival. C.C. Pinckney warned sou-
therners to "beware...of an unsound foundation....Too much
certainty in ourselves...really weakens the body politic."
Confederate churchmen therefore concluded that "he...who at this crisis does most for his own soul, and the souls of others, does most for his country."30

Bishop Elliott defined the second commandment of Confederate evangelicals in this manner, "No man should presume to touch this ark of our liberty with unhallowed hands and with unclean lips, and until he proves that he can control himself should have no part or lot in this great enterprise." William Rees adjured southerners to "put down drunkedness, profanity, Sabbath-breaking, and every other vice and immoral habit that disgraces a free people...that we may present to the world...a nation that has...founded its nationality on the...eternal principles of the Bible...reverently and obediently choosing God [to be] our Sovereign, that we may attain that dazzling summit of national prosperity that God will grant us if faithful to Him and [to] the high prerogatives committed to us."31

Repentence therefore was as necessary to the conversion of the Confederate nation as it was to the conversion of Confederates. Reverend William H. Wheelwright recalled southern evangelicals to the fact that "the recognition of the power and providence of God does not avail without a recognition of ourselves as sinners, and an approach to God is the only way a sinner can come by--by repentence and faith." Furthermore, repentence--in order to be efficacious--must be accompanied by "confession of sin," which T.L. DeVeaux described as "an expression of our guilt, to
gether with sincere sorrow for sin and an utter abandonment of it as displeasing to God and an endeavor after new and constant obedience."\(^{32}\)

Confederate churchmen were further convinced that prayer was necessary to the success of southern arms and therefore encouraged "morning and evening prayers" in the camps. They also summoned southern soldiers to the emulation of such Confederate men of prayer as Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and in particular Stonewall Jackson. To stress the importance of prayer, Reverend I.T. Tichenor related an anecdote that concerned a "regiment" of "untried soldiers" who encountered odds of 5-1 on their first confrontation with a northern army. Nevertheless, since the day was Sunday, they "stood like a wall of adamant against the surging masses of the foe until...victory was won! It was the thought that prayer was ascending for them that nerved their arms and made them heroes in that fateful hour."\(^{33}\)

Confederate churchmen were confident that faith, repentance, and prayer were the instruments selected by providence to ensure southern success. J.L. Burrow assured southerners that it was "within [their] power...to make sure absolutely and infallibly, their deliverance, independence and prosperity. Let them only humble themselves before God, renouncing their sins, and walking faithfully by the line of His commandments...and heaven and earth shall fail rather than one jot or tittle of His word fail of accomplishment."\(^{34}\)
The message of southern evangelical churchmen was powerful and simple. If southerners would accede to the demands of providence, then providence would bless the Confederate States. Nevertheless, the concerns of southern evangelicals were not solely restricted to the destiny of the Confederate nation. Providence—in the mid-nineteenth-century—seemed as vulnerable to assault as were the southern states themselves. This was principally due to the spirit of the age—an age "in which men, even the mass of professing Christians—seem to walk by sight, not by faith! The essentially spiritual features of Christianity...have for the most part been ignored." As a result, Joseph M. Atkinson surmised that "the great purpose of God [in the war] would appear to have been to exalt his own glorious sovereignty in debasing the pride of [northern] material power and illustrating the supremacy of moral focus."35

The conviction of southern evangelicals was that providence inspired the war because providence—and the traditional Christian moral order upon which it was based—was the principle issue of the war. This remarkable conviction was the product of fear—fear of the direction in which the material and intellectual culture of nineteenth-century America was headed.

It appeared to educated southern evangelicals that a secular, rationalist, and materialist culture was about to devour the scattered remnants of the traditional Christian perceptions of man and the world. According to such
perceptions, a personal God was the Creator and Sustainer of the world. Although evangelicals conceded the place of secondary causes in the laws of providence, they argued that such causes acted as God directed them to act. Such an image of God and His providence permitted evangelicals to look out upon a world suffused with purpose and meaning. An additional tenet in the evangelical creed was the conviction that the fundamental laws that govern man and nature are not the laws of physics or biology—but rather the moral law of the Creator.

Evangelical southern churchmen were alarmed at contemporary attempts to dilute or even to deny the stern and transcendent grandeur of the biblical God. Both in the North and in western Europe, it appeared that all the premises upon which a traditional faith was based were in the process of demolition. Newton's Principia stood in the place of the Bible as the hallowed expositor of the laws of nature. Modern science's concentration upon secondary causes seemed to make a First Cause superfluous. At best, the nineteenth-century seemed to demand that evangelicals abandon the sense of a personal God. At worst, the patchwork divinity that remained seemed a servant of man rather than the Sovereign Lord of the evangelical imagination. The spirit of the age also undermined the moral and eschatological dimensions of Christianity. It was more difficult to imagine that "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God"
when the universe was governed according to the laws of Isaac Newton and Adam Smith rather than the laws of Moses and the Messiah.

Nor was the danger confined to Europe or to the North. Confederate evangelicals attributed the moral laxness of southerners not simply to prosperity but also to the importation of dangerous, unchristian ideas. Secession therefore occurred at a critical moment. Southern churchmen persuaded themselves that southern independence was—in a literal sense—a godsend. An independent southern nation could set up a moral blockade between itself and the contagion of secular modernity.

Such considerations inspired Benjamin Morgan Palmer when he declared to southerners that: "We strike for the rights of God and [to] vindicate the honesty of his reign. This will fully explain why the ministers of the gospel throughout the land have borne a distinguished part in this momentous struggle....The moral aspect of this controversy, they, at least, understand; and as much as they desire their country to be free, with an infinitely deeper fervor do they desire that God should reign."36

Nevertheless, a paradox confronted the southern clergy. The southern evangelical dream of a pure and orthodox Confederate nation seemed destined to die in childbirth due to the advanced degree of corruption present in the Old South. The attempts of the clergy to overcome such an obstacle—and to define the nature of the challenges to God and
His providence that made secession necessary to the preservation of Christianity—are the subjects of the next chapter.
ENDNOTES

All the sermons cited in this thesis are contained in the Confederate Imprints Microfilm Series. The number in brackets after the title of each sermon is that sermon's number in the CIMS.


3. Ibid., 3-4.


5. David Seth Doggett, A nation's Ebeneezer. A discourse delivered...September 18, 1862: the day of public thanksgiving appointed by the President of the Confederate States. [4136] (Richmond, 1862), 8.

7. Ibid., 11.

8. Joseph Mayo Atkinson, God, the giver of victory and peace. A thanksgiving sermon, delivered ...September 18, 1862... [4123] (Raleigh, N.C.?, 1862?), 12. On the contemporary "crisis" of prosperity in the Old South, see Loveland, Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 91-129.

9. Edward Reed, A people saved by the Lord. Deut. XXXIII, 29. A sermon delivered...July 28, 1861. ...[4185] (Charleston, 1861), 12 (first quotation), Henry Niles Pierce, Sermons preached...on the 13th of June, 1861, the national fast appointed by His Ex-cellency, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America....[4181] (Mobile, Ala, 1861), 3 (second quotation).


11. Sylvanus Landrum, The battle is God's. A discourse ...on the day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, ap-pointed by President Davis, August 21st, 1863. ...[4162] (Savannah, 1863), 7-8 (first quotation), 5 (second quotation).

12. J.S. Lamar, A discourse delivered in the Christian Church, on the Confederate fast day, Friday, Nov. 15th, 1861... [4162] (Augusta, Ga., 1861), 7 (first quotation), Alfred Magill Randolph, Address on the day of fasting and prayer appointed by the President of the Confederate States, June 13, 1861...[4183] (Fredericksburg, Va., 1861), 10 (second quotation).


15. James Warley Miles, God in history. A discourse de-livered before the graduating class of the College of Charleston...March 29, 1863...[4170] (Charleston, 1863), 6 (first quotation), 7 (second quotation).
On the attempts of evangelical clergymen in the Old South to produce a rational defense of Calvinist orthodoxy, see Holifield, *Gentleman Theologians*, especially 72-126, 186-207.


20. W. Rees, *A sermon on divine providence; delivered February 4th, 1863 (Thanksgiving day)...*[4185-1]* (Austin, Tx., 1863), 6 (first quotation), Stephen Elliott, *How to renew our national strength. A sermon preached...on Friday, November 15th, 1861. Being the day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States...*[4147]* (Richmond, 1862), 15 (second quotation).

21. George Foster Pierce, *Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer, D.D., delivered before the General Assembly at Milledgeville, Ga., on fast day, March 27, 1863...*[4178]* (Milledgeville, Ga., 1863), 6 (first quotation), Henry Holcombe Tucker, *God in the war. A sermon delivered before the legislature of Georgia, in the Capitol at Milledgeville, on Friday, November 15, 1861, being a day set apart for fasting, humiliation and prayer, by His Excellency the President of the Confederate States...*[4196]* (Milledgeville, Ga., 1861), 17 (second quotation).

22. Reed, *A people saved by the Lord*, 8 (first quotation), Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *National responsibility before God. A discourse, delivered on the day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States, June 13, 1861...*[4176]* (New Orleans, 1861), 11 (second quotation), 10 (third quotation).


27. Stephen Elliott, Our cause in harmony with the purposes of God in Christ Jesus. A sermon preached...on Thursday, September 18th, 1862 being the day set forth by the President of the Confederate States, as a day of prayer and thanksgiving....[4150] (Savannah, 1862), 6.


29. Robert Newton Sledd, Sermon delivered...Before the Confederate cadets on the occasion of their departure for the seat of war, Sunday, Sept. 22d, 1861....[4190] (Petersburg, 1861), 17 (first quotation), Atkinson, God, the giver of victory and peace, 13 (second quotation), Pinckney, Nebuchadnezzar's fault and fall, 13 (third quotation), Thomas Atkinson, "On the causes of our national troubles." A sermon....[4125] (Raleigh, N.C., 1861?), 6-7 (fourth quotation).

30. Pinckney, Nebuchadnezzar's fault and fall, 11 (first quotation), Atkinson, God, the giver of victory and peace, 14 (second quotation).

31. Elliott, How to renew our national strength, 11 (first quotation), Rees, A sermon on divine providence, 12 (second quotation).

32. William H. Wheelwright, A discourse delivered to the troops, stationed at Gloucester Point, Va., February 28th, 1862....[4205] (Richmond, 1862), 7 (first quotation), T.L. De Veaux, Fast-day sermon, preached...Thursday, June 13th, 1861....[4135] (? , 1861), 8 (second quotation).

33. Stephen Elliott, The silver trumpets of the sanctuary. A sermon preached to the Pulaski Guards...on the
second Sunday after Trinity. Being the Sunday before their departure to join the army in Virginia...[4152] (Savannah, 1861), 10 (first quotation), Isaac Taylor Tichenor, Fast-day sermon...; delivered before the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, on Friday, Aug. 21st, 1863...[4195] (Montgomery, Ala., 1863), 14-15 (second quotation).

34. John Lansing Burrows, Nationality insured! Notes of a sermon delivered...Sept. 11th, 1864...[4129] (Augusta, Ga., 1864), 5.

35. Alexander Gregg, The duties growing out of it, and the benefits expected, from the present war. A sermon, preached...on Sunday, July 7th, 1861...[4156] (Austin, Tx., 1861), 16 (first quotation), Atkinson, God, the giver of victory and peace, 8 (second quotation).

Chapter II--Day of Wrath: Analyses of the Moral and Spiritual Causes of the War

Anne C. Loveland commented upon the deep sense of resignation that was characteristic of the southern evangelical response to secession and the South's descent into war. Evangelical churchmen "were," Loveland mused, "conditioned to look for divine retribution."¹

The meditations of southern churchmen upon the scriptural science of providence made it clear that the ultimate cause of war and of the collapse of nations was sin. God never permits the spread of moral corruption to go unpunished. Nations that mock His providence and that disregard the occasions of repentence He provides are compelled at some point to endure the day of wrath.

The dread of such a day was a familiar theme to the evangelical churchmen of the Old South. Southern churchmen did not participate in the mid-nineteenth-century tributes to American progress--tributes that appeared to members of the clergy to resemble the cult of a new golden calf. Although the American masses--North and South--praised the social, political, and economic advances made since the establishment of the new nation, evangelical clergymen lamented the moral and spiritual decay that appeared to them the principal monument of the era. These Jeremiahs of the evangelical pulpit attributed such decay to the nation's abandonment of traditional religious and ethical values--an abandonment that was tantamount to a denial of providence and of the purposes of God.
Furthermore, evangelical southern churchmen pointed to the dissolution of the Union and the outbreak of war between the sections to confirm such a diagnosis. The "ordeal of the Union" was God's punishment of American spiritual pride and reliance upon self rather than upon providence.  

Nevertheless, the principal commitment of southern evangelicals was to the new Confederate nation—not to the dead Union. Unless the independent southern nation was to meet a fate identical to its predecessor's, it was crucial that the Confederate clergy persuade southerners to confess and repent their contributions to the demise of the Union. Such preventative medicine, however, played a subordinate part in the purposes of the clergy. Evangelical southern churchmen were confident that—provided the independent South was obedient to the laws of providence—the collapse of the old covenant—the covenant of Jefferson and Madison—was but a prelude to the establishment of a new and everlasting covenant—the covenant of the evangelical Confederate Israel. The new Confederate nation constituted a saving remnant—"the stone the builders rejected." Nevertheless, in order to ensure such a destiny it was necessary to make southern laypersons understand the supernatural sources of the present crisis. Confederate clergymen therefore set out to trace the proper causes—the moral and spiritual causes—of the collapse of the Union in the plans of providence.
Evangelical Confederate churchmen were appalled at the South's enthusiastic response to secession. Although clergymen were persuaded that the southern cause was just, an element of dread was apparent in the southern evangelical reaction to the events of 1860-61 and in particular to the prospects of civil war. Despite the confidence of southern clergymen that the outcome of the war would be favorable and that the conflict would in fact lead to the establishment of an evangelical Confederate nation, nevertheless, they dreaded the death and destruction that was to occur prior to that conclusion. William Meade—the Protestant Episcopal bishop of Virginia—seemed convinced that the South's best hope lay in the speedy arrival of the Second Coming. Meade could not in fact compel himself to contemplate the future, "unless the Prince of Peace shall speedily come down and establish that Kingdom which is to be forever and ever....Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."  

Meade's colleague, Bishop Thomas Atkinson of North Carolina, alerted his parishioners to "the beginning of sorrows" and called upon them to pray that "the avenging hand" of God should lay down "the fearful scourge of civil war." Nevertheless, Atkinson predicted that "within a few short months, this great country will be divided into two hostile camps, intent to inflict upon each other the greatest possible amount of devastation and misery." 4

The anguish of evangelical Confederate churchmen was
the product of a deep concern—concern, not that the cause
of Lincoln was just, but that the new Confederate nation
might die a premature death due to the moral and spiritual
decadence of the Old South.

To understand the ambivalence of the southern evangelical
response to secession and war, it is first necessary
to appreciate the impact of the doctrine of providence upon
the Confederate Christian's interpretation of contemporary
events. The doctrine of providence makes it clear that
all human dispensations—including war—are didactic in
purpose. Such dispensations are meant to illustrate the
universal principals of sin and redemption that are the
basis of the evangelical understanding of history. War
in particular was considered a dramatic illustration of
the "wages" of sin. Although God cannot be said to cause
evil, He nevertheless makes use of the evils of war to pun-
ish the sins that are the cause of such conflicts and to
reassert the demands of His sovereignty.

The workings and wages of sin was therefore the key
Confederate churchmen used to make sense of the southern
crisis. Reverend Daniel I. Dreher of Salisbury, North Caro-
lina, observed that, "Were it not for the deep corruption
of the human heart, the present unnatural conflict must
remain an enigma forever."5

The doctrine of providence made it clear that morals
—not politics—was the source of the present war. Bishop
Elliott insisted that the war was indeed "a moral...neces-
sity" due to the fact that "corruption had become deep-seated" in all aspects of contemporary American culture "and that morals were fast losing their hold on the public mind." Bishop Atkinson agreed that recent years had witnessed a marked decline in the morals of the American nation. Such perceptions of decline—and in particular of the pervasive impact of materialism, individualism, and rationalism upon traditional evangelical standards—served to confirm the conviction of the clergy that moral rather than "political" causes "were the source of the nation's troubles." Since this was the case, the bishop of North Carolina summoned Confederate evangelicals to a consideration of the "religious...and moral causes of...our present calamitous condition." 6

The moral and spiritual corruption of the South itself was the principle target of the Confederate evangelical assault. Drew Gilpin Faust observed that, "The wartime jeremiad scrutinized southern society with a critical severity rarely seen before the war." Clergymen called upon patriotic Confederates to consider the impact of southern sins upon the sacred cause of the South. The plea of Reverend T.L. De Veaux of Alabama to the "people of the South" was to "wound no more your mother,...but bear her, now weeping and bleeding upon your arms to the throne, and while you weep with her and for her, confess her sins and your sins there, with a spirit of humble penitence, and God will acknowledge and accept the sacrifice...and answer
with speedy and abundant blessing."7

De Veaux's plea was in effect an attempt to persuade southerners to shoulder the demands of providence. Southern evangelicals were persuaded that to merit the success that is the product of divine blessing, it is first necessary to make a humble confession of sin. As De Veaux put it, "confession and supplication must precede the attainment of desired blessings from God." Each Confederate therefore shared a part of the burden of southern redemption. Since each was a member of the South's corporate person, by means of individual confession and repentence, every Confederate was competent to ensure God's acceptance of the new southern nation.8

Such a treatment of the bonds between the individual southerner and the Confederate nation represents a development of the concept of "corporate personality" discussed in the first chapter. Southern evangelicals seem to have groped towards a concept somewhat analogous to the Pauline doctrine of the mystical body of Christ. As each Christian is a member of the mystical body—the Church—and contributes to its building up by means of his personal vocation, in the same manner each southerner has a vocation to build up the Confederate "mystical body" of which he is a part. The South therefore assumes a sacramental status—a status that is clearly elaborated in evangelical discussions of the nature of a Confederate Israel.

Nevertheless, such a doctrine runs counter to popular
perceptions of southern evangelical Protestantism. These perceptions attribute to southern evangelicals such an intense concentration upon the intimate relationship between the individual sinner and his Savior that the Christian community is made to assume a subordinate position. Therefore, the emphasis of evangelical Confederate churchmen upon the place of the southern nation in the economy of salvation appears unusual.

Nevertheless, the corporate emphasis is such a consistent element of evangelical Confederate sermons that its inclusion must be considered deliberate. Nor is it impossible to reconstruct the motives of southern clergymen. A number of Confederate churchmen traced the collapse of the Union—at least in part—to the destructive impact of an ethos of individualism upon the American nation. Southern evangelicals were therefore determined to prevent a similar collapse of the Confederate States. Furthermore, the demands of the contemporary southern crisis compelled Confederates to sacrifice the luxury of a self-absorbed individualism and to concentrate upon the corporate needs of the new nation. The sermons of southern churchmen therefore placed particular emphasis upon a corporate, organic model of church and state—a model that in a subtle manner subordinated the demands of the individual to the needs of the corporate national "person".9

Nevertheless, the Confederate evangelical assault upon the Old South was not simply a precaution against subse-
quent mistakes. If the doctrine of providence is used to illuminate these evangelical jeremiads, it is possible to detect in them the reflected dreams and ambitions of Confederate clergymen. Southern evangelicals were convinced that the product of their labors was to be the metamorphosis of a morally corrupt South into a sacramental Confederate nation.

Much of the evangelical assault upon the contemporary South seems conventional and—to put it mildly—unsensational. There are revelations of southern "sabbath-breaking" in addition to "intemperance...blasphemous oaths" and "fraud." The conclusion of such catalogues was usually a rhetorical accusation such as, "And shall not God visit us for these things?" ¹⁰

Nevertheless, Confederate clergymen did not concentrate upon the sins of individuals. The principal preoccupation of such churchmen as Bishop Elliott was the marked contemporary decay of southern cultural norms. Elliott lamented that "a high value has been put among us upon all those qualities which are the very opposites of the graces of the gospel," such as "pride...self-reliance" and "animal courage." ¹¹

Southern churchmen attributed the perversion of southern culture to the spread of a crass concentration upon the accumulation of wealth. Nor were southern evangelicals content to accept the common plea that this was the "spirit of the age....Do we ever say, or think, or feel,"
asked Elder J.S. Lamar, "it is the sin of the age?" Furthermore, despite the fact that "our adversaries in the North" are in this respect "worse than we...this is neither a compliment to our righteousness; nor a pledge of our safety."

Confederate clergymen were also aware of the presence of political and judicial corruption in the South. Reverend Henry H. Tucker in particular concentrated his assault upon the notorious laxness of Georgia's criminal justice system ("How is it that in the state of Georgia it is almost impossible to convict a culprit of crime?") and upon the immoral behavior of a number of state politicians ("Does Satan claim a monopoly of all the intellectual power and administrative ability in the world?"). Furthermore, Confederate evangelicals condemned the widespread collusion between the states and "vendors of intoxicating beverages" whom "the authorities wink at and testify their approbation with a license. The implication of such pulpit diatribes was that greed, drunkenness, and moral indifference endangered not only the salvation of individual southerners but the destiny of the corporate Confederate "person" in addition.

Nevertheless, despite such assaults, Confederate churchmen did not concentrate upon such secular southern targets. Clergymen concentrated rather upon the decadence of the churches themselves and upon the provocation that such sacrilegious corruption represented to an angered God. Reverend William Norwood, in a breathtaking instance of section-
al arrogance, claimed that northerners were pawns intended to punish the sins of southern evangelicals. Norwood further accused southerners of "practical atheism." Despite loud protestations of personal faith, southerners in fact "substitute as the guiding principles of their lives, their own wills, their selfish interests, the dictates of pleasure" and "the corrupt customs of a wicked world for the will of God." Such intolerable individualism constituted a denial of southern dependence upon providence. Norwood summoned Confederate evangelicals to a renewed awareness that "all comes primarily from Him, and ours is only a secondary agency in producing the blessings of which we have so loudly boasted." 14

Nevertheless, Confederate clergymen conceded that a significant share of the blame was due to the churches themselves—and not simply to the personal corruption of southern laypersons. The Church—it seemed—had entered into the spirit of the world, although the world still remained impervious to the claims of the Church. In other words, clergymen lamented that southern evangelicalism was apparently a mournful prey to its own spectacular success. The price of such success seemed to involve a steady dilution of the primitive evangelical spirit and a dreadful intrusion of secular worldliness into the sanctuary of God.

George Foster Pierce—the Methodist Episcopal bishop of George—lamented that "the Church has been sliding into the world; the broad scriptural lines of demarkation
[sic] were well nigh passed." It appeared to a disturbed Bishop Pierce that the virile evangelicalism of an earlier generation had degenerated into "a supple, sickly liberalism, ready to breakdown the last barrier to the encroachments of fashion and the demands of an ungodly age."15

Confederate clergymen were sadly aware that the diminished devotion of evangelicals was due in part to the successful appeal of the denominations to the members of the southern elite. Despite the increase in status that such success involved, evangelicals such as Elder Lamar lamented that the churches had opened "their doors to unsanctified wealth, and intellect, and worldly influences; and these elements have at length given character to the institution[s]." Reverend De Veaux was properly appalled at the number of southerners who now attended church because it was considered "customary, or fashionable."16

Elder Lamar's embittered reference to the influence of "unsanctified intellect" upon the churches was in part the product of evangelical disillusionment at the impact of voluntarism. The Episcopal and Presbyterian churches in the South in particular--churches that traditionally depended upon the support of the section's social and intellectual upper crust--were disillusioned due to the unseemly spread of the more "popular" Baptist and Methodist denominations. As Lamar put it, southerners "exercise the prerogative of choice where they ought to be disciples and servants. They join the church that they
'like'; they accept the ordinances that they 'prefer'; they embrace the form of doctrine that accords with their 'notion of things'; and now, without any subjection of mind to the wisdom of God...with pride of intellect and life unsubdued, they complaisantly[sic]" profess and call themselves Christians, while they have neither "denied" themselves, taken "His yoke" upon them, nor "followed Him." 

Nevertheless, evangelical southern churchmen were not merely outraged at the offense against God that such unsubdued "pride of intellect" represented. It seemed to a number of clergymen that they themselves were looked upon as the employees--rather than the shepherds--of the churches they served. The pulpit was transformed into a source of popular entertainment due to the need of pastors to satisfy the demands of congregants who--if not satisfied--were at perfect liberty to transfer their worship elsewhere. A clearly crankish Elder Lamar expressed the bitterness of many of his peers when he lashed out that, "Our churches are filled every first day of the week by a respectable audience of 'Greeks,' seeking after wisdom or human philosophy, and expecting the pulpit to supply the demand; everywhere we encounter the Athenian proclivity for 'some new thing,' while to a very great extent, we pour our discourses into 'itching ears--turned from the truth, and turned unto fables.'" Elder Lamar's diatribe demonstrates that the issue of status--the status of the evan-
gelical clergy in the South--was a principal preoccupation of the Confederate churchmen who attempted to interpret the contemporary crisis in terms of the plans of providence.\textsuperscript{18}

Nevertheless, Confederate clergymen were not reluctant to concede the contributions of the clergy itself to the spread of southern corruption. Bishop Meade called upon his brethern to recall "that judgment is to begin at the house of God--in the very sanctuary--with his ministers--and that all their short-comings will be so many swift witnesses against them." The aged Meade--a reluctant secessionist--also attributed the present national punishment--at least in part--to the bitter sectional disputes of the evangelical denominations. The Virginia bishop issued a solemn prediction that, "None may suffer more in this war than the ministers of religion."\textsuperscript{19}

A study of Confederate sermons therefore also illuminates the divisions that sundered the apparently serene ranks of evangelical churchmen. The impact of evangelicalism upon the Old South was in fact itself a source of bitter debate. A number of Episcopal clergymen in particular--clergymen who were profoundly aware of the previously established church's new and distasteful minority status--were pleased to attribute the present crisis to the South's adherence to "a noisy and ostentatious" revivalism rather than to the stately worship of the Book of Common Prayer. Bishop Atkinson claimed that evangelical worship
lacked the necessary spirit of reverence and had therefore attributed to a steady decline in the character of southern religion. The Bishop of North Carolina concluded that, "If... we are a less reverent people than our [Anglican] forefathers, we are a less religious people, even if... our religious feelings [are] more easily and more frequently excited." Nevertheless High Churchmen such as Bishop Atkinson could not prevent the steady assimilation of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the South into the evangelical mainstream.  

Confederate evangelicals were clearly disturbed at the state of the South in 1861. Southern society seemed an incoherent collision of atoms in constant competition --devoid of an appropriate sense of dependence upon God and of the mutual dependence of individual men upon one another. Such individualism was not likely to avoid the condemnation of providence. It in fact constituted a defiant denial of the laws of providence--a denial the wages of which were secession and civil war.

Confederate churchmen developed a dual strategy to meet the desperate situation. Southern clergymen first implored their congregants--in the name of the new nation--to consecrate themselves anew to an offended God. The laws of providence stated that a nation committed to confession and repentence could--despite the nearness of the abyss--still win the blessing of God and prevail against its adversaries. The Confederate evangelical
assault upon southern individualism was an important part of such a campaign to placate providence.

The second part of the evangelical strategy involved an attempt to uncover the roots of southern moral and spiritual corruption. Clergymen were prompt to attribute the source of the South's moral degeneration to the unnatural union between the slave states and the free North.

Confederate clergymen attempted to unravel the logic of providence—a logic that furthermore supported secession. Benjamin Morgan Palmer assured the Presbyterians of New Orleans that "the division of the American people into two distinct nations has not taken me by surprise....We have vainly read the history of our fathers, if we have failed to see that from the beginning two nations were in the American womb."\(^{21}\)

Palmer appealed to Scripture and to American history to confirm his point. He was convinced that the biblical dissolution of a previously attempted union—the union at Babel—demonstrated that "in the original law under which human governments were constituted by God, not consolidation but separation is recognized as the regulative and determining principle." Furthermore, "no man can...read the debates under which the American Constitution was framed, without the conviction that from the beginning, two nations were in the womb."\(^{22}\)

The primary determinants of the "law" of separation that Palmer claimed to discover in the sacred Scriptures
were moral and spiritual. The Union "had" in a literal sense "grown too great to be good." Palmer lamented that "history mournfully attests how rapidly a nation may outgrow its virtue, until, corrupted by its own aggrandizement, it ceases to be a minister of God for good and becomes a terror and scourge to all mankind." Palmer was persuaded that the corruption present in the contemporary United States transformed it into such a scourge. William Rees--a Methodist Episcopal minister in Texas--appealed to the biblical collapse of the chosen nation of Israel--a collapse that occurred in consequence of the consolidation of the twelve tribes under the monarchy--in order to demonstrate the corrupting influence of consolidation upon sovereign states.23

Southern evangelicals persuaded themselves that secession was simply an inevitable act of providence since, as the Reverend I. Dreher put it, "It is not conceivable that a people so differently educated, and with such antagonistic interests to be served, could, for any considerable time, remain united." The apparently plausible conclusion was that, "Nature and nature's God has marked us out for two nations."24

Nevertheless, the sources of dispute between the sections were more fundamental than such matters as education or even the politics of slavery. Elder Lamar stated in blunt terms that the people of the North "differed from us as radically and rigidly as Puritanism differs from
Christianity or as abolitionism differs from the Bible."
H.A. Tupper issued a succinct statement of the Confederate evangelical consensus when he proclaimed that, "SEPARATION WAS NECESSARY TO SALVATION." 25

Although southern evangelicals asserted that the sections shared a prevalent corruption, Confederate clergymen nevertheless attributed a greater degree of guilt to the North. Indeed, southern churchmen concluded that--despite the clear implication of a number of the accusations made in Confederate evangelical sermons--southern corruption was not indigenous to the slave states, but was rather the product of a baleful northern influence. De Veaux detected a "hideous amount of corruption, political and moral... exerting an...influence upon" the South, which "has had hanging upon her skirts, and to a certain extent paralyzing her energies, a Northern 'body of death'." 26

Secession was therefore necessary to purify the South, since it was the radical corruption of the northern states that prevented the South's complete dedication to its evangelical vocation. The assault of Confederate clergymen upon the North was therefore more than mere propaganda. Southern churchmen detected in the free states the negative or antitype of an evangelical Confederate Israel.

The descriptions of the northern Antichrist--opposed to God and to His providence--were also the fevered products of southern evangelical anxiety. Confederate churchmen projected onto the detested northern succubus the assorted
attributes of nineteenth-century modernity—such attributes as secularism, rationalism, and liberalism—that most troubled and bewildered them. There was therefore no confusion in the southern evangelical mind between the cause of Confederate independence and the preservation of evangelical Christianity, since these causes were in fact seen as dual elements of the same struggle. The printed sermons make it plain that a significant source of the clergy's fervent Confederate patriotism was this identification of the destiny of an independent South and the cause of Christianity itself.

Confederate clergymen applied a scapel to the corruption in the northern states and discovered three symptoms of malignant spiritual cancer—political, moral, and religious decay. The southern analysis of the North's diseased political culture was in fact based upon Aristotle rather than upon the Bible. Book Four of the Politics states that, "In democracies which obey the law there are no demagogues; it is the better class of citizens who preside over affairs. Demagogues arise in states where the laws are not sovereign. The people then becomes an autocrat—a single composite autocrat made up of many members, with the many playing the sovereign, not as individuals, but collectively." The consensus of evangelical southern churchmen was that Aristotle's description of a "democratic despotism" contained an uncanny insight into the political culture of the North—a culture in which unscrupulous demagogues and an unrestrained
"autocratic" majority obstructed the rule of law and of a "better class of citizen". 27

Benjamin Morgan Palmer thundered that, "I could perhaps manage to live, if Providence had so ordained, under the despotism of the Czar....I could perhaps submit even to the Turk...but I will not--so help me God!--I never will submit to the despotism of the mob." H.A. Tupper described thus the predicament of the slave states, "Between these two engines of destruction, an restrained majority, and unconscionable [abolitionist] fanaticism, we were truly between the upper and the nether stone which sooner or later would have ground us into powder." R.N. Sledd, a Methodist Episcopal clergyman in Virginia, vindicated secession since it was the duty of southerners "to drive from our soil the propagandists of principles subversive of all social order and domestic happiness." 28

The basis--to a considerable degree--of the Confederate evangelical antipathy to democracy was--as shall be demonstrated in a subsequent chapter--the threat that it represented to the cherished principles of social and political deference--such deference as was due--not merely to the South's social and political elites--but--the implication is clear--to members of the clergy--the "spiritual" elite--as well. Therefore, although the point should not be stretched to such a degree that it leads to an impeachment of the Confederate clergy's undeniable sincerity and integrity, a plausible deduction is that the interpretation
of the plans of providence that southern churchmen elaborated was not entirely unblemished by personal considerations of status and ambition.

Aristotle asserted that an "autocratic" democracy was particularly vulnerable to demagogues and tyrants. The Baptist chaplain E.T. Winkle thus lamented that, "Within the lifetime of a single man, the government of the United States has been perverted into a tyranny, the asylum for the oppressed into the prison house of oppressors." 29

Nor were Confederate evangelicals unable to name the new Nero of the North. The Presbyterian A.B. Longstreet of Columbia, South Carolina, put the rhetorical question to his parishioners, "Who fills the seat of Washington? A man who seems to combine the name of a patriarch and a warrior, only to caricature both. He the base, behaves himself proudly against the honorable. He defies a Taney's power, and striplings of the press applauded him for it. The people oppress one another, and every man his neighbor." 30

Bishop Elliott considered Lincoln the principal architect of an antisouthern conspiracy. Until the presidential election of 1860, the archconspirator's plans showed signs of success. Lincoln's strategy was "to achieve all his purposes thro' seemingly constitutional movements. He well know that the rapid growth of free territory, filling up with a foreign population of the most radical description would surely give him what he aimed at....At this
moment [immediately prior to the secession of South Carolina] in the confidence of his heart, he might well have asked 'Where is now their God?" All the bishop's lurid mise en scene lacked was Lincoln feverishly stroking his new beard and cackling in a maniacal manner.\textsuperscript{31}

Less imaginative perhaps but more to the point, H.N. Pierce--an Episcopal rector in Mobile, Alabama--lamented that, "If despotic principles develop themselves as rapidly in the future as they have done in the past few months in the United States, it will soon appear that the land of the slave is the last refuge on this Continent...of rational, constitutional liberty." The rector considered it unnecessary to point out that such liberty was also a white monopoly.\textsuperscript{32}

Nevertheless, political corruption in the North was merely a symptom of moral corruption. Southern evangelicals claimed to observe a complete negation of the Christian ethical system in the free states. The basis of the evangelical ethic is sublimation of the impulse toward individual gratification and subsequent consecration of the converted will to the simultaneous service of God and neighbor. The moral sense of northerners was darkened, however, due to a demented attempt to construct a social order dedicated to the satisfaction of unrestricted passions.

Reverend D.S. Doggett located the sources of the contemporary tragedy in the North's "lust of power...lust of wealth...passion of prejudice [against slavery]...and...
passion for revenge." Bishop Elliott recalled the recent massive preparations of the Federal army. Nevertheless, there was "not a word about God and His justice and power that we could hear; not a moments distrust of themselves and reliance upon God." 33

The basis of the moral decadence in the North was—to the southern evangelical mind—the most loathsome manifestation of sectional corruption—the corruption of orthodox evangelical doctrine. Southern evangelicals traced the spread of heterodox doctrine in the North—at least in part—to the peculiar nature of the New England mind. Bishop Atkinson charged that the practice of religion in New England was deprived of a spirit of reverence. Such deprivation was due to the impact of the Puritans who, Atkinson claimed, practiced "independence in matters of religion." Furthermore, Puritanism "makes religion to be entirely an individual relation between each individual and its Creator. In theory then, it rejects all human authority in matters of religion." Such a position nevertheless "loses sight of our oneness in Adam, of our oneness in Christ, and of our incorporation in one body. It tends to rationalism in religion....Nothing consequently can make any demand on man which does not square with his individual judgments, his conscience." 34

Bishop Atkinson was not a pure product of southern evangelicalism. Although circumstances and hard times compelled the Protestant Episcopal Church in the South to ac-
commodate itself to evangelicalism, nevertheless pre-evangelical habits and attitudes died hard. Bishop Atkinson's appeal to the authority of the Church could therefore be seen as a momentary lapse. The statements of the bishop of North Carolina are in fact, however, an extreme statement of ideas current in many Confederate evangelical pulpits—not merely Presbyterian and Episcopalian but also Methodist and even Baptist.35

Such ideas were in part a consequence of the southern evangelical assault upon the abolitionist interpretation of evangelical Protestantism. According to southern critics, abolitionist evangelicals claimed the prerogatives of autonomous agents—under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—in matters of scriptural interpretation. Bishop Atkinson's pointed reference to the incorporation of the believer into the body of the Church suggests, however, that the consensus of the faithful places certain constraints upon the capacity of church members to interpret the Scriptures. Nevertheless, Atkinson's corporate evangelicalism is not therefore a denial of the classic Protestant doctrine of sola scriptura, since in fact the consensus of the faithful is simply the Church acting upon its mission to preserve the integrity of the Scriptures against the dangers of individual misinterpretation.

The basis of evangelical commitment to the southern cause was therefore the Confederate evangelical interpretation of the Christian Church's mission. The Presbyter-
ian Reverend Thomas Smyth summed it up when he stated that, "We have crossed swords with the Northern confederacy over the Bible." Benjamin Morgan Palmer attributed the war to an "arrogant competition of individual opinion [italics mine], findings its climax in the pretensions of a 'higher law'." Furthermore, the southern evangelical identification of the Confederate cause with the mission of the Church possessed a number of significant consequences. Southern churchmen—as shall be demonstrated in a subsequent chapter—concluded on this basis that in some special sense the South was the Church—the Confederate cause and the cause of Christ were identical.36

R.N. Sledd put it thus, "The cause of Christ, the interests of religion are involved in this direful conflict. ...As a natural consequence [of the abolitionist influence] the leaven of infidelity is at work through all the ramifications of Northern society....And the great principle which seems now to animate every [northern] heart and, on the supremacy of which they seem determined, may be shown to lead, and in a multitude of instances has already led to an open rejection of the Word of God."37

Southern evangelicals were dismayed at the spread of liberal Protestant sects in the North—in particular the Unitarians—and the consequent diminished influence of orthodox Calvinist teaching. Confederate clergymen were convinced that the "rational religion" of Unitarianism was located at the start of an alarmingly short path toward
atheism. The abolitionist denial of the clear meaning of Scripture and appeal to a "higher law" vindicated—at least to the southern evangelical mind—such a prediction. Benjamin Morgan Palmer observed that, "At an early period, the people of the North commenced to tamper with their religious symbols until the very creeds of the Church became the nests of heresy and deceit. The Bible fell next before the dread spirit of apostacy[sic]....The transition was easy to...a 'higher law'."38

Alexander Gregg—the Episcopal bishop of Texas—charged that the "higher law" of abolitionists was no more than "the reason, or conscience, or passion of man...setting itself up as God." The mission of the southern Church, therefore, was to defend Scripture against such rationalism, individualism, and the consequent moral anarchy.39

Southern evangelicals located the source of the North's corruption in politics, morals, and religion in the failure of northerners to submit themselves to the laws of providence. Georgia's Bishop Pierce called northerners a race of people who "give themselves up to infidelity, erect there[sic] reason into a counsellor of the Almighty, [and] make a majority vote higher authority in morals as well as in politics than...the book of heaven." Southern evangelicals, however,—who prayed to destroy the apostate troops of the North—"are praying in harmony with the plans of Providence and the moral interests of mankind."40

In practice, the North's refusal to submit to the laws
of providence involved an attempt to overthrow the natural order—the basis of all divine and human covenants—and to subvert the moral law—the basis of God's government.

Reverend Doggett called abolitionism an "attempted inversion of what we have every reason to believe to be the social order of Divine Providence." Furthermore, the abolitionists entertained "the frenzied idea of setting the Universe to rights, at the risk of overthrowing it." Doggett prayed that "the result will demonstrate the insanity of the undertaking."41

Bishop Elliott detected in northern "philanthropy" an implicit denial of the impact of human sin upon creation and of the justice of God's disciplinary dispensations. "Instead of believing in the curse of God upon sin, which curse manifested itself in poverty, in suffering, in slavery, in a thousand forms which made the world as miserable as it is, they determined that human effort should remove them all....They did not work that the evils of social life might fade out quietly under the influences of Christianity, but they defied God, because there were any social evils at all."42

To Palmer, northern benevolence was a saccharine but nevertheless deadly blasphemy. "Claiming for themselves a purity superior to [God's] own they have presumptuously pronounced against the Divine administration from the beginning of time....Nay more! Not content with impeaching the divine morality and hurling their impious accusations
against the integrity of God's rule, they proceed in all the madness of fanaticism, to rectify the errors of his administration, and to shape the providence which shall henceforth guide and govern the world." Furthermore, such "reforms" threatened to disrupt the peace and stability of the world. "Though the universe should be in ruins at his feet, nothing must retard this glowing ambition to make the world more perfect than God would have it be—and the sun must be swept from the face of the sky because their telescope has revealed a spot upon his disc." 43

Confederate clergymen detected in the North's assault upon the laws of providence not mere blasphemy—but also madness. Moreover, the punishment was suited to the crime. Since northerners revolted against the rational decrees of providence, the God who ordained the laws of providence denied the inhabitants of the free states the use of their reason.

Reverend O.S. Barten—an Episcopalian—attested that northerners "are beyond the control of reason. They are struck with judicial blindness." Thomas Smyth charged that the insanity of northerners caused them "to see good in evil and evil in good—to see 'a holy and sacred war' which 'God knows to be right' in a diabolical invasion of sovereign states...and to see in the Lincoln dictatorship 'the Government of the United States and the ordinance of God' which is to be obeyed at the peril of damnation." 44

Nevertheless, God ordained the madness of the free
states to secure the plans of His providence. Bishop Elliott claimed that it was the moral and political obtuseness of the Republicans that had "produced an Union of the South which was scarcely hoped for." Elliott attributed the miracle to God's "overruling and protecting Providence."

The Presbyterian Reverend George Armstrong summed up the southern evangelical position when he alluded to the Latin proverb, "Quem Deus perdere, prius dementa[sic]" or "Whomsoever God sets out to destroy, He first makes mad."45

The Confederate evangelical campaign against the North was not merely propaganda—it was in fact the resolution to a theological dilemma. The basis of the dilemma was the moral and spiritual corruption of the Old South. Since such corruption merited God's punishment—in the present instance the punishment of war—it was not clear to southern evangelicals that the Confederate States could look to the support of providence.

Nevertheless, two considerations prevailed against the imminent despair of Confederate churchmen. First, periodic days of national prayer and fasting offered an opportunity both to repent and to confess the sins of the southern past and to establish a durable covenant between God and the new southern nation.

Second, Confederate clergymen were persuaded that the war was in fact the means of providence to sunder the South's ties to the acknowledged source of southern corruption—the apostate North. Since—in the minds of southern church-
men--the North was the sectional incarnation of a detested liberalism--political, moral, and religious--southern evangelicals were able to transform the Civil War into a sacred crusade--a crusade to defend and vindicate providence.

Reverend J.W. Tucker--a North Carolina Methodist--thus addressed the "soldiers of the South": "Your cause is the cause of God, the cause of Christ, of humanity. It is a conflict of truth with error--of the Bible with Northern infidelity--of a pure Christianity with Northern fanaticism--of liberty with despotism--of right with might. In such a cause victory is not with the greatest numbers, nor the heaviest artillery, but with the good, the pure, the true, the noble, the brave." The "maddened adversaries" of the Confederate States, however, were, in the words of Bishop Elliott, "warring not only against us but against God--against his arrangements, against his purposes, against his moral law, against his holy religion."46

Nevertheless, the impassioned assault upon the apostate North and the pleas to southerners to repent and confess their sins was in fact a mere prelude to the principal aim of Confederate churchmen--to persuade southern evangelicals to accept the vocation that providence summoned an independent southern nation towards. Such a vocation demanded the conversion of the Old South into a southern sacramental community--a Confederate Israel. Confederate evangelical discussions of the meaning of such a sacred southern policy are therefore the subject of a third chapter.
ENDNOTES


3. William Meade, Sermon...at the opening of the convention of the P.E. Church of Virginia...[4168] (Richmond, 1861), 19.


5. Daniel I. Dreher, A sermon delivered...June 13, 1861. Day of humiliation and prayer, as per appointment of the President of the Confederate States of America. ...[4138] (Salisbury, N.C., 1861), 6.

6. Stephen Elliott, "New wine not to be put in old bottles". A sermon preached...on Friday, February 28th, 1862, being the day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States....[4149] (Savannah, 1862), 8-9 (first quotation), Atkinson, "On the causes of our national troubles", 6 (second quotation).


9. Drew Gilpin Faust discusses the impact of "Confed-erate nationalism[']s...notion of corporate mission" upon the traditional individualism of southern evangelicalism. Faust, Creation of Confederate Nationalism, 29-30.

10. William Meade, Address on the day of fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States. June 13, 1861....[4167] (Richmond, 1861), 5-6.

11. Stephen Elliott, God's presence with the Confederate States. A sermon preached...on Thursday, the 13th
of June, being the day appointed at the request of Congress, by the President of the Confederate States, as a day of solemn humiliation, fasting and prayer. ...[4146] (Savannah, 1861), 20.

12. J.S. Lamar, A discourse delivered...on the Confederate fast day, Friday, Nov. 15th, 1861...[4162] (Augusta, Ga., 1861), 11. On the relationship between perceptions of American materialism and the evangelical defense of secession, see Faust, Creation of Confederate Nationalism, 42.

13. Henry Holcombe Tucker, God in the war. A sermon delivered before the legislature of Georgia, in the Capitol at Milledgeville, on Friday, November 15, 1861, being a day set apart for fasting, humiliation and prayer, by His Excellency the President of the Confederate States...[4196] (Milledgeville, Ga., 1861), 20. On the southern evangelical critique of contemporary American politics, see Loveland, Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 121-24.

14. William Norwood, God and our country. A sermon, preached...on the 27th day of March, 1863, the day appointed for prayer and humiliation by the President of the Confederate States....[4174] (Richmond, 1863), 11.

15. George Foster Pierce, The word of God a nation's life. A sermon: preached...before the Bible Convention of the Confederate States...March 19, 1862...[4179] (Macon, Ga., 1862), 17. On the transformation of southern evangelicalism during the antebellum period, see Donal G. Matthews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago and London, 1977), 81-135. On the anxious reaction of southern evangelicals to many aspects of this transformation, see Loveland, Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 95-102.

16. Lamar, discourse, 10 (first quotation), De Veaux, Fast-day sermon, 8 (second quotation). On the spread of worldliness in the antebellum churches, see Loveland, Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 91-102.

17. Lamar, discourse, 12.


19. Meade, sermon...at the opening of the P.E. Convention of Virginia, 8 (first quotation), William Meade, Address on the day of fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States. June 13,
The standard account of the antebellum denominational schisms and their impact on the coming of the war is C.C. Goen, Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denomina-
tional Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War (Macon, Ga., 1985).

20. Atkinson, "On the causes of our national troubles", 11 (first quotation), 9 (second quotation). On the assimilation of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the South to evangelicalism, see Mathews, Religion in the Old South, 129-31.

21. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, National responsibility be-
fore God. A discourse, delivered on the day of fast-
ing, humiliation and prayer, appointed by the Presi-
dent of the Confederate States of America, June 13,
1861. . . . [4176] (New Orleans, 1861), 26-27.

22. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer, D.D., delivered before the General Assembly at Milledgeville, Ga., on fast day, March 27, 1863. [4178] (Milledgeville, Ga., 1863), 31 (first quotation), 33 (second quotation).

23. Ibid., 33 (first quotation), W. Rees, A sermon on di-
vine providence; delivered February 4th, 1863, (Thank-
giving Day,). . . . [4185-1] (Austin, Tx., 1863), 10-11.


25. Lamar, discourse, 9 (first quotation), Henry Allen Tupper, A thanksgiving discourse, delivered...on Thurs-
day, September 18, 1862 [4200] (Macon, Ga., 1862),
7 (second quotation).

26. De Veaux, Fast-day sermon, 10. Drew Gilpin Faust de-
scribes the confidence that southerners felt due to
the fact that they "had at least taken the first step
in their regeneration by separating themselves from
the sinful North." Faust, Creation of Confederate Nationalism, 30.


28. Palmer, National responsibility before God, 25
(first quotation), Tupper, Thanksgiving discourse,
6 (second quotation), Robert Newton Sledd, Sermon delivered...Before the Confederate Cadets on the occasion of their departure for the seat of war, Sunday, Sept. 22d, 1861. [4190] (Petersburg, Va., 1861), 19-20 (third quotation). Jack Maddex comments that--to the southern evangelical mind--"the era of individualism...had culminated in libertarian radicalism, the apocalyptic dragon. By binding radicalism, the Confederacy was inaugurating an era of aristocratic, corporate 'conservatism.'" Maddex, "Proslavery Millennialism," 58-59.


31. Elliott, God's presence with the Confederate States, 7.

32. Henry Niles Pierce, Sermons preached...on the 13th of June, 1861, the national fast appointed by His Excellency Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America....[4181] (Mobile, Ala., 1861), 6.

33. David Seth Doggett, The war and its close. A discourse delivered...April 8th, 1864...on the occasion of the national fast....[4137] (Richmond, 1864), 6. On southern evangelical perceptions of moral decadence in the North, see Loveland, Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 259-60.

34. Atkinson, "On the cause of our national troubles", 9-10.

35. See Mathews, Religion in the Old South, 129-31, and Holifield, Gentlemen Theologians, 157-162.


38. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, A discourse before the General Assembly of South Carolina, on December 10, 1863, appointed by the Legislature as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer....[4175] (Columbia, S.C., 1864), 18.
39. Alexander Gregg, The duties growing out of it, and the benefits expected, of the present war. A sermon, preached upon Sunday, July 7th, 1861...[4156] (Austin, Tx., 1861), 5.

40. George Foster Pierce, Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer, 6.


42. Stephen Elliott, Ezra's dilemma[sic]. A sermon preached...on Friday, August 21st, 1863, being the day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States...[4142] (Savannah, 1863), 14. According to Jack Maddex, the "organic, progressive view of society" entertained by southern Calvinists rendered the northern reform impulse abhorrent. Maddex, "Proslavery Millenialism," 51-52.


44. Otto Sievers Barten, A sermon preached...on the fast day, June 13, 1861...[4126] (Richmond, 1861), 10 (first quotation), Smyth, battle of Fort Sumter, 19 (second quotation).

45. Elliott, God's presence with the Confederate States, 10 (first quotation), George Armstrong, "The good hand of God upon us." A thanksgiving sermon preached on the occasion of the victory at Manassas, July 21st, 1861...[4122] (Norfolk, Va., 1861), 10 (second quotation).

46. Joel W. Tucker, God's presence in war: A sermon delivered...on Friday, May 16, 1862....[4198] (Fayetteville, 1862), 11 (first quotation), Stephen Elliott, Gideon's water-lappers: A sermon preached...on Friday, the 8th of April, 1864. The day set apart by the Congress of the Confederate States, as a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer....[4143] (Macon, Ga., 1864), 22 (second quotation).
Chapter III--"Theodicy of Nations":
The Doctrine of the Evangelical Confederate Israel

The tone of the Confederate jeremiad discussed in the second chapter suggests that southern evangelicals entered upon the war in a state of unrelieved fear and trembling. This was not, however, in fact the case. Despite a clear consciousness of the South's unworthiness, Confederate churchmen were persuaded, as one bishop put it, that our cause was [God's] cause; that we were defending a condition of society [slavery] which He had established as one of the links in the chain of His Providence, and that we should be successful, not because of any merits or righteousness of our own--for God knows that we have sins enough to bring upon us any chastisement--but because we were instruments in His hands for the fulfillment of an important part of the economy of grace. We maintained that this conflict was not one of the ordinary and ever recurring struggles for independence but that it bore many of the features of a sacred war, involves in its issues not human rights only, but sound religion, and the maintenance of truth in philosophy, in morals and in government....As it went on, we had perceived, more and more clearly, its necessity and its righteousness, and such wonderful manifestations of God's presence with us had accompanied it, that we felt satisfied He was acting as our counsellor and leader.1

Bishop Elliott's impassioned Confederate apologia contains an eloquent summary of the evangelical defense of southern independence. Southern evangelicals were not content to preside at the birth of a nominally Christian nation--such a nation as the shattered Union had once appeared to be. The swift decay and ultimate collapse of the United States was in fact the means providence employed to demonstrate the necessity of a vital faith to the prosperity of a nation. The persistent theme of evangelical Confederate sermons therefore was that southerners should "bring
our new born nation to the temple of Jehovah to baptize it, to-day with our Christian faith...and to invoke upon its rulers, its people, and its Constitution, the benediction of the King of Kings."  

Confederate clergymen searched the scriptures to discover in them the pattern of the new nation. Since the New Testament contained no precedents to meet the southern situation, the Old Testament—and in particular the sacred history of the chosen nation of Israel—was selected to provide the scriptural basis of Confederate nationalism. Southern churchmen therefore asserted that the secession of the slave states was the prelude to the establishment of a new Israel. Furthermore, not unlike its Judaic predecessor, the evangelical Confederate Israel was destined to play "an important part in the economy of grace."

Although the dream of an evangelical Confederate Israel was not in fact destined to issue in the millennium, it did contribute to a metamorphosis of southern evangelicalism during the Civil War. In the first place, the corporate implications of the doctrine of a Confederate Israel undermined the traditional individualism of southern evangelicals. According to the Confederate paradigm, however, as distinct from orthodox ecclesiological ideas, it was the sacred South rather than Holy Church that absorbed the converted sinner. Furthermore, the deep interest of the southern clergy in the establishment and maintenance of such a sacred polity eroded the distinction between the sacred
and the secular realms and administered the coup de grace to the persistent shibboleth of the "spirituality of the Church."

The dream of an evangelical Confederate Israel was in fact to prove more durable than the Confederate nation itself. The conviction that the South was uniquely Christian and that it was therefore destined to play a pivotal part in the expansion of the gospel survived the Confederate swan song and is still apparent in the preeminent contributions of southerners to the religious culture of America and of the world. Such an accomplishment in fact represents the enduring legacy of evangelical Confederate churchmen to the South and to the nation.

Southern churchmen were insistent that unless the new Confederate nation was molded in the theocratic pattern of the Old Testament nation of Israel, it would be doomed to destruction. Reverend William Rees—a Methodist Episcopal clergyman in Texas—asserted that "the only nation that can hope to be permanent" is one that boasts a constitution based upon "the teachings of the Bible...as exemplified by providence in the history of the Jews." Furthermore, Rees was consoled that in many respects the Confederate States already resembled "the Jewish polity...the divine[ly] instituted model of government of the world." Rees produced a paradigm of the ideal nation state based upon his investigations of the Old Testament. "This [ideal] nation shows
a confederation of independent tribes, or states, governed by their own internal by-laws, bound together by the worship of the same God, and mutual interest, and for mutual defense; cemented together by moral sentiment, without any coercive power to compel submission. This, then, was a model republic. It was also a slaveholding republic." Surely, Rees seemed to say, such a correspondence between the Judaic and the Confederate Israels must be a consequence of the intervention of providence.3

The implication of such an argument was that to the degree it corresponded to the biblical pattern, the constitution of the Confederate Israel was--like its predecessor--the product of divine revelation. Such wartime apotheoses of the independent southern nation were later to furnish the postbellum foundations of the cult of the Lost Cause.

Nor were Confederate clergymen averse to the theocratic implications of the Old Testament parallel. Bishop Elliott reminded his parishioners that Jehovah had not been merely the God of the children of Israel, "but their King. He made their laws; He guided their armies; He arranged every matter, not only of religious worship but of civil and military discipline." The implication of Bishop Elliott's remark was that God must also assume the prerogatives of lawmaker and civil ruler in an evangelical Confederate Israel. Nevertheless, such an assertion seems to involve the abdication of an important principle--the principle of the "spirituality of the Church"--often associated
with the evangelicalism of the Old South.⁴

James Henley Thornwell—the most celebrated Presbyterian churchman of the Old South—provided the most eloquent defense of the doctrine of the "spirituality of the Church." Thornwell considered the Church "a spiritual body, whose purposes are only the dispensation of eternal salvation, and not the creation of morality, decency, and good order, which may...be secured without faith in the Redeemer."

Therefore, the Church possessed "no commission to construct society afresh, to adjust its elements..., to rearrange the distribution of its classes or to change the forms of its political constitutions."⁵

Although a tradition of strict adherence to the principle of the separation of church and state was not unknown to many eighteenth-century southern evangelicals—such a tradition was particularly strong among the Baptists—nevertheless, the classic formulation of the doctrine of the Church's "spirituality" was a product of the acrimonious slavery debate. According to historian Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., "Primarily because of attempts by Northerners to involve themselves in civil matters in the Southern states, Southerners formulated a doctrine advocating the strict noninterference of the churches in political matters."⁶

The doctrine of the Church's "spirituality" did not vanish entirely during the war. It in fact underlay the southern evangelical assault upon the North's overzealous reformers. Southern churchmen claimed that their northern
counterparts—by succumbing to the temptation to interfere in "nonspiritual" matters—had not only desecrated the Church but endangered the peace of society as well.

Nevertheless, when southern evangelicals turned to consider the new Confederate nation, they did not simply ignore but in fact openly and proudly repudiated the idea that the church should not interfere in political matters. Bishop Gregg of Texas offered a vigorous defense of this apparent heresy.

The pulpit, sacred from the intrusion of topics involved in the ordinary course of political affairs—a time with us that is past—the pulpit...can no longer be silent. With the liberties of our country, now that infidelity and fanaticism have begun to wage their "irrepressible conflict"—the cause of religion itself is inescapably bound up....Its [the Church's] work will be to impress the hearts of our people with the spiritual dangers, the religious duties, and the sacred claims of patriotism affecting them, as they give an account to God for their conduct in this contest.

In other words, the church could not maintain the position of a passive observer, because the future of Christianity was linked to the fortunes of the Confederate States. The eternal salvation or damnation of individual southerners was therefore to be assessed on the basis of their loyalty to the will of providence—a will made manifest in the establishment of an independent, religiously orthodox southern nation.7

Bishop Meade called upon his "brethren and friends to testify how carefully I have avoided in all my communications the least reference to anything partaking of a poli-
tical character." Nevertheless, "in the present circumstances of our country, the cause of religion is so deeply involved," that Meade felt constrained to break his long apolitical silence. Furthermore, a sense of duty compelled the Church to interfere since, as Bishop Elliott put it, "In this crisis of our national history, there is no element of society, which is so important as the Church. It yields the most powerful instruments for good and for evil at a moment like this."8

The principal weapon that the Confederate churches claimed to possess was a correct understanding of the science of providence. Such an understanding enabled southern evangelicals to read the "signs of the times" and to divine the Confederacy's prospects of success. In this connection, Confederate clergymen were pleased to recall the manifold religious blessings that God had conferred upon the South. A providential significance was attached to such blessings. The most signal indication of heaven's favor was that the South—unlike the apostate North—had preserved intact the teachings of evangelical orthodoxy.

Bishop Pierce proclaimed that, "I rely with cheerful assurance upon a single fact, that is, that the Southern people with all their faults...have never corrupted the gospel of Christ....These are facts of hopeful significance, when we remember that God's government of the world all looks to the fortunes of Christianity." The implication of Bishop Pierce's last remark is that the South's singular
adherence to religious truth was an indication of its destiny to assume the leadership of Christendom.\textsuperscript{9}

The South's happy loyalty to evangelical truth was especially significant since, in the words of D.S. Doggett, "One of the issues involved in the war is the purity of the religious faith of the nation." While "the seeds of all sorts of religious heresy are scattered broadcast across the North, these pestilential errors have never infected to any material extent, the people of the South." Furthermore, Doggett warned his listeners that, "If our enemies succeed, the barriers will be broken down, the floodgates will be raised, and the torrent of multifarious error will roll its desolating surge over the heritage of God[italics mine]." However, should the southern nation succeed in its bid for independence, "Christianity ...will maintain her asylum, at least for a while, on Southern soil."\textsuperscript{10}

Doggett hammered home the message to his Methodist congregation that the South was in a peculiar sense the "heritage of God" and the protector of the Christian faith—a faith that had fled to southern soil after the apostasy of Europe and of the northern United States. Therefore, since God had clearly singled out the South in this remarkable way, it was the duty of southern evangelicals to acknowledge the divine favor in the manner that providence intended. "It is the duty of a people so eminently distinguished as we have been, to establish amongst us the perma-
nent worship of God...and to diffuse the religion of the Bible amongst all orders of society, by precept and example." Bishop Pierce put it thus, "Let us have a Christian nation, in fact as well as in name, that God may be as a wall of fire round about this young Confederacy, and a glory in the midst of her." 11

Bishop Pierce's summons to establish "a Christian nation in fact as well as in name," indicates the dissatisfaction of Confederate clergymen with popular attitudes towards religion in contemporary America. Southern churchmen could not accept an interpretation of the First Amendment that rendered the government indifferent to the claims of Christianity. Such an interpretation seemed opposed simultaneously to the demands of revelation and of human nature.

The student of Confederate evangelicalism is confronted by a mentalité that is profoundly dissimilar to that of secular modernity. The modern mind's division into sacred and secular compartments—a division that seems second nature to most Americans in the latter part of the twentieth century—was not complete at the time of the Civil War. Confederate evangelicals were, however, conscious of the contemporary evolution of a modern secular mentalité, and they were profoundly hostile to its implications. In the tradition of Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin, southern evangelicals continued to insist that since the proper end of man is God, the state—the purpose of which is to promote the ends of
man--must also acknowledge and submit to the divine law. Furthermore, since man's fundamental nature is religious, a state indifferent to the claims of revelation would constitute an unnatural monstrosity.

As an anonymous Confederate clergyman put it, "It is evident...that there can be no civilization without intellectual and moral cultivation; and there can be no cultivation without cultus--that is to say, a worship, a public recognition of a supreme being and a supreme law." Furthermore, according to the Reverend Edward Reed, history vindicated such a position since "among nations there is no exception to the assertion that greatness has been found in connexion[sic] with religion."12

Southern evangelicals therefore insisted that, "The whole education of the [Confederate] country should be Christian....The infidel policy of leaving the youthful mind unbiased[sic] and free, is unsound....It is a stratagem of the enemy of souls." Bishop Pierce denounced the futile protests of southerners who resisted his scheme of universal Christian education in the name of "liberty of conscience" since "the impregnation of government, law, art, commerce, civilization, with her own pure, gentle, peaceable, loving, sentiment is the predicted triumph of Christianity." Furthermore, God seemed to have reserved the triumph of such an "impregnation" to the new southern nation.13

Nevertheless, Confederate evangelicals did not formally renounce the principle of separation of church and
state. Rather, they interpreted it in a much narrower manner than has subsequently been the case. Provided that there was no single established denomination, the First Amendment did not appear to Confederate clergymen to prevent a general establishment of Christianity as the law of the southern land. Nor did such an interpretation strike Confederate churchmen as inconsistent with the intentions of the framers of the Constitution. Rather, it seemed to the clergymen of the Confederate South that they had in fact returned to the original intent of the framers—an intent that a corrupt subsequent generation had deliberately misunderstood. As Bishop Pierce put it, "Our republican fathers wisely separated the Church from the State; their degenerate successors madly separated the State from Heaven. It has been the fashion to...decide in politics, as if Christianity were not a superior, supreme law, and as though God had abandoned his book and his rights to the chances of a doubtful contest." 14

Reverend O.S. Barten insisted that, "We must become a Christian nation—a people fearing God!" Then—in case his listeners were tempted to mistake his meaning—Barten added, "All schemes of social reform, all elements of true political success, all remedies for individual and national evils centre[sic] in the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Reverend C.C. Pinckney put it even more succinctly when he asserted that, "The supreme power of Jehovah should be the recognized basis of our national existence." 15
Southern clergymen saw no greater conflict between the constitution of the Confederate Israel and the original American charter than they did between the Old and New Testaments. In fact, just as the New Covenant had completed and perfected—rather than abolished—the Old, the purpose of the evangelical Confederate Israel was to purify and sanctify—rather than annul—the principles of Washington and Madison. As Reverend O.S. Barten put it, "The United States were founded on the doctrine of human rights.... Then let the Confederate States go a step beyond. Let this Government upon which we this day implore God's blessing become the glorious embodiment of Christian liberty—the faithful exponent of human rights, as rectified and hallowed by religion." Barten therefore saw in the "heroes" in the Confederate army "the apostles of justice, human rights and religion" who "serve[d] God and humanity."\(^\text{16}\)

Nevertheless, in order to ensure "Christian liberty," Confederates had to submit to the supreme legislative authority of God. Not to do so would constitute a denial of His rights. In the words of Bishop Pierce, "In morals we have no rights of legislation.... If we would be a Christian nation, what the law commands or allows must never contravene the behests of heaven." Furthermore, if human law should come into conflict with "the revealed economy of God," it was the duty of Confederates to "vindicate the divine right."\(^\text{17}\)

Southern churchmen were also aware of the need to provide the Confederate Israel an abundant stock of Joshuas, Samuels, and Davids. Nevertheless, the clergy were compelled
to accept that in a Christian republic such as the Confederate States the ballot stood in place of a direct divine summons. The Presbyterian Reverend A.B. Longstreet insisted that Confederate voters must demand Christian magistrates. "We must support such [magistrates] as He approves; and if such do not offer themselves for our suffrage, we must support the one which approaches nearest to His standards." Should southerners act in such a manner, "Our government will be as stable as the hills, and lasting as the pyramids." 18

Reverend A.M. Randolph described the ideal character of the Confederate magistrate.

They are, or ought to be, a band of...consecrated men, who care more for the worship of God than for the applause of men, or the emoluments of office...men who go up from closets of prayer to their council chambers and who, in every perplexity of statesmanship, fall back upon the oracles of Scripture, and the laws of Jehovah. Such is the ideal character, which belongs to the civil magistrate, and thus the State through him becomes the subject of a divine government, and its institutions and offices are loyal to the heavenly supremacy. 19

Reverend Barten summed up the Confederate evangelical position on the proper relations between church and state in this manner, "We do not believe in the union of Church and State. We grant to every man the right to worship according to the dictates of his conscience. But we do believe in the union of religion and government." There can be "no true liberty without principles of justice,...rectitude,...[and] obedience to the law of God....And these are principles and sentiments fostered in the heart of man,
and fostered there by religion only."\textsuperscript{20}

The failure of the Federal Constitution to recognize the existence of God was therefore the death knell of the Union the Constitution was intended to preserve, since it deprived Americans of "the principles of justice,...rectitude,...[and] obedience to the law of God." The authors of the Confederate Constitution had rectified the error of 1787 so that the new southern nation could "be thoroughly pervaded and regulated by the principles of God's word." Southern churchmen therefore saw in the new Confederate government an "echo of Bible truth--a mighty focus catching and concentrating, and thence distributing through its various media, the purifying influence of moral truth."\textsuperscript{21}

The Confederate Constitution was therefore not meant simply to purify the corrupted legacy of 1787. Rather, the purpose of the new southern nation was to transcend that legacy altogether, to "plant the government on the Bible, talk less of the rights of the people and more about the rights of God,...and let all the ends we aim at be God and country and truth." The Confederate government, therefore, was clearly intended to assume the nature of a political sacrament--to preserve the evangelical truth and to dispense the means of salvation to the South and to all the debilitated members of Christendom.\textsuperscript{22}

Despite the enthusiasm of southern evangelicals, it was clear to them that the present Confederate administration's understanding of the intentions of providence was
not adequate to the needs of the nation. Although the Confederate Constitution--unlike its Federal predecessor--contained
an acknowledgment of the nation's dependence upon God, nevertheless there was no explicit reference to His Son or to
the truth of Christianity. Southern churchmen were disturbed at this omission--an omission that seemed to obstruct the
South's vocation to lead Christendom.

Benjamin Morgan Palmer lamented that the constitution makers of Montgomery had failed to accept the duty to take
"this young nation as it passes through its baptism of blood,
and to seal its loyalty to Christ at the altar of God."
Bishop Pierce also insisted that the Confederate Constitution must contain a "distinct recognition of Christianity." Pierce
appealed to the prophetic nature of the "theocracy of the Jews" to demonstrate his point. This "theocracy..., though
not prescribed as a model for the nations of the earth,
was intended to be the type, in substance if not in form,
of all righteous government. In the progress of civilization
and religion, as the world approaches the grand prophetic
period,...the governments of the world will all be assimilated
to this pattern." Therefore, in taking the Israelite theocracy
as its model, the Confederate nation would in fact be initiating
a momentous transformation of Christendom that would eventually result in the establishment of the millennial kingdom.23

Nevertheless, despite the concern of evangelical sou-
thern churchmen that the Confederate Constitution contained
no explicit reference to Christ, Confederate clergymen did not in general concern themselves with the precise form of the new government. As Bishop Elliott put it, "The form of a Government is not the important point; it is the principles [that underlay it]." Since the biblical nation of Israel was at different stages in its history under the rule of judges, kings, and priests, it was clear that providence was not partial to any single mode of constitution. "Principles" were another matter, however, and the evangelical churchmen of the Confederate States were determined to inspire in southern evangelicals a correct appreciation of the biblical principles of government. 24

Such an aim possessed special importance, since Confederate churchmen considered the animating principles of the old Union to have been dangerous and unscriptural. Bishop Meade argued that Americans at the time of the Revolution, after "throwing off allegiance to power unduly exercised,...proceeded to the overthrow of all authority,...asserting dangerous rights,...Nor have we, to this day, recovered from its effects. There is a spirit of independence and insubordination...among all ranks, which is one of the most fearful signs of our times, and which, if not arrested, must bring down the heaviest calamities on our land." Bishop Elliott agreed that carried away by our opposition to monarchy and an established Church, we declared war against all authority and against all form. The reason of man was exalted to an impious degree, and in the face not only of experience but of the revealed word of God, all men were declared
to be created equal and man was pronounced capable of self-government. Two greater falsehoods could not have been announced--falsehoods, because the one struck at the whole constitution of civil society as it had ever existed, and because the other virtually denied the fall and corruption of man.25

The consequences of the disappearance of a sense of reverence in postrevolutionary America constitutes a central theme in the extant evangelical Confederate sermons. Bishop Atkinson pointed out that all human governments are rooted in a sense of divine reverence, otherwise "why should I submit to a man except that he can force me or that God bids me?...Our forefathers rejected a government of force, and framed one on the basis of voluntary obedience." Nevertheless, Atkinson was afraid that the Founding Fathers "went too far in that direction and that our institutions themselves have fostered that spirit of individualism...which introduces anarchy, and which, in due time, consequently throws us back upon despotism, for government we must have." Bishop Elliott asked, "Where is there, even among us, guarded and protected as we have been, any reverence for age, for authority, for experience?...Have not all the conservative influences of our General and State Governments been progressively overturned, and new doctrines, all based upon these [democratic] principles, been worked into the public opinion of the people?"26

The reintroduction into southern society of a spirit of due reverence--a spirit based upon a paternalistic, hierarchical vision of society--was therefore an essential ele-
ment in the evangelical dream of a Confederate Israel. R. Wilmer—the Episcopal bishop of Alabama—observed that the war was the chosen means of providence to affect this particular revolution upon the democratic southern mind. "The trials, fears and hopes of men in the army compelled them to look up to their leaders....This surely is a needful and wholesome lesson for a people whose institutions and habits tended to the obliteration of all distinctions between man and his fellows. Obedience, the root of all the virtues [italics mine], is thus inwrought through the rigid and necessary discipline of war."27

The majority of evangelical Confederate churchmen whose sermons have survived belonged to the upper echelons of the ministerial profession in the South. They served elite urban rather than poor rural congregations. Therefore it was natural that these clergymen should identify themselves with the sentiments and ambitions of their distinguished parishioners. These sentiments—at least to the degree that the printed sermons reflect them—vindicate the claim of Drew Gilpin Faust that the "second American Revolution" was in fact intended by many members of the southern elite to be a counter-revolution directed against the democratic excesses of post-Jacksonian America.28

Southern clergymen insisted that providence intended the Confederate Israel to correct these abuses. Nor should it be a surprise that conservative southern evangelicals discovered the source and inspiration of neo-aristocratic
counter-revolution in Scripture. Bishop Elliott urged southern evangelicals to "go back to the principles of the Bible, if we would find our permanent remedy....Subordination reigns supreme in heaven, and, it must reign supreme on earth....It [subordination] is the support of all authority, the true moral principle of all order in social life."\(^{29}\)

Bishop Pierce called upon his parishioners to remember that "Government is an institution of Heaven; the powers that be are ordained of God." A.M. Randolph added that, "Rulers when they fulfill their mission, serve as [God's] agents, and the channels of communication between men and the people they represent." Bishop Elliott called upon congregants to "learn a new lesson under this our new Government, and endeavor to regain a virtue almost lost in the western world--the virtue of reverence--and the lesson of respecting, obeying, and honoring authority, for authority's sake."\(^{30}\)

Confederate clergymen did not openly advocate the establishment of an aristocracy in the South. The idea of "republicanism, with its assumption of a lost world of public virtue and its calls for redemption through a return to past values," contained the necessary distinction between a destructive democracy and the social system suited to a evangelical Confederate Israel. According to Benjamin Morgan Palmer, the United States had been saved from the savage rule of unlicensed democracy by the establishment of a Confederate republic; with its written constitution, and all the checks and balances which can be furnished by two deliberative chambers,
the presidential veto and state sovereignty....The Northern people, from the commencement of American history, have failed to seize the true idea of a republic. They have confounded it with democracy...[by] exalting the will of a numerical majority above the force of constitution, and covenants, and creating in the despotism of the mob the vilest and most irresponsible tyranny in the annals of mankind.31

Palmer concluded that the emergence of an "unlicensed democracy" in the North was unavoidable due to that section's lack of a "class...representative and guardian of the conservative element in human society." Such a class "existed only at the South." Due to the absence of a conservative element--such an element as undoubtedly nodded in rapt approval at Palmer's pulpit eloquence--the North had been given over to radicalism and therefore "drives recklessly forward to its own destruction." Nevertheless, in case the planter presence was not by itself adequate to exorcise the demon of radicalism, Bishop Elliott urged Confederates "to put it out of our power to corrupt ourselves, by laying down fundamental propositions of the most conservative character, and adhering to them through good report and through evil report."32

The Confederate Israel therefore entered into combat under the twin banners of the Bible and the Republic. As to the latter, Palmer proclaimed that "the last hope of self-government upon this Continent lies in these eleven Confederate States." For this reason alone, southerners "may...feel the support of God's immoveable Providence."
Bishop Elliott added that, "The bloody war in which we are engaged is necessary for our purification," in order that the North should be compelled to recognize the evils of a democracy that had degenerated into its inevitable complement—a military despotism.\textsuperscript{33}

Southern evangelicals did not consider the political conservatism of the Confederate Israel accidental to its religious orthodoxy. Such a synthesis of religious and political crusades was in part a consequence of the Confederate clergy's proud defiance of the distinction between the sacred and the secular—a distinction that appeared to them to limit the sovereignty of God and the imperial sway of providence. However, it was also part of a more general attack upon nineteenth-century liberalism and all of its works. Most of the Confederate churchmen whose sermons are available to us were in fact intellectual descendants of Edmund Burke and products of the conservative reaction to the French Revolution. Therefore, the enthusiasm of the clerical elite for the Confederate cause increased in proportion to the clergy's recognition that an independent South could become an island of vital conservatism in a vast sea of degenerate liberalism.

Nor was such a dream unrelated to the plans of providence—at least as those plans were understood by southern churchmen. As Chaplain Drury Lacy imagined it, it was with the divine blessing that in an independent Confederate South "the old leaven of radicalism, in all[italics mine] its
widespread and ever restless forms will have been purged out." Reverend James Warley Miles expressed the harmony of political and religious conservatism in an evangelical Confederate Israel when he promised southerners that, "If we are true to ourselves, if we are not blind to the indications of Providence, we have the glorious, but awfully responsible mission of exhibiting to the world that supremest effort of humanity—a political organization in which the freedom of every member is the result of law, is preserved by justice, is harmonized by the true relations of labor and capital, and is sanctified by the divine spirit of Christianity." Clearly Jacobins were no more welcome to a place in the Confederate Israel than were abolitionists.34

Evangelical Confederate churchmen were convinced that the war was the means of providence to effect a lasting transformation of southern society. Furthermore, the purposes of such a metamorphosis transcended the mere eradication of the South's moral and spiritual corruption. Rather, God was raising up and training an evangelical Confederate Israel that was destined to play a pivotal part in the salvation of mankind. According to Reverend I.R. Finley—a Virginia Methodist—"It is observable, then, in the perusal of the record of God's dealings with men...that in all ages of the world He has been wont as a uniform practice of His government in the earth to raise up human agencies and instrumentalities, possessing peculiar adaptations to specific
ends, for the working out mediately of His bright designs. It is also observable, that usually these have undergone a course of discipline or training preparatory to their entrance upon the work to which they are called of God."35

Bishop Elliott attempted a succinct definition of the "specific ends" for which God intended to establish His Confederate Israel.

We have been entrusted with the moral and religious education of an inferior race, made more sacred to us by the events of this war....We have been appointed to preserve upon this continent all that is valuable in morals and legislation and religion. We have been selected to be a bulwark against the worst developments of human nature, fanaticism, democracy, license, atheism. For such purposes God is discipling and reforming us in the fires of affliction, and when He shall perceive that we have been...exalted by our self-denial...He will give us our deliverance and establish us in this land...as a nation consecrated for His own mysterious yet all wise purposes.

Reverend James Warley Miles added that, "If such is our mission, and we fulfill it with fidelity as a Christian people, then the history of our Confederacy will be another great chapter in the theodicy of nations, justifying the ways of Providence to men."36

Southern evangelicals traced the moral and spiritual decline of the modern world to the revolutions of the eighteenth century. The political, intellectual, and economic revolutions of the eighteenth-century had undermined the traditional model of a paternalistic, hierarchical, and religiously based society. Out of the vacuum thus created had emerged the embryo of a new society based upon political, intellectual, and economic liberalism. Conservative
southern evangelicals were convinced that the traditional
preindustrial, pre-Enlightenment model of society was in
conformity with God's intentions for mankind. Therefore,
the erosion of such a society constituted an implicit re-
jection of providence and of the Christian revelation.
Furthermore, the material and intellectual self-reliance
that the individualistic ethos of nineteenth century lib-
eralism encouraged appeared to confirm such pessimism.

Such profound antimodernism combined with the perva-
sive paranoia of the antebellum South to shape the reac-
tion of Confederate clergymen to the Civil War. The evan-
gelical Confederate Israel of which the southern clergy
dreamed was to be in effect a "sacred ghetto"--the last
refuge of political, social, and religious orthodoxy in
a world gone stark mad.

Nevertheless, as the words of Reverend Miles imply,
God's southern remnant was also to be a "saving remnant."
The fidelity of southerners to providence was to initiate
the eventual transformation of a corrupted Christendom.
While most of the western world collapsed into moral and
political anarchy, the preservation of order and orthodoxy
in the Confederate States would serve simultaneously to
vindicate the maligned South and to justify "the ways of
Providence to man." God and the Confederate South were
therefore co-conspirators in a plot to preserve Christian-
ity, reform a decadent Christendom, and--as the grand finale
of the entire process--issue in the end of history and the
establishment of the millenial kingdom.

Reverend Finley proclaimed that, "Infidelity and irre-
ligion and superstition and idolatry have reigned long enough.
What if God should call some highly favored people of the earth to spring forth into the forefront of his forces, to 'cut short the work in righteousness', by stimulating the other Christian nations to self-denial, more virtuous action, and more rapid and decisive results than have yet been exhibited or achieved? What if the Southern Confede-
racy...should be that nation?" 37

According to the Reverend O.S. Barten, "The purposes of God shall never fail, and His purposes are bound up with us as a nation!" Furthermore, Barten called upon the Confed-
erate nation to become "a living embodiment of the Gospel of Christ. In the gradual unrolling of the mighty scroll on which God has written the story of our future...may there stand emblazoned in letters of living light but this one testimony: 'They are My people, and I am their God!'" 38

Southern evangelicals applied to themselves and to the Confederate States all the Old Testament promises made to the children of Israel. Upon the single condition of fidelity to the Law, God had promised to preserve and defend the biblical Israel. In the same manner and upon a similar condition, God was pledged to protect the nineteenth-century Confederate Israel. There was, however, a significant differ-
dence. Whereas the Jews had lost their national indepen-
dence and were now relegated to the diaspora, the covenant
between God and the evangelical Confederate Israel was to be an everlasting covenant.

According to R.N. Sledd,

We "fight for the cities of our God"...--the God who has chosen us as His peculiar people, made us the repository of His will, and the light of the world--the God who has ever been about us as a wall of fire...and who has lavished upon us the richest gifts of His love His honor is assailed and His majesty despised by those idolatrous [northern] Ammonites! And the cities of our God...--Jerusalem which He hath chosen, and Mt. Zion where His glory dwelleth—all are threatened with desecration and ruin! Then let us be valiant for Israel and for Israel's God! 39

There could not be a more succinct statement of the nature of the evangelical Confederate covenant. Southerners constituted God's chosen people--the people selected to vindicate "His honor" and "His majesty". In return, God would defend His southern "Jerusalem" against its enemies. Under such circumstances, Confederate defeat was unthinkable. As Reverend A.M. Randolph put it, "A people whose God is the Lord...cannot be conquered." 40

Nevertheless, as has been shown, the mission of the Confederate Israel transcended the Mason-Dixon line. The Confederate Israel was to be a sacramental nation--a sign of God's presence in an infidel epoch--and its independence would lead to the conversion of the North and eventually of all mankind. Bishop Gregg meditated upon the prospect that a separate North and South, at peace and united by "our common Christianity," might in the years ahead conspire together "to achieve more glorious triumphs for the
Cross and marshall its heavenly forces as never before, for the last struggle with the great enemy of man!" The fidelity of the Confederate Israel to its God inspired in Reverend Henry H. Tucker an even more grandiose vision of the future. "Suppose every nation were thus to turn to the Lord. Then every nation would secure his blessing. Nation would rise up against nation no more, nor would men longer learn the arts of war. The spears would be beaten into pruning hooks and the swords into ploughshares, the days of Millenial glory would come, and the whole world would be subject to the gentle reign of the Prince of Peace!" 41

Such an inspiring vision seemed within the realm of possibility to southern evangelicals in the early days of the war since, in the words of Thomas Smyth, "Every step in the southern movement has been pointed out by a voice from heaven, saying: 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'" Furthermore, it seemed to Joseph Atkinson as to many that war had indeed inspired in southerners an unusual degree of "faith in God—the perennial source of patience, courage and hope." 42

Evangelical Confederate sermons made it clear that the condition of southern independence was the South's acceptance of its divine appointment. Reverend William C. Butler proclaimed that,

God has given us of the South to-day a fresh and golden opportunity....He has placed us in the front rank of the most marked epoch in the world's history. He has placed in our hands a commission which we can faithfully
execute only by holy, individual self-consecration to all of God's plans....Let us never forget our high calling. Let us only be faithful to ourselves and religiously discharge our sacred trust. And all things work together for our good--the stars in their courses fight for us.43

Nevertheless, southern churchmen understood that a covenant was a binding contract between God and His chosen people. In order to make such a contract effective, the chosen people must first make a public, ritual declaration of its acceptance of the terms of the contract--such a declaration as the biblical Israel had made, assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai. The Confederate counterpart to the theophany at Sinai was the day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer.

Such days were celebrated periodically throughout the war--usually at the direct summons of the Confederate Congress. The immediate purpose of the fast day was dependent upon the South's fortunes in the war. After an important victory, a fast day was declared in order to render thanks to providence. Fast upon the heels of a military disaster, a day of humiliation and prayer was proclaimed to placate an angry God. Nevertheless, southern evangelicals attached a significance to these fast days that far exceeded the needs of the moment. The fast day sermons of Confederate clergymen made it clear that the importance of these periodic acts of public worship lay in their celebration and acknowledgment of the covenant relationship between the Confederate Israel and the God of providence.
Bishop Pierce was convinced "that these official acts [congressionally decreed fast days] piously performed by the powers that be, and reverently acknowledged by the people of our country...[bring the Confederacy] into peculiar covenant relations with God and enlist in our defense, the resources which God alone can command." According to Benjamin Morgan Palmer,

This vast assembly is not simply a convention of individuals engaged in acts of worship...But, as an integral part of this young nation and in obedience to the call of our civil head, we are met to recognize the God of nations....The people of these Confederate states proclaim this day, 'the Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.' It is this sacramental feature of our worship which lends to it such dreadful solemnity....The bonds of this covenant which we seal this day to the Lord are entered upon the register in which the Recording Angel writes up the deeds of time, before the Eternal Throne. 44

A sacrament is by definition a sign that possesses the power to effect what it signifies. By referring to fast days as a sacrament, Palmer implied that through them the dream of an evangelical Confederate Israel was made real--despite the continuing presence of the northern menace. As Palmer put it, upon such days southerners approached the Throne not in the manner of individuals but in the "corporate person" of the Confederate Israel. Fast days were also symbolic of the South's rejection of the nineteenth-century's assorted heresies--individualism, rationalism, and materialism--and return to the pure spirit of the laws of providence.

This was true primarily because on fast days south-
erners accepted and celebrated the proper relationship be-
tween creature and Creator—a relationship that secular
modernity had turned on its head. As Bishop Elliott put
it, a fast day "calls upon us to humble ourselves before
God in this our time of peculiar difficulty, to recognize
His righteous government....It is a day to be devoted to
mingled gratitude and humiliation—to thanksgiving for great
mercies and to a confession of our unworthiness of them—
to acknowledge that unto Him alone belongs the glory of
our present condition, and to supplication that He will
continue to be our shield and strong tower of defense."45

The spirit of Bishop Elliott's declaration is funda-
mentally opposed to the dominant ethos of mid-nineteenth-
century American culture—at least as that culture was under-
stood by southern evangelical clergymen. Instead of an
optimistic confidence in man's capacity to harness and con-
trol nature, Bishop Elliott substitutes a stern reminder
that man is a debased sinner, scarcely able to control his
own darker impulses. In place of a mid-century confidence
in the free will of man as the motive force of history,
Bishop Elliott substitutes the traditional Calvinist insist-
ence upon man's dependence—voluntary or otherwise—upon
an omnipotent providence. Furthermore, in place of an atom-
istic individualism, the corporate symbolism of the fast
day reinforced the organic nature of the good society—a
society in which all men of whatever rank shared a mutual
dependence upon the twin benevolences of God and neighbor.
Relevant to the last point is the specific reference of Sylvanus Landrum to the fact that it was the "nation" rather than a congregation of individuals that was "voluntarily humiliating itself before the Great God" on fast days.46

The renunciation of a "selfish" individualism was necessary to the incorporation of the individual into such a sacred corporate entity as the Confederate Israel. Therefore, such sublimation was a constant in evangelical Confederate sermons. As Reverend T.L. DeVeaux put it, "Prostration of the heart before God is at all times a solemn and impressive spectacle. It is an act signifying a renunciation of selfdependence and self-reliance." Once such an act of selfrenunciation had been made by the members of the congregation, it was therefore no longer a mere assembly of individuals but rather "the South" that approached God in the shape of a penitent. "In that form kneeling penitent attitude--our own beloved Land--our cherished South lies here, in whose great heart the hitherto frozen fount of penitential tears has been broken up....Let the feast, and the dance, and the sounds of gayety[sic] be banished, and let a universal silence prevail: for a kneeling nation confesseth unto Jehovah of hosts." In the same vein, Bishop Elliott insisted that "the legitimate consequences of humiliation and prayer" included "the decrease of selfishness."47

It was not simply that Confederate evangelicals consid-
ered the "selfish" individualism of the North sinful. In addition there was a deep conviction that the traditional emphasis of southern evangelicals themselves upon individual conversion was inadequate to the needs of the moment. As Drew Gilpin Faust put it, "The possibility of salvation on a level even more exalted than that of individual justification offered a powerful nationalist appeal within an evangelical South, encouraging Christians to embrace the corporate identity that would bring them to such realization of God's grace." In this way, the stress upon the subordination of the individual to the southern "Church" combined with the conservative organicism of the Confederate jeremiad to create the powerful impression of a corporate Confederate Israel—a complete negation of the atomistic individualism and corrosive liberalism to which many southern churchmen attributed the collapse of the Union and the decrepit condition of Christianity in antebellum America.48

The Confederate governments constant recourse to fast days was the most meaningful symbol of what southern independence signified to Confederate evangelicals. Such recourse involved both a public pronouncement of the Confederate nation's acceptance of the laws of providence—and of all that these laws signified to southern churchmen—as well as a declaration of war upon an apostate modernity. H.N. Pierce, an Episcopal rector in Alabama, believed that Jefferson Davis's declaration of national fast days augered "well for the future of our new Confederacy," since "the master
builders are laying its foundations in humility, and contribution, and cementing its stones with faith and prayer." Indeed, such was the power of the penitential sacrament to affect what it signified that, in the words of Bishop Pierce, "If I could only be assured that all the people of our land were truly repenting of their sins before God...I should not fear that another drop of blood would be shed." 49

Secession and war compelled the churches in the Confederate states to abandon the politically correct otherworldliness of the 1850s. The claims of patriotism prompted southern evangelicals to sacralize the southern cause. Nevertheless, the commitment of southern churchmen to the Confederate cause transcended the demands of southern nationalism. Confederate clergymen transformed the southern nation into a simultaneous fulcrum of orthodox religious aspiration and conservative political calculation. Although it is doubtful that all southerners shared the latter sentiments, the legacy of Confederate evangelicalism—the image of southerners as a chosen people and of the South as a sacred society—was destined to endure—despite the loss of southern independence.

Evangelical Confederate clergymen were persuaded that the Confederate Israel and all its institutions were—not unlike the institutions of the biblical Israel—sacred. The attempts of southern churchmen to discover the place
of a "peculiarly" sacred institution--slavery--in an evangelical Confederate Israel are the subject of a fourth chapter.
ENDNOTES

1. Stephen Elliott, God's presence with our army at Manassas! A sermon preached...on Sunday, July 28th, being the day recommended by the Congress of the Confederate States, to be observed as a day of Thanksgiving, in commemoration of the victory at Manassas Junction....[4144] (Savannah, 1861), 8.

2. Alfred Magill Randolph, Address on the day of fasting and prayer appointed by the President of the Confederate States, June 13, 1861....[4183] (Fredericksburg, Va., 1861), 16.

3. W. Rees, A sermon on divine providence; delivered February 4th, 1863 (Thanksgiving Day)....[4185-1] (Austin, 1863), 10 (first quotation), 9 (second quotation).

4. Stephen Elliott, The silver trumpets of the sanctuary. A sermon preached to the Pulaski Guards on...the Sunday before their departure to join the army in Virginia....[4152] (Savannah, 1861), 3.


7. Alexander Gregg, The duties growing out of it, and the benefits expected, from the present war. A sermon preached...on Sunday, July 7th, 1861....[4156] (Austin, 1861), 6. Not even James Henley Thornwell--the apostle of "spirituality"--could resist the temptation an independent South presented. Farmer,
Metaphysical Confederacy, 189.

8. William Meade, Address on the day of fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States, June 13, 1861...[4167] (Richmond, 1861), 15 (first, second quotations), Elliott, God's presence at Manassas, 22 (third quotation).

9. George Foster Pierce, Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer, D.D. delivered before the General Assembly at Milledgeville, Ga., on fast day, March 27, 1863. [4144] (Milledgeville, Ga., 1863), 22.

10. David Seth Doggett, The war and its close. A discourse, delivered...Friday, April 8th, 1864...on the occasion of the national fast...[4137] (Richmond, 1864), 12-13.

11. David Seth Doggett, A nation's Ebeneezer. A discourse delivered...Thursday, September 18, 1862: the day of public thanksgiving appointed by the President of the Confederate States...[4136] (Richmond, 1862), 13 (first quotation), George F. Pierce, The word of God a nation's life. A sermon preached before the Bible Convention of the Confederate States...March 19th, 1862...[4179] (Augusta, Ga., 1862), 15 (second quotation).


15. Otto Sievers Barten, A sermon preached...on the fast day, June 13, 1861...[4126] (Richmond, 1861), 11-12 (first, second quotations), Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Nebuchadnezzar's fault and fall: A sermon preached...on the 17th of February, 1861...[4182] (Charleston, 1861), 12 (third quotation).


17. Pierce, The word of God a nation's life, 10.


24. Stephen Elliott, "New wine not to be put into old bottles": A sermon preached...on Friday, February 28th, 1862, being the day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States ....[4149] (Savannah, 1862), 14.

25. William Meade, *Sermon preached by Bishop Meade at the opening of the Convention of the P.E. Church of Virginia*....[4168] (Richmond, 1861), 12 (first quotation), Elliott, "New wine not to be put into old bottles", 10 (second quotation).


27. Richard Hooker Wilmer, *Future good--The explanation of present reverses: A sermon preached...during the spring of 1864*....[4206] (Charlotte, N.C., 1864), 18.


29. Elliott, "New wine not to be put into old bottles", 14.

31. Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 30 (first quotation), Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *A discourse before the General Assembly of South Carolina, on December 10, 1863, appointed by the Legislature as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer...*[4175]* (Columbia, S.C., 1864) 10 (second quotation).


33. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *National responsibility before God*. A discourse delivered on the day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States of America, June 13, 1861...*[4176]* (New Orleans, 1861), 26 (first, second quotations), Elliott, "New wine not to be put into old bottles", 17 (third quotation).

34. Drury Lacy, *Address delivered at the general military hospital, Wilson, N.C., on the day appointed by the President as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer...*[4162]* (Fayetteville, 1863), 13 (first quotation), James Warles Miles, *God in history*. A discourse delivered before the graduating class of the College of Charleston on...March 29, 1863...*[4170]* (Charleston, 1863), 2324 (second quotation).

35. I. Randolph Finley, *The Lord reigneth*. A sermon preached...August 16, 1863...*[4154]* (Richmond, 1863?), 15.

36. Stephen Elliott, *Gideon's water-lappers*. A sermon preached...the 8th day of April, 1864. The day set apart by the Congress of the Confederate States, as a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer...*[4143]* (Macon, Ga., 1864), 2021 (first quotation), Miles, *God in history*, 27 (second quotation).


41. Gregg, *Duties*, 18 (first quotation), Henry Holcombe Tucker, *God in the war*. A sermon delivered before the legislature of Georgia...on...November 15, 1861, being a day set apart for fasting, humiliation, and
42. Thomas Smyth, The battle of Fort Sumter: its mystery and miracle: God's mastery and mercy. A discourse preached on the day of national fasting, thanksgiving, and prayer...June 13, 1861....[4192] (Columbia, S.C., 1861), 23 (first quotation), Joseph Mayo Atkinson, God, the giver of victory and peace. A thanksgiving sermon delivered...September 18, 1862....[4123] (Raleigh?, N.C., 1862?), 10 (second quotation).

43. William C. Butler, Sermon: preached...on the Sunday after the battle of Manassas, July 21, 1861....[4178] (Richmond, 1861), 3-4.

44. Pierce, Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Butler, 3-4 (first quotation), Palmer, National responsibility before God, 6 (second quotation).

45. Stephen Elliott, God's presence with the Confederate States. A sermon preached...on...the 13th of June, being the day appointed...by the President of the Confederate States, as a day of solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer....[4146] (Savannah, 1861), 3.

46. Sylvanus Landrum, The battle is God's. A discourse...on the day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, appointed by President Davis...August 21st, 1863....[4163] (Savannah, 1863), 5.

47. DeVeaux, Fast-day sermon, 3-4 (first quotation), Stephen Elliott, "Vain is the help of man." A sermon preached...on...September 15, 1864, being the day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, appointed by the Governor of the State of Georgia....[4153] (Macon, Ga., 1864), 8 (second quotation).


49. Henry Niles Pierce, Sermons preached...on the 13th of June, 1861, the national fast appointed by His Excellency Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America. [4181] (Mobile, Ala., 1861), 3 (first quotation), Meade, Address, 5 (second quotation).
Chapter IV--The Metaphor of Slavery:
The Place of the Peculiar Institution in the Evangelical
Confederate Israel

Ex-Confederates tended to deny that slavery had caused
the "War Between the States" or that the South seceded to
preserve the "peculiar institution." Survivors of the Lost
Cause protested that the war was a crusade to defend sacred
principles--"state's rights," "constitutional liberty,"
"southern honor"--anything but slavery. Historians usually
dismiss such protests as defense mechanisms. Ex-Confede-
rates could not concede that the southern sacrifice was
dedicated upon the morally discredited altar of human bon-
dage.

Nevertheless, such "objective" historical analysis
cannot do the Confederates justice. Such a categorical
statement as "slavery led to secession and the Civil War"
--despite its transparent truth--leaves unexplored the rich
vein of "subjective" motives that impelled southerners to
defend the Confederate cause. Slavery itself was half fact
and half metaphor--a symbolic Proteus that accommodated
itself to the disparate social, political, and moral prin-
ciples of the southerners who contemplated it. Therefore,
when the blase statement is made that southerners waged
a war to preserve slavery, it is necessary to ask what such
preservation meant to individual classes of southerners.
In other words, what was it precisely that the preservation
of slavery was itself intended to preserve or to promote?

Such an inquiry into the symbolic importance of slav-
ery is particularly necessary to a study of Confederate evangelicalism. The peculiar institution as an independent concern is conspicuously absent in the extant evangelical Confederate sermons. Southern clergymen considered slavery subordinate in importance to the moral and spiritual principles that were the "true" sources of the war. Confederate churchmen attributed the South's determined defense of slavery to a prior and vastly more significant loyalty to providence and to the Bible. The assertion that the latter attachment was in any sense reducible to the former would have inspired outraged denial. Therefore, when southern clergymen insisted that the war between the sections was inevitable--even apart from the issue of slavery--there was more involved than simple self-delusion.

Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that the architects of an evangelical Confederate Israel were indifferent to slavery. Southern evangelicals were indeed aware that the "mission to the slaves" was the crucible--the crucial test--of the Confederate Israel's accomplishment of its millennial mission. The consequences of such an awareness were steeped in unselfconscious irony. A paradoxical and even poignant reversal of roles occurred in which the freedom of the master was dependent upon the fidelity of the slave. The salvation of the "saving remnant" was dependent upon the cooperation of the "sons of Ham." The logic of the Confederate Israel compelled southern clergymen to paraphrase the psalm, "I look to the slave quarters, from whence comes
my help." The ultimately unsuccessful attempts of Confederate churchmen to resolve such paradoxes and translate the rhetoric of the "mission to the slaves" into reality constitutes the turning point in the history of the Confederate Israel.

Confederate clergymen were insistent that slavery was perhaps the cause, but it was not the issue, of the war. Conspicuous care was taken not to treat slavery as an independent issue but rather to see in it the preeminent illustration of the moral and spiritual principles that were in fact the inspirations of the Confederate crusade. Southerners argued that they died to defend these principles and--almost coincidentally it appears--to preserve slavery.

The basis of the Confederate evangelical treatment of slavery was a deep conviction that God was the author of the peculiar institution. Therefore, a crusade to vindicate slavery was also a crusade to vindicate God. Nor is it accurate to dismiss such an argument as transparent rationalization. Rather, the defense of slavery was a logical consequence of the conservative southern clergy's determined antimodernism.

Confederate clergymen attributed the assault upon slavery to the Leviathan--liberalism. Abolitionism was, however, a peculiarly clever strategem of the enemy of souls, since it served simultaneously to undermine religious, social, and political orthodoxy. As Bishop Gregg put it, "The lights
of recent investigation, the result in great measure of the aspersions made on the institution [of slavery]...have only served to bring opposing arguments to an end—to drive its adversaries, in greater numbers, to the rejection of the Bible, in an appeal to a 'higher law,' so making common cause with that infidel agrarianism [utopian socialism], of which it is but one of the phases.\(^1\)

The clear scriptural support of slavery therefore compelled abolitionists to adopt the secular rationalism of the "higher law" argument. At the same time, abolitionism itself was "but one of the phases" in an "infidel agrarianism" that—unless combated—threatened to undermine the bases of conservative southern society. Therefore, southern clergymen were insistent that the Confederate Israel's mission was not reducible to the defense of slavery, since such a defense was merely the implication of a more fundamental crusade against the bastions of radicalism.

Nevertheless, the proslavery argument was unique in that—as has been demonstrated—it served to concentrate upon itself the entire disparate array of southern evangelical concerns—such concerns as the impact of intellectual liberalism, social egalitarianism, and Jacksonian democracy upon the South. Therefore, when Confederate clergymen stake the chances of a Confederate Israel's success upon the vindication of slavery, it is necessary to be sensitive to the rich symbolic importance of the peculiar institution. The student of Confederate evangelicalism is
constantly reminded that southern slavery was not simply a system of labor discipline.

Reverend I.T. Tichenor—an Alabama Baptist—attributed the isolation of the South—due to the spread of anti-slavery sentiment in the North and in western Europe—to providence. Such isolation was necessary in order that "guided by His hand we may rise up to future greatness, and show to the world in all coming time that GOD was right in instituting slavery among men; that it is the best form of human society....For such a mission I confidently believe God is preparing us. This preparation requires purity among our people; a proper understanding and regard for the rights of both master and servant,...and above all else a desire not so much for national glory as for the honor of GOD and the good of our race." Bishop Elliott was adamant that slavery was central to the didactic purposes of providence in the war. In fact, the war "must go on until ...we ourselves learn to value the institution above any estimate we have ever placed on it, and to treat it as a sacred trust from God, until all shall acknowledge, with one consent, that it is a divinely guarded system, planted by God, protected by God, and arranged for his own wise purposes in the future of him, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The Presbyterian Thomas Smyth developed further the place of slavery in the plans of providence. "Now the whole movement of the South is based upon God's Word...and upon the recognition
of God's authority, power and providence, in forcing upon us [italics mine] millions of laborers;...in imposing upon us their superintendence, and their cultures as a solemn trust for mankind at large; and blessing our labors in a marvellous[sic] manner, with all spiritual and temporal good."  

The statements of these Baptist, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian clergymen reflect the consensus of Confederate evangelicals. Slavery was the symbolic focus of the evangelical Confederate Israel. The presence of the peculiar institution in the South was not the responsibility of southerners but rather a "solemn trust for mankind at large" that God had "forced" upon the South "for his own wise purposes." The cultivation of such a trust demanded an unusual degree of moral and spiritual purity, confidence in the wisdom of providence, and--not least--a "regard for the rights of both master and slave." The source of the South's contemporary persecution was therefore not its refusal to abandon a barbaric anachronism but rather its heroic fidelity to the decrees of providence. Such fidelity compelled the South to endure the assault of infidels. Nevertheless, these assaults would--lead to God's vindication of his "suffering servant." Therefore slavery was simultaneously the South's cross--"unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness"--and the ultimate source of its impending resurrection.

Confederate evangelicals claimed therefore that the
South’s social system was the gift of providence. Such a claim was intended to silence the critics of slavery. Nevertheless, it was also a part of the logic of the Confederate Israel. Since the Confederate States was a sacramental nation, it was necessary to trace the development of its institutions to the interventions of providence. Such “historical” analysis was also a source of southern edification, since it illustrated the intimate relationship that had always obtained between God and the people of the South.

C.S. Vedder—a Presbyterian clergyman in Charleston—asked, “Was it accident that peopled this commonwealth ... with a race brave, generous and noble?” Vedder also clearly detected the interventions of providence in the availability to the southern soil of “the peculiar labor force necessary to its productiveness,” in addition to a benevolent master class that was solicitous of the welfare—both secular and sacred—of its slaves.?

The biblical proslavery argument was already so deeply engrained in the minds of southern evangelicals that it is seldom outlined in detail in Confederate sermons. Southern churchmen instead made use of “code words” such as “Ham” and “Japheth” that immediately suggested arguments the slavery debate had long rendered familiar. Nevertheless, Benjamin Morgan Palmer appealed at length to Japheth and Ham—the biblical prototypes of contemporary southern masters and slaves—to suggest the venerable antiquity of
the southern social system. Palmer's clear intent was to suggest that Noah's blessing of Japheth and curse upon Ham was a prophecy of the status quo in the Confederate Israel. Mankind had scarcely survived the flood and the southern sacramental nation was already in preparation. "Enlargement was promised to Japheth; and throughout all the past, the hardy and aggressive families of this stock have spread over the larger portion of the earth's surface, fulfilling their mission as the organs of civilization....Upon Ham was pronounced the doom of perpetual servitude--proclaimed with double emphasis, as it is twice repeated, that he shall be the servant of Japheth and the servant of Shem."  

Noah's prophetic pique served simultaneously to vindicate secession as well as slavery, since it demonstrated the suitability of independence to the Anglo Saxon and its complete unsuitability to the African. R.N. Sledd instructed his parishioners that a war of national independence was a godly cause "if a state of national independence" was "conducive to our happiness and to our accomplishment of the objects of life." However, "if our capacity be such that a condition of subjection and dependence will best promote our welfare, then does it accord with the purpose of our being and with the will of God that we should occupy that position."  

The implication of such an argument was as inescapable as it was steeped in the assumptions of paternalism. The preservation of slavery was a part of the duty of the Con-
federate Israel, not because such preservation served the interests of southern whites but because it was the duty of the stronger and innately superior to protect the naturally inferior. As Reverend George Armstrong put it, "In God's providence, we have a dependent race among us, sustaining peculiar relations to the governing race. The character and position of this dependent race is such that its safety, its very existence...require that the absolute control of all matters concerning it shall be left entirely in the hands of our Southern people." Furthermore, Armstrong "did not see how we, as honest, Christian men, could answer to God for our conduct, did we surrender one iota of this control."6

Benjamin Morgan Palmer developed the theme that slavery was--to recall the memorable phrase of the late U.B. Phillips--a "school for civilization." Palmer considered it "notoriously true that the highest type of character ever developed among them then [blacks] has been in the condition of servitude." Furthermore, "the form [of slavery] most beneficial to the negro himself is precisely that which obtains with us; either as born in the house, or bought with our money, he is a regular member of the household, and is protected by the affection and by the interest of the master." Reverend James Warley Miles agreed that, "The African who is intrusted[sic] to our care can only reach the amount of civilization and development of which he is capable--can only contribute to the benefit of humanity
in the position in which God has placed him among us." 7

Confederate clergymen were convinced that the abolitionists were in fact the deadly enemies of the South's slave population, since--due to the natural and scripturally demonstrated inequality of the races--black emancipation could only result, in the words of Benjamin Morgan Palmer, in the "extirpation of the negro" by the bestial northern conquerors of the Confederacy. Bishop Gregg agreed that the slaves were indeed "imperilled." "In this perilous crisis for them, as to all that affects their present welfare and future good, they must claim our deepest sympathy and most anxious care. They are imperilled!...Their happiness as a race, if not their existence, depends upon the issue [of the war]." Furthermore, Gregg described the "rapid decline and relapse into barbarism, ending in extinction," that would be the consequence of misguided northern philanthropy. 8

Despite the boasted superiority of the master race, southern evangelicals possessed an uncanny consciousness that the unusual intimacy of the relationship between master and slave produced a sort of primitive equality between Ham and Japhet. In any case, Confederate clergymen were no more certain of the herrenvolk's capacity to survive the collapse of slavery than that of the "imperilled" Africans. Benjamin Morgan Palmer was convinced that Confederate defeat would necessitate "the extermination both of the white and the black races now upon the soil," since white
southerners were determined to face death rather than submit to northern invasion, while "experience" demonstrated that "except in the condition of servitude, an inferior race cannot be intermingled with a superior, without annihilation." Palmer's ominous conclusion—perhaps not altogether attractive to his listeners—was that, "Their [the slaves'] destiny is involved in ours."\(^9\)

The implication of both the biblical proslavery argument and the clergy's apocalyptic appeals to traditional southern fears of slave insurrection was that slavery was a "permanent relation." Palmer's earnest prayer was that the prosperity of a southern "slaveholding republic" would demonstrate the unscriptural fatuity of emancipationism --immediate, gradual, \textit{et al.} Palmer hypothesized that the purpose of the war was "to teach mankind that the allotment of God, in the original distribution of destinies to the sons of Noah, must continue, despite the ravings of a spurious and sentimental philanthropy—to illustrate the riches of his grace, and the workings of a beneficent gospel, through the relation of master and servant, not less than through that of parent and child, and all the other permanent relations in which man stands to his fellow man." Although Palmer accepted as a distant possibility the eventual emancipation of the slaves, he did not greatly expect it.\(^{10}\)

Palmer's comparison of the relationship between master and slave to that of parent and child is a clear indication of the Presbyterian churchman's dedication to social and
political paternalism. As was stated earlier, southern slavery was half fact and half metaphor. Palmer and many other Confederate clergymen saw in slavery the metaphor of a politically deferential and socially paternalistic order--such an order as these conservative churchmen claimed was the dictate of Sacred Scripture. In defiance of the accusation that slavery was anathema to the progressive modern mind, Palmer positively celebrated the paternalistic, antidemocratic implications of the peculiar institution. The evangelical Confederate Israel could never succumb to the blandishments of political or intellectual liberalism --provided that slavery was the basis of its social order.

In the South...the dominant race, by the force of its position towards an inferior and servile class, is rendered conservative in the highest degree....All their interests are bound up in the perpetuation of the prevailing institutions of the land; and the class whose tendencies might be to change, has no share whatever in the administration of public affairs. It matters not whether slaves be actually owned by many or by few, it is enough that one simply belongs to the superior and ruling race, to secure consideration and respect.

As a consequence, the South could claim all the advantages of aristocratic government without abandoning "the simplicity of republican taste." The Methodist Bishop Pierce was also in agreement that slavery was "the great conservator of republican government."11

The implication of Palmer's strategem is clear. Slavery simultaneously promotes a conservatism conducive to the perpetuation of planter rule and a semblance of white solidarity adequate to placate the classes of white southerners
not otherwise admitted to the closed circles of power. Providence—rather than James Henry Hammond—was apparently the author of the "mudsill" theory.

The difficulty with metaphors however is that they are capable of diverse interpretations. Chaplain J.J.D. Renfroe demonstrated the sort of fervent class consciousness that—according to Palmer—slavery was intended to obstruct. Although Renfroe's use of the metaphor of slavery was also a variant upon the mudsill theory, nevertheless—unlike the paternalist Presbyterian—the democratic chaplain saw in the peculiar institution the ideal obstruction to the aristocratic ambitions of the southern planters. "In our country, color is the distinction of classes—the only real distinction....The rich do sometimes try to establish distinctions in classes and grades in society, but they have hitherto failed of the establishment of anything like a controlling aristocracy; while our institutions remain as they are, they must forever fail."\(^\text{12}\)

Renfroe considered slavery the guarantor of freedom. "Examine any nation in any age of the world where the existence of this institution is not allowed, and the poor of the land are the slaves of the rich. It is so in the North, it is so in Europe, and I had almost said, it is so of every people on this globe except our own sunny South." Furthermore, Renfroe addressed the widespread sentiment that the conflict was "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight."

Abolish the institution of slavery, and your children and my children must take the place of that institution.
Abolish that institution—as is the design of our enemies—and in less than a half century, the poor of the land must become the carriage drivers, body servants, waiting maids, and tenants of the rich.... See your posterity in cruel bondage—see them reduced to an equality with the negro man and woman... and then tell me if this is not preeminently the poor man’s war. 13

The divergent uses to which the metaphor of slavery was put illustrates the deep class divisions that sundered the Confederate Israel. Clearly not all Confederate clergymen opposed the advance of political liberalism or saw in slavery the safeguard of paternalism. The defense of the peculiar institution could just as easily be used as a patriotic excuse to vent the frustrations of lower class whites against the pretensions of the southern elite.

Nevertheless, perhaps wisely, Confederate clergymen chose to concentrate upon the moral and spiritual blessings—rather than the social and political implications—of slavery. Bishop Elliott rhapsodized that, "However the world may judge us in connection with our institution of slavery, we conscientiously believe it to be a great missionary institution—one arranged by God.... We believe that we are educating these people as they are educated no where else; that we are elevating them in every generation; that we are working out God’s purposes; whose consummation we are quite willing to leave in his hands." 14

Furthermore, Bishop Elliott described in moving terms the "martyrdom" of the southern slave owner. "At that day of terrible judgment, when the secrets of all hearts will
be disclosed, many will stand before God, who shall be able to show that they have sacrificed feelings dearer than life itself for the benefit of these very slaves, who have spent days of toil and nights of prayer to understand what was best for their temporal and eternal state."15

Reverend William Norwood spoke reverently of the South's mission of "civilizing and Christianizing" the members of its slave population. Reverend I.R. Finley insisted that "the commission comes from Heaven's High Chancery to us as a nation to christianize that dark and benighted people." Furthermore, rather than undermine them, "under the discipline of war, the relations subsisting between master and slave are being placed upon a nobler and more stable basis by the mutual discoveries of truth and duty." Bishop Elliott summed up the Confederate evangelical position when he proclaimed that, "We cannot permit our servants to be cursed with the liberty of licentiousness and infidelity, but we will truly labor to give them that liberty wherewith Christ has made us all free."16

Confederate evangelicals characterized slavery as a duty--a "civilizing and Christianizing" mission that providence had "forced" upon white southerners. As such it was an integral part of the evangelical Confederate covenant. Nor was the realization of the "mission to the slaves" simply necessary to meet immediate needs--namely the military vindication of the Confederate Israel's political independence. It was also part of a much larger design that southern
clergymen traced back to the original importation of the Africans to British North America.

Bishop Elliott reminded his listeners of the scriptural mandate that Christ cannot return until the gospel has been preached to all nations. Due to the blessings of European imperialism, that command seemed upon the point of fulfillment "everywhere else except in Africa". Elliott was therefore convinced that the South's slaves were "the instruments whom God is preparing in his own inscrutable way, to co-operate with the other instruments who are at work upon the other Continents to bring in the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and it is this conviction, and not any merit in ourselves, which makes me confident that we shall be safely preserved through this conflict." Bishop Gregg also attributed to "the orderings of Providence," the mission of the southern slaves's descendants "to aid in the advance of a nobler work--the Christianizing [of] the millions who sit in darkness and the shadow of death." Providence had apparently not informed the Confederate clergy how the South's slaves would be able to contribute to the conversion of Africa if--as Benjamin Morgan Palmer insisted--slavery was a "permanent relation".17

Nevertheless, the conviction that the preservation of slavery was crucial to the grand purposes of providence served to turn on its head the abolitionist accusation that slavery was in fact a brutal institution that merely served the selfish interests of southern slaveowners. Rather than
the sadistic oppressors, Confederate clergymen depicted slaveowners as "the guardians and champions of a people whom [God] is preparing for his own purposes and against whom the whole world is banded." As a consequence, Bishop Elliott was able to conclude that "His divine purposes seem to be intermingled with our success....Our conscience in this war is thus made right towards God and towards man." 18

Therefore, the mission to the slaves was simply a prelude to the mission of the slaves—a mission that had germinated in the mind of providence ever since the first "twenty negars" had landed at Jamestown. Nevertheless, there was considerable irony implicit in such a connection between the plans of providence and the preservation of southern slavery. Since the conversion of Africa was supposedly dependent upon the preservation of the peculiar institution, and the future of slavery was dependent upon the outcome of the Civil War, the inescapable conclusion was that in order to protect its plans, providence was "compelled" in a sense to preserve the independence of the Confederate States. The southern master was therefore compelled to appeal to his enslaved bondsmen to "emancipate" him.

Nor were Confederate clergymen reluctant to point out the moral and spiritual dependence of the sons of Japheth upon the descendants of Ham implicit in such an interpretation of the plans of providence. Rather, southern churchmen celebrated the "certainty" of Confederate independence that such an interpretation implied. Benjamin Morgan Palmer
confessed "that if this be the fate of the African [the genocide implied in slave emancipation], I am at a loss to understand the meaning of that Providence which brought him to our shores, and made him thus a member of the household of faith; and I feel that He...will forefend this doom of the slave, by the preservation of the master who, under divine appointment, stands his guardian and friend." Palmer asked further, "Whether four millions of heathen in the arms of the Southern church to be evangelized and saved may not be held as a pledge from the God of the church, that the land shall be spared in which those heathen dwell, until that church shall fulfill its work in training them for the Kingdom of glory?" 19

The evangelical Confederate sermons contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate psychology of the relationship between master and slave. Slavery was dependent upon the preservation of an impassable physical and psychological chasm between the races. Nevertheless, the peculiar intimacy of the relationship between master and bondsman served to undermine the chasm and promote a sense of mutual dependence—a sense that was perhaps not entirely pleasant on the part of southern slaveowners. Nevertheless, such a sense of mutual dependence is evident in the claim of Confederate clergymen that neither race was equipped to survive the collapse of slavery. The Gordian knot of slavery was such that the fate of the oppressor was necessarily identical to the destiny of the oppressed. As Palmer put
it, "With his fate bound up so entirely with our own, I believe that for his sake at least we shall be preserved." So compelling was such logic to southern evangelicals that as late as September 1864 Bishop Elliott continued to insist that, "To protect them [the slaves], he must protect us, and therefore is it, as I have said again and again, that I have full confidence in the successful termination of this conflict."20

Nevertheless, if such a declaration of the moral and spiritual dependence of white southerners upon the inhabitants of the mudsill seems faintly shocking, there was a method to the madness of these Confederate clergymen. Evangelical southern churchmen were aware that the Confederate Israel was the product of a covenant—a sacred contract—between God and the inhabitants of the Confederate States. The mission to the slaves occupied a conspicuous and a crucial part in the terms of such a contract. Fast days were not sufficient to appease providence. Southern success was dependent upon the adherence of slaveowners to the terms of the evangelical Confederate covenant. Furthermore, the terms of the covenant demanded the speedy translation of the paternalist rhetoric of the mission to the slaves into an embodied fact. Therefore, the purpose of the southern clergy's startling appeal to the dependence of master upon mudsill was to shock a lethargic audience of complacent slaveowners into action.

Bishop Elliott looked "to the poor despised slave as
the source of our security, because I firmly believe that God will not permit his purposes to be overthrown or his arrangements to be interfered with." Nevertheless, Elliott warned that if southerners dared to "assume the dominion of masters without remembering the duties thereof, God will make them[the slaves] pricks in our eyes and thorns in our sides, and shall vex us in the land wherein we dwell. Benjamin Morgan Palmer stated bluntly that the purpose of "the severe discipline of this protracted war" was "to chasten us for our past shortcomings" vis-a-vis the slaves.21

Confederate clergymen were compelled to tread a thin line. Critical of numerous aspects of contemporary slavery in practice, southern churchmen were always careful to distinguish between criticism of "abuses" and condemnation of the peculiar institution per se. Nevertheless, contemporary circumstances compelled some members of the southern clergy to display a prophetic courage that is not usually attributed to the churchmen of the Old South. Such courage was inspired by the conviction that unless slavery was reformed to meet the demands of the evangelical Confederate covenant, the sacramental southern nation was doomed.22

Although Reverend I.T. Tichenor was careful to insist that he entertained "no doubt that slavery is right," nevertheless he was adamant that "we have failed to discharge our duties to our slaves." Tichenor cited in particular the precarious nature of slave marriages, "dependent," as they are, "upon the will of the master." At the same time,
Despite the "civilizing and Christianizing" mission of the sons of Japheth, "too little attention has been paid to their moral and religious culture." Furthermore, Tichenor was convinced that the history of the war contained a graphic illustration of the punishments meted out to complacent slaveowners. "It is a significant fact that those parts of our country which have suffered most in the loss of property, have been the very localities where those abuses [of the duty of slaveowners] have been the greatest."²³

Despite the defiant evangelical defense of the peculiar institution, the logic of evangelicalism—a logic that compelled white southerners to concede the personality of the slave—and the logic of chattel slavery—a logic dedicated to the denial of that personality—were not easily reconcilable. The tensions between slavery and evangelicalism—tensions that the South's defensive posture during the sectional crisis had served to conceal—came abruptly to the fore during the Civil War. The evangelical Confederate covenant demanded that southerners concede to the slave the prerogatives due to the possessor of an immortal soul. Furthermore, should such demands not be met, the carefully constructed relationship between slavery and southern evangelicalism threatened to unravel. The evangelical Confederate Israel would therefore plummet to its defeat at the precise moment that the basis of its sacramental character—the evangelical Confederate covenant—was revealed to be a fraud.
Bishop Pierce issued a remarkable ultimatum to the Georgia legislature. Pierce condemned the Georgia "law which forbids us to teach our negroes to read." The basis of Pierce's protest discloses the tension between the logic of evangelicalism and the logic of chattel slavery. "The negro is an immortal being and it is his right by the law of creation and the purchase of redemption to read for himself the epistles of his Redeemer's love." Furthermore, Pierce insisted that the logic of evangelicalism must prevail against the logic of chattel slavery, or the peculiar institution--and the nation that was created to preserve it--were destined to meet a much merited and unlamented end. "If the institution of slavery cannot be maintained except at the expense of the black man's immortal interests, in the name of Heaven I say--let it perish!" Nor was Pierce finished. Since "one of the moral ends of this war is to reform the abuses of slavery[italics mine], I ought to add that all laws and parts of laws which authorize or allow interference with the connubial relations of slaves, ought to be rescinded."24

Most Confederate clergymen were neither as blunt nor as courageous as Bishop Pierce. Pierce's brethren tended to mingle flattery and criticism in appeals to the necessity of slavery reform. Bishop Elliott was typical in this regard. "Many, very many, I know have been insensible to their duty and have neglected the great trust committed to their charge, and for this punishment has fallen upon
us, but," Elliott hastened to add, "many have acquitted their consciences before God." Bishop Meade agreed that although the mass of southern slaveowners were better to their slaves than northern critics imagined, nevertheless, there had also been unfortunate failures to meet the demands of God toward the "unfortunate race." 25

Nevertheless, neither the bluntness of Bishop Pierce nor the diplomacy of Elliott and Meade were adequate to inspire the reform of slavery necessary to the safety of the Confederate Israel. Ultimately, the evangelical Confederate covenant was to be the victim of the essential paradox of chattel slavery—the bondsman's simultaneous status as chattel and the possessor of an immortal soul. Furthermore, the failure of Confederate evangelicals to resolve such a paradox served to undermine the confidence in southern victory that the dream of a Confederate Israel was intended to inspire. The peculiar institution was therefore the conspicuous Achilles's heel of the southern covenant nation. 26

Confederate clergymen did not, however, openly accept such logic. Bishop Elliott, for example, continued to insist that the war had actually strengthened slavery. Elliott in fact claimed that he was "satisfied from the beginning that the institution would come out of the war stronger than it went into it." Elliott also hoped that after the war the "domestic relations" of slaves would be rendered "more permanent" and that slaveowners would "consult more
closely their [slaves's] feelings and affections." In other words, Elliott argued that the reform of slavery was necessary to reward the loyalty of the South's slave population during the war. The noblesse oblige implied in slavery reform would enable southerners to proclaim to outsiders that the slaves had "adhered to us in our difficulties, have borne with us our poverty, have comforted us in our sorrows, have never once lifted up their arms against us and now testify to the world that our culture has changed them from savages into men of Christian feeling and Christian sympathy." Although Elliott's argument ultimately fell upon deaf ears, it was however prophetic of the postwar myth of the "loyal slave"—a myth that posthumously transformed the peculiar institution into the benevolent, Christianizing mission that southern evangelicals had failed to make of it during the war.²⁷

Emancipation and Appomattox spared southern clergymen the discomfort of further attempts to resolve the paradox of chattel bondsmen who were simultaneously "men of Christian feeling and Christian sympathy." Perhaps it was merely a slip of the pen, but Elliot is conspicuously the only Confederate churchman to refer to slaves as "men" in a printed sermon. The conspicuous failure of Confederate evangelicals to overcome the tensions implicit in such a slip would eventually help southern clergymen to account for a subsequent act of providence—the loss of the Confederate Israel's political independence.
Nevertheless, provided that a Confederate army was still in the field, southern evangelicals were able to avoid such unpalatable conclusions. In fact, it must be conceded that slavery does not play a conspicuous part in the extant evangelical Confederate sermons. Confederate clergymen were much more concerned to make certain that southerners understood the status of the evangelical Confederate Israel in the plans of providence. As long as there was an independent southern nation to defend, Confederate churchmen could safely avoid the implications of the failure of their campaign to reform slavery.

Furthermore, many of the references to slavery contained in the sermons of Confederate churchmen must be understood in the context of the elite clergy's determined antimodernism. Such conservative clergymen did not seek to address the reality of slavery, but rather saw in it the metaphor of premodern society—a metaphor almost indistinguishable from the dream of an evangelical Confederate Israel itself.

Apart from such theoretical matters as the nature and constitution of the Confederate Israel, the most pressing need of southern clergymen was to interpret the progress of the war itself in terms of the scriptural science of providence. The attempts of Confederate churchmen to reconcile the serene reasonableness of providence and the irrational horror of the Confederacy's "baptism of blood"
are the subjects of the next chapter.
ENDNOTES

1. Alexander Gregg, The duties growing out of it, and the benefits expected from the present war. A sermon preached...on Sunday, July 7th, 1861...[4156] (Austin, 1861), 19.

2. Isaac Taylor Tichenor, Fast-day sermon,...delivered before the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, on Friday, Aug. 21st, 1863...[4195] (Montgomery, Ala., 1863), 12-13 (first quotation), Stephen Elliott, Our cause in harmony with the purposes of God in Christ Jesus. A sermon preached...on Thursday, September 18th, 1862, being the day set aside by the President of the Confederate States, as a day of prayer and thanksgiving, for our manifold victories....[4150] (Savannah, 1862), 21-22 (second quotation), Thomas Smyth, The battle of Fort Sumter: its mystery and miracle: God's mastery and mercy. A discourse preached on the day of national fasting, thanksgiving and prayer...June 13, 1861....[4192] (Columbia, S.C., 1861), 22 (third quotation).

3. Charles Stuart Vedder, "Offer unto God thanksgiving": A sermon delivered...on Sunday, July 28, 1861.... [4201] (Charleston, 1861), 8.


5. Robert Newton Sledd, Sermon delivered...before the Confederate cadets on the occasion of their departure for the seat of war, Sunday, Sept. 22d, 1861. [4190] (Petersburg, Va., 1861), 6.

6. George Dodd Armstrong, "The good hand of God upon us". A thanksgiving sermon preached on the occasion of the victory of Manassas, July 21st, 1861....[4122] (Norfolk, 134


12. John J.D. Renfroe, "The battle is God's." *A sermon preached before Wilcox's Brigade, on fast day, the 21st August, 1863...* [4186] (Richmond, 1863) 18.


14. Stephen Elliott, *Address...to the thirty-ninth annual convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the Diocese of Georgia.* [4140] (Savannah, 1861), 9-10.

15. Stephen Elliott, *Ezra's dilemma[sic]. A sermon preached ...on Friday, August 21st, 1863, being the day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States...* [4142] (Savannah, 1863), 12.

16. William Norwood, *God and our country. A sermon, preached ...on the 27th day of March, 1863, the day appointed for prayer and humiliation by the President of the Confederate States...* [4174] (Richmond, 1863), 8 (first quotation), I. Randolph Finley, *The Lord reigneth. A sermon preached...Sunday, August 16, 1863...* [4154] (Richmond, 1863?), 18 (second quotation), Elliott, *Address,* 10 (third quotation). *On the mission to the*

17. Elliott, Our cause in harmony with the purposes of God in Christ Jesus, 8-10 (first quotation), Gregg, duties, 19 (second quotation).

18. Elliott, Our cause in harmony with the purposes of God in Christ Jesus, 14-15.


20. Palmer, discourse before the General Assembly, 17 (first quotation), Stephen Elliott, "Vain is the help of man." A sermon preached...on Thursday, September 15, 1864, being the day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, appointed by the Governor of the State of Georgia...[4153] (Macon, Ga., 1864), 9 (second quotation). Palmer is alluding unintentionally to what David Brion Davis called the "problem" of slavery. "The more perfect the slave, as Hegel later observed, the more enslaved becomes the master. For the master's identity depends upon having a slave who recognizes him as master: the truth of the master's independent consciousness lies in the dependent and supposedly unessential consciousness of the bondsmen." David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823 (Ithaca and London, 1975), 40.

21. Elliott, Our cause in harmony with the purposes of God in Christ Jesus, 10-11 (first quotation), Palmer, discourse before the General Assembly, 17 (second quotation).


23. Tichenor, Fast-day sermon, 11-12.

24. Pierce, Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer, 14-15. Clarence L. Mohr refers to the "stunned" reaction of Pierce's distinguished audience to the bishop's eloquence. Furthermore, the sympathetic Christian Index was nevertheless compelled "to concede...that Pierce's remarks had stirred 'no small spirit of con-
25. Elliott, Ezra's dilemma[sic], 12 (first quotation), William Meade, Address on the day of fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States, June 13, 1861...[4167] (Richmond, 1861), 10 (second quotation).

26. Clarence L. Mohr argues that the outspoken attempts of many southern evangelicals to reform slavery in the Confederate States constituted a revival of the "cautious antislavery gradualism which had flourished throughout America in the postrevolutionary and early national period." Such a revival, according to Mohr, implied the eventual extinction of southern slavery--even apart from the loss of Confederate political independence. (On the Threshold of Freedom, 270. See also Mohr, "Slaves and White Churches in Confederate Georgia," in John B. Boles, ed., Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870 (Lexington, Ky., 1988), 153-72. Drew Gilpin Faust denies however that such moderate reforms as Confederate clergymen promoted were necessarily fatal to the peculiar institution. (Creation of Confederate Nationalism, 79-81.) Apart from its impact upon the survival of slavery, however, the acute consciousness of the tensions between evangelical demands and the contemporary reality of slavery that was characteristic of at least some Confederate evangelicals does seem to involve the transition to a new and uncertain phase in the relationship between the peculiar institution and the evangelical denominations--not to mention a thaw in the antebellum cold war that had virtually eliminated all criticism of the institution of slavery.

27. Elliott, Our cause in harmony with the purposes of God in Christ Jesus, 20-21.
Chapter V—"All Things Work Together for Good to Them That Love God": Providence, the Evangelical Confederate Israel, and the Southern Experience of War

Southern evangelicals considered the war a sort of advanced catechesis—a deadly variant upon the pulpit or the modern Sunday school classroom. The purpose of such instruction was to convey to God's chosen people a perpetually memorable illustration of the workings of providence. Confederate clergymen—the custodians of the laws of providence—therefore served to interpret to an alternately stricken or elated southern population the communications of the Lord sent in the shape of contemporary events at Manassas, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Atlanta.

Nevertheless, such an apparent fusion of the means of modern warfare and the ends of the Prince of Peace did not come naturally to many southern evangelicals. Although providence clearly had condoned the sacred wars entered into by the biblical nation of Israel, the nineteenth-century Confederate Israel was nevertheless in need of reassurance that armed bloodshed and the blood of the Lamb were indeed compatible.

Confederate churchmen turned simultaneously to the Old Testament—mindful of the evocative parallels between the Judaic and the Confederate Israels—and to the venerable propositions of the just war argument to calm southern consciences. Furthermore, southern clergymen used the incidents of the war itself—both memorable and minor—to provide conclusive evidence of God's sympathy toward the
southern cause. Such splendid successes as first Manassas or the Seven Days campaign were considered clear demonstrations of the sympathy of providence toward the independence of the Confederate Israel.

Although such an argument was clearly intended to support and strengthen southern morale, it was nevertheless a two-edged sword, since its implication was to transform the military issues of success or defeat upon the field of battle into moral dilemmas. In other words, since success was an indication of God's support, was not defeat therefore also a demonstration of His displeasure? Furthermore, was it possible to reconcile such displeasure, the righteousness of the Confederate cause, and the laws of a rational and benevolent providence? Confederate clergymen were therefore compelled to attempt a reconciliation of these disparate but interconnected elements. Until the surrender of Lee, however, the conviction that supported and sustained the speculations of the Confederate clergy was that of ultimate southern success—such a success as was able to eradicate the moral stumbling block of temporary reverses. Although southern evangelicals could never compel themselves to contemplate the prospects of a "reconstructed" South, the labors of Confederate churchmen to describe the contemporary "dispensation of death" in terms of the scriptural science of providence nevertheless provides a preliminary outline of the clergy's subsequent attempts to locate the place of a "crucified" southern na-
tion in the plans of providence.

The romantic illusions of subsequent generations of southerners—products of the cult of the Lost Cause—are conspicuously absent in the attitudes of Confederate clergymen toward the nature of war. Bishop Gregg called war "the direst scourge of the human race" and described in apocalyptic cadences the price of southern independence.

When the flower of our youth shall have been cut down; when mothers shall weep, and refuse to be comforted, because their children are not; when the widow's son shall fall, to be raised up by no compassionate son of David from his gory bier; when fathers have gone forth to return not to the homes from whence they went out, and the hands of the violent shall finish what the sword has spared; even amid the last shout of victory...shall be heard the sounds of anguish, as the angel of death flies through our southern heavens, with a scroll, written within and without, with mourning, and lamentation, and woe!

Bishop Meade commented that, "Poets and historians may speak in praise of battles, stimulating and gratifying the spirit of war which is in man, but we find no such language in the Word of God....The first and greatest of God's sore judgments...is the sword."¹

Such moving accounts of the destructive potential of war disturbed the consciences of a number of southern evangelicals. The outbreak of the Civil War therefore inspired a renewal of the continuous tension between the apparent pacifism of the New Testament and the national impetus toward the armed preservation of state sovereignty. Such a tension placed Confederate clergymen in a peculiar situation. Appalled at the prospect of war, circumstances nev
ertheless compelled southern churchmen to demonstrate that
--in the words of Rector H.N. Pierce--"a man may be a sol-
dier, and a Christian."²

The New Testament once again provided slender support
for the needs of Confederate nationalism. The southern
evangelical response to the nonviolence of the gospels was
therefore to place scant emphasis upon it and to concentrate
upon the more polemical--and therefore more relevant--aspects
of the Old Testament. Furthermore, such an emphasis served
to point up the meaningful parallels between the biblical
and the Confederate Israels. Thomas S. Dunaway--a Baptist
elder--reminded his congregants that, "The history of the
people of Israel...is a history of a succession of bloody
wars...begun and carried on under the direction of Divine
Providence. Indeed, as mysterious as it may appear to us,
it seems to be in accordance with the purpose of God in
administering his moral government, that wars shall take
place."³

Reverend Daniel I. Dreher expanded upon the theme that
war was a natural consequence of the "moral government"
of providence. "War is what we may expect in this world--
m en will trample upon the rights of one another, and human
nature will resent a wrong. These are circumstances as
certain as cause and effect." Under such circumstances,
patriotic indignation and the armed violence used to voice
it were not merely unopposed to the spirit of Christianity,
but were in fact the instruments of providence to assert
the supremacy of the moral law. Therefore, despite the opposition of the gospel to its destructive spirit, war was nevertheless "not evil in itself," according to Bishop Gregg, since it had been "made the instrument, by divine command, for punishing wicked nations of old," and was as a consequence morally defensible when appealed to "as a last alternative." 4

Traditional Calvinism shed a depressing illumination upon the origins of war—such origins as made it "as certain as cause and effect." Chaplain J.J.D. Renfroe asserted that war "universally originates, so far as concerns human agency, in the unholy passions of men." According to the Presbyterian T.V. Moore, although "war is an evil," nevertheless, it is also "part of the agency by which God disciplines nations....Had there been no sin, there would have been no war...but as long as there is sin in the world, so long may we expect to find this scourge" of war. War therefore "comes as a chastening for sins, and becomes a blessing by extirpating those sins, and bringing to a hardier life the corresponding virtues." 5

The assertion of Reverend Moore recalls a consistent theme in evangelical Confederate sermons—a theme encapsulated in the promise of St. Paul, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his promise." [Rom.8:28] Southern evangelicals were convinced that the Confederate Israel was indeed "called according to his purpose." Such
confidence permitted Confederate Christians to contemplate the potential horror of war—such horror as southern clergymen described in vivid detail—in a spirit of remarkable calm and to therefore persist in the conviction that war was in fact a disguised "blessing." Confederate churchmen made dedicated attempts to define the "benefits of war" in order to support the optimistic professions of southern laypersons.

Bishop Gregg reminded his parishioners that a nation was a "person" in the mind of providence. Therefore, "Nations, as the individuals of which they are made up, are subjected to...[a] disciplinary process." War was simply "part of that general state of trial and discipline through which successive generations are called to pass to their final accounts." Preeminent "among the beneficial results...of a war like this, may be reckoned a livelier sense of dependence as a people upon his blessing, and of our responsibility to God....A state of war is sometimes therefore a necessary—may be a most wholesome correction, even for those, who are not justly chargeable, as human agents, with having brought on the strife!"

Therefore, although war per se was a product of sin, the consequence of "this Moloch of evils"—at least in respect to God's elect—was to serve as an earthly purgatory—an agent of temporal punishment and of purification intended simultaneously to test and to inspire the commitment of the southern "saving remnant" to its millennial mis-
sion. The prospect of such "benefits" therefore inspired a sort of positive euphoria in some southern clergymen—including the normally gloomstricken Reverend Moore. Moore compared the war to a hurricane that sweeps away "the tainted air and the poisoned water...and there are left behind a purer air and a richer soil then could have existed without the purification of tempest and flood." War overcame the "mammon-worship, effeminacy and selfish expediency" that are the products of "a long period of peace and prosperity." War was also the means by which "vigor, enterprise and honor are breathed into the heart of a people, and...the hardy, simple and manly virtues are worked into the very sources of national life....No nation has ever risen to greatness without this stern tutorage." ⁷

Furthermore, such a sense of the potential of war to chasten and purify a nation—when wedded to the sectional pessimism of the Confederate jeremiad—inspired a sort of perverse hope in some southern churchmen that the confidence of an early peace was illusory. Bishop Elliott commented that, "I can see no room for hope of an early decided settlement of this question....We must first pass through" a bitter war of national independence. "Hope will be buoyed up by partial victories, until at last, wearied and exhausted, peace will be wrung from our enemies through sheer necessity. But that is far off, and ere we reach that point, we shall have been disciplined by much sorrow and purified in the fire of affliction." ⁸
Bishop Elliott's glib announcement of a protracted war was inspired by his confidence in ultimate southern success—a confidence based upon the righteousness of the Confederate cause. The prospects of such a success apparently diminished—in Bishop Elliott's mind—the importance of the length of the conflict that preceded it. Furthermore, the moral law "compelled" its Author to intervene in behalf of the just cause. As D.S. Doggett put it, "Now if our ideas of God are correct,...he must interfere. He must approve, he must take sides with the right." Subsequent events would therefore compel southern evangelicals to reevaluate their "ideas of God."\(^9\)

Nor was the assumed moral correctness of the Confederate cause the sole inspiration of southern confidence. Circumstances compelled the South to assume a defensive posture throughout the war—the attempted invasion of Pennsylvania excepted. Confederate clergymen appealed to Scripture and to the venerable just war tradition to demonstrate that providence smiled upon wars of self-defense. Bishop Elliott quoted the book of Numbers[10:9] to this effect to the assembled children of the Confederate Israel. "'And if you go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets.' Under these circumstances, children of Israel, is the paraphrase of the promise, ye may go to battle without any fear, and strike boldly for your homes and your altars without any guilt. The right, in such cases of self-defense, will be on your
side, and God sitteth in the throne judging right." A lacon-
ic Bishop Meade put it more simply. "All other wars [wars of aggression--such as the attempted northern invasion of the Confederate Israel], not based on the principle of self-
defense, either of person or property, or without the sanc-
tion of God."

Two years later than the sermons of Bishop Elliott and Bishop Meade, the law of providence in support of wars of self-defense would be used to supply the meaning of the disaster at Gettysburg. Sylvanus Landrum reminded strick-
en southerners that "self-defense" was apparently "God's will as shown by his providence, in reference to us. Our duty is to stand on the defensive, throw all our energies into the cause, and trust in God above all else." Southern clergymen suspected that a campaign of invasion directed against the North smacked too much of that reliance upon self that the war was intended to stamp out in God's Con-
federate Israel. A war of self-defense on the other hand seemed appropriate to the spirit of humble--and humbled--reliance upon the support of providence--a posture the assump-
tion of which was central to the southern evangelical defense of the Confederate cause.

Since "all things work together for good to them that love God," it was only natural that Confederate clergymen should concentrate upon the "blessings" implicit in the South's "baptism of blood." God's love of the southern sacramental nation was so profound that even the horrors
of modern war were transformed into sources of spiritual grace. As J.W. Tucker put it, "Our cause is sacred. It should ever be so in the eyes of all true men in the South. How can we doubt it, when we know it has been consecrated by a holy baptism of fire and blood. It has been rendered glorious by the martyrlike devotion of Johnson, McCulloch, Garnett, Bartow, Fisher, McKinney, and hundreds of others who have offered their lives as a sacrifice on the altar of their country's freedom." Tucker's implicit appeal was to the sacrificial death of Christ—a sacrifice that prefigured the depth of devotion contained in the "martyrdom" of Confederate heroes. The intent of the Presbyterian clergyman was to make his parishioners understand that the blood of such martyrs was indeed the blessed seed of the Confederate Israel.\(^{12}\)

Southern evangelicals considered history a sort of spectacular morality play—a simultaneous source of splendid drama and spiritual edification. Therefore, the principal grace that the war bestowed upon the Confederate South was a deeper understanding of the play's most important premise—the nature and sovereignty of providence. Confederate clergymen were convinced that the War of Southern Independence was unique, and not simply the latest in a succession of attempted wars of national independence that were already scattered across the acutely nationalist cultural landscape of the nineteenth century. The singular importance of the southern struggle was evident in the clarity and number
of its manifestations of the fundamental laws of providence. Confederate churchmen impressed upon the minds of southern evangelicals that providence was indeed the principal actor in the present act of a didactic historical drama. The men in grey and in blue—and the nations whose destinies were dependent upon them—were simply supernumeraries.  

Thomas Smyth was convinced that the events at Fort Sumter did not merely constitute a battle, but a theophany—a visible manifestation of the transcendent grandeur of God—in addition. "The mystery of providence, long hidden, God has now made manifest, and the secret things that belonged unto Him, He has now revealed unto us and to our children. And the proof is: that God's providence is interpreted, and His will revealed, by His word and working." Sumter's purported theophany was implicit in the vindication its fall provided to the most basic principle of the laws of providence—God's implacable support of the just cause and His punishment of the enemies of His people.

The impression that the sovereignty of providence was the principal issue of the war was indeed pervasive in the Confederate South. Reverend George Armstrong quoted Brigadier General Hill's official account of the battle of Bethel. "Our Heavenly Father has wonderfully interposed to shield our heads in the day of battle: Unto His Name be all the praise for our success." Reverend Armstrong was persuaded that Hill's reverent dispatch—the "heartiness in the recognition of 'God's good hand' contained in it"—made it "un-
like any other official dispatch from a battlefield I have ever read."15

Nor was Hill an isolated case. Reverend J.H. Elliott was convinced that "this has been the universal impression. As we heard said on the day of surrender [of Fort Sumter], 'minds that never before had been awakened to such a train of thought were conscious of it now.' And how could they escape it." How indeed.16

Thomas Smyth instructed the members of his congregation that, "Extraordinary providences [such as the fall of Fort Sumter] are instructive warnings, of great importance in God's government of the world, and to be very solemnly considered." Furthermore, since—as J.H. Elliott pointed out—God had illumined the minds of southern evangelicals to understand the interventions of providence in the war, Confederate clergymen pointed to particular instances of such intervention in an attempt both to deepen the southern understanding of the moral and spiritual principles of providence and to persuade Confederates of the need to depend solely upon the support of God to vindicate the southern sacramental nation.17

Nevertheless, the needs of the present moment were not the only concern of southern clergymen. The reverent rehearsals of particular instances of God's support of the South suggests the conscious creation of a Confederate "sacred history"—a sacred history analogous to the exodus legends in the Old Testament and to the accounts of the
ministry of Christ and the career of the primitive Christian community in the New. Confederate churchmen intended to ensure that subsequent commemorations of the Confederate crusade were dominated by the themes and symbols of evangelicalism—instead of by the insidious secular nationalism that was so characteristic of the phenomenon that modern scholars label "civil religion" in nineteenth-century America. Furthermore, the covenant people of the South needed a "myth of the founding" worthy of the Confederate Israel. Such consecrated labors on the part of southern clergymen were not to prove fruitless, although their ultimate "fruit"—the cult of the Lost Cause—was not what Confederate churchmen intended.18

J.H. Elliott—in a sermon that celebrated the fall of Fort Sumter—asked

What sufficient tribute of gratitude can we present to Almighty God for his interposition on our behalf, during that memorable siege, which has terminated so auspiciously for our arms, and rendered another spot in our harbor classic and historic ground. If, on that eventful morning,...anyone had dared to predict such a result, at so early a period, he would unquestionably have been set down as a dreamer or an enthusiast.

Furthermore, Elliott claimed to detect in the capitulation of Sumter a vindication of the laws of providence as spectacular and as conspicuous as any contained in Sacred Scripture. "We confess the hand of God seems as plainly in it as in the conquest of the Midianites, or any other of the victories by which, in ancient or in modern times, He has been pleased to intimate his favor to a cause or his pro-
tection to a people." 19

Elliott proceeded to draw the moral and spiritual lessons of Fort Sumter. "In all these seemingly fortuitous circumstances, happening so critically, with wonderful precision and appositeness of arrangement, we must see and acknowledge a more than human prescience." Although Elliott conceded "our noble soldiery" their due, nevertheless, "When we have done all, let us acknowledge that the hand and the wisdom and the goodness of God have not only worked in and by these necessary instrumentalities [italics mine], but without and beyond them all have been manifested in things uncontrollable by any power or sagacity at their disposal." Elliott's triumphant conclusion was that "in all this it were profane and stupid not to see the mighty arm of Jehovah which has all along guided and defended the course of this great Revolution, and which, we believe, will guide and defend it so long as it continues to be the cause of righteousness and truth." 20

Confederate clergymen were even persuaded that God influenced the seasons to the South's benefit. Reverend Armstrong commented that, "At the time this present contest first began to appear to us inevitable, our necessities as a people seemed to require peculiarities in the season almost impossible of fulfillment." Despite such potential difficulties, God had nevertheless blessed the Confederate States with golden weather. "This year, we have not had the constant succession of rains which we are
accustomed to speak of as 'the long wet season in May,' and as yet God has 'given us rain from heaven' to secure what is admitted on all hands to be the most abundant grain crop ever gathered in the Southern States." Such seasonal benevolence had also facilitated the South's military preparations to such a degree that the new nation's army was able to inflict upon "the federal forces at Manassas" what "an eyewitness" termed a "rout" such as "history" had not witnessed "for the past century."21

Providence's support of the Confederate cause also seemed apparent in the casualty lists of the war's earliest battles. Reverend Armstrong quoted the claim of Brigadier General Hill that God had "wonderfully interposed to shield our heads in the day of battle" at Bethel. Although Union losses were so numerous that "they have never been willing to publish an official account," not one Confederate was killed, despite the opposition of "some thirteen hundred of our men" to "four or five thousand of the enemy." Armstrong asserted that in all the skirmishes of the war thus far, God's preservation of Confederate lives and contempt of the Federal assault was apparent. Although the precise number of dead and wounded at Manassas still remained uncertain, Armstrong ventured "the opinion that where our loss is numbered in hundreds, the loss of the enemy will be numbered in thousands."22

Furthermore, Confederate clergymen traced in reverent detail the "fortuitous circumstances" that demonstrated
the prosouthern sympathy of providence. Reverend Armstrong appealed to the arrival of General Kirby Smith at Manassas, "at the critical moment when the fortunes of the day seemed hanging 'as in an even balance'....Had Kirby's division arrived at an earlier hour, its accession must have proved of far less service than it did. Had it arrived at a later hour," it would have been too late. Clearly providence had controlled both the timing and the success of General Smith's appearance at Manassas.23

Nor did southern clergymen restrict the pro-Confederate interventions of providence to the manipulation of the weather or to the appropriate placement of generals. Scripture described the rout of the Assyrian army encamped outside the walls of Jerusalem by hosts of angels. Southern churchmen were convinced that providence had not done less to preserve the Confederate Jerusalem--Richmond--during the course of the Seven Days campaign. Reverend Joseph M. Atkinson assured his listeners that, "If our eyes could have been unsealed during those seven day's memorable battles before Richmond, we should doubtless have seen a more awful and a more glorious spectacle. We should have seen an angel, terrible as that which smote the host of Sennacherib, hurling back the multitudinous cohorts of our self confident invaders, filling...their ranks with confusion, dismay and death." A confident Atkinson consoled his congregants that, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."24
Nevertheless, men—not angels—inhabited the ranks of the Confederate army. Southern clergymen attributed the spectacular heroism of Confederate soldiers—not to innate courage—but to an infusion of supernatural power. Reverend Armstrong claimed that southern courage was the product of an influence from above, causing this courage to take on for many 'more than mortal heroism': an influence exerted when God's service is concerned, through the agency of revealed truth, and hence often and truly spoken of as the influence of Christian faith....Such is the courage of the true patriot and Christian warrior, often frail in body and timid in natural disposition, yet, on the battlefield, keeping even pace with him of iron nerve, ready to do or die.

Only such courage as this—rooted as it was in the fidelity of the Confederate Israel to evangelical truth—could account for the "mad" heroism of the Confederate forces at Manassas.25

Nevertheless, despite the sovereign sway of providence, Confederate clergymen did not deny a limited freedom of action to southern evangelicals. Since a covenant was a reciprocal agreement, providence demanded a free and active cooperation of Confederates. Therefore, the appropriate use of the means or "instrumentalities" available to the people of the South—a use that carefully guarded against any implicit denial of the South's primary reliance upon providence—was considered a central lesson of the war. Under the corrupt Union, "instrumentalities" had been perverted into causative agents independent of providence. Under the Confederate Israel, such "instrumentalities" were
not denied, but reduced to the theologically correct status of secondary causes. As Reverend William C. Butler put it, "Not by miracle, but by the faithful use of every means—moral, intellectual and physical—that God [italics mine] has continued, and will, we believe, yet continue to provide for and bestow upon us, must every battle be fought and every victory be won."26

The primary "instrumentality" that Confederate clergymen urged southern evangelicals to rely upon was neither cannon nor cavalry—but prayer. Prayer—and the faith that motivated it—was the principal weapon of the Confederate Israel against the northern hordes. Furthermore, southern evangelicals were convinced that God was attentive to such prayers and that He could—and would—alter the balance of power between conflicted armies in response to them. Reverend T.S. Winn attributed the victory at first Manassas to the fast observed upon the previous June 13. Winn assured his listeners that, "It was not a vain and useless ceremony. There is efficacy in faith, repentance and prayer."27

Bishop Elliott—in his Manassas thanksgiving sermon—appealed to the rich imagery of the book of Exodus to demonstrate the same moral.

Sunday last was the day of battle and of victory, and ...as if God was speaking to us from the very altar of the sanctuary and cheering us on with words of prophecy—the chapters of Exodus which contain a detailed account of the preparations of the haughty Pharaoh... and which wind up with this magnificent hymn of exultant praise, which Moses and the children of Israel sang [was read]....At the very moment when these chap-
ters were reading in the Churches of the living God, parallel scenes were enacting upon the banks of the Potomac, and God was singing for us, before man knew the result, our song of triumph and praise. It is the crowning token of his love—the most wonderful of all the manifestations of his divine presence with us.28

Reverend D.S. Doggett described in rapturous language the jubilant reaction of Confederates to news of the smashing southern successes during the Seven Days campaign. "When they[the reports] of the campaign were yet fresh in our memories, the whole country resounded with the praise of God....Now, I maintain, that this spontaneous sentiment of the people indicates the fact of an actual exhibition of Divine power in our successes, that it was a trustworthy exponent of the principle asserted in our text[I Sam.7:12]: 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.'" The implication is that the war had transformed southerners into ecstatic prophets—a clear indication of the support of providence. Furthermore, provided that southerners preserved and did not squander the spirit of such charismatic celebrations, providence was sure to persist in the vindication of God's chosen people—until the hordes of Pharaoh Abraham were drowned in the Potomac.29

Furthermore, southern clergymen clinched the Confederate advantage by the insistence that providence was not attentive to the prayers of Yankees. According to J.H. Elliott, "When the little band of Sumter's defenders... bowed their knees...committing...themselves to the Divine protection, [only] half their prayer was heard, the other
half dispersed to empty air....Their lives were given them at their request, but the banner of an evil cause, and the ensign of a broken covenant, was destined by a righteous God to humiliation and defeat."30

The purpose of the Confederate evangelical insistence upon the necessity of the South's primary reliance upon the power of prayer--rather than that of armed resistance--was to underline what southern clergymen considered the single most important lesson of the entire war. As William C. Butler put it, the southern success at first Manassas was a fadeless, imperishable triumph of the moral over the physical[italics mine]. It was a voice of thunder from the throne of God, reverberating into the dull, earthly ears of men--Might is not Right, but Right is Might....It was a re-assertion of the truth--as immortal as God himself--that when men contend earnestly and intelligently for principles of human government that lie deep down among the imperishable foundations of Divine government, they are fighting with God and for God, and God is fighting with them and for them.31

"The triumph of the moral over the physical" was principally the triumph of providence--since providence was governed according to the eternal moral law. Therefore, Reverend Butler's statements constitute the reassertion of an identification that was so central to Confederate evangelicals--the identification between the vindication of the abused South and that of the laws of God's providence.

Such an identification also implied the casting out of the demons that so troubled Confederate clergymen--the demons of materialism, the "pride" of individualism, and
rationalism. Bishop Elliott insisted that—at first Manassas—God "had smitten our enemies in their most tender and sensible part, their invincible power, and he has taken from us the pride of our victory by giving it to us wrapped up in the funeral shrouds of the brave and the young. Reverend D.S. Doggett elaborated upon the triumph of moral rectitude against material might and rational calculation at Manassas. "When...the decided majority of human and natural advantages are arrayed against the right, and display all their intensity to defeat it, and are utterly abortive, natural causes are then counteracted, human calculations, so confidently believed, are outwitted, and the issue proves that...God has overruled the boasted arrangements of man, that he might vindicate the supremacy of his moral government." The sheer magnitude of the odds against southern independence was not therefore an indication of ultimate Confederate defeat, but was rather merely a tantalizing premise in an argument the conclusion of which was that, "Might does not make Right, but Right makes Might."³²

Nevertheless, such encomiums concealed the awareness of Confederate clergymen that the logic of providence was a two-edged sword—a weapon that could alternately defend or destroy the Confederate Israel. The natural complement of the conviction that success demonstrated the approval of providence, was the sense that reverses indicated the disfavor—perhaps even the abandonment—by God of the South. Although a number of Confederate clergymen had indeed anti-
icipated a protracted war, nevertheless, the impact of a delayed peace and a succession of dashed hopes upon southern morale was profound. Furthermore, southern churchmen perhaps possessed an uneasy sense that the depth of Confederate depression—most evident in the wake of Gettysburg—was due in part to the clergy's own rhetoric—a rhetoric that had concentrated not only upon the covenant between God and His Confederate Israel, but also upon the necessity of the South's vindication—the clear implication of such a covenant. The conundrum of the southern clergyman was that he could not accuse providence of bad faith, nor could he suspect either the wisdom or the impeccability of the Confederate cause. Nevertheless, the simultaneous attempt to vindicate the laws of providence and to provide a persuasive account of southern reverses was not a simple matter.33

Confederate clergymen conceded the dilemma. Chaplain J.J.D. Renfroe admitted that, "When we entered upon this revolution, we had not a thought of its continuing so long; and when we have so often looked to certain anticipated developments with hope that they would terminate the sanguinary struggle, our hopes have been as illusive as the spider's web or the floating paper and, alas, we discover fewer signs of peace now than at the beginning." Bishop Elliott agreed that, "A day of darkness and of gloominess has unexpectedly settled down upon us, and without being able to conceive any natural cause, sufficient to account for it, we are conscious that...we are in peril of our cause."34
Nevertheless, Confederate clergymen advanced the paradoxical proposition that the necessary assurances of the South's vindication were implicit in the reverses themselves that seemed to undermine the plausibility of such assurance. Southern reverses did not indicate God's abandonment of the South, but were rather a sort of critical moral surgery—a removal of the props that constituted sources of Confederate hope independent of the interventions of providence. The implication was that the South's consecration to the God of providence was incomplete. The Confederate States continued to hedge its bets, and to turn to its political, economic, and military—that is, to its material—resources to a degree that undermined the confidence of southerners in the sovereignty of providence.

Benjamin Morgan Palmer alluded to the fact that a number of the hopes southerners had cherished in 1861—that England or France would intervene, that King Cotton would compel the great powers of Europe to support the Confederate crusade, that the Lincoln despotism would collapse of its own weight—had vanished into vapor by 1863. Nevertheless, Palmer insisted that, "I cherish the conviction, with all the tenacity of a religious belief, that God is about to vindicate the supremacy of his own power in the establishment of our independence." In other words, God had stripped Confederates of all other resources in order to rescue them by a display of His sovereignty.35

Reverend William H. Wheelwright chided the inhabitants
of the Confederate Israel that, "The false gods of Israel were two--Baalim and Ashtaroth. The false gods of the Confederates were two--Foreign Aid and Self." Chaplain Renfroe agreed that, "It is infinitely better that we should forget the crowned heads of the earth and look for recognition to that Power enthroned over universal empire, who has so often and so materially intervened in our behalf." Such a premise led Reverend Henry H. Tucker to the heady conclusion that southerners should "court the friendship not of a foreign power, for the God of our fathers is not foreign to us, but let us court the favor of heaven, and verily an alliance with the Almighty will make us omnipotent." Furthermore, Bishop Elliott concluded that the war's de-thronement of King Cotton had depleted the supply of southern arrogance--a most salutary "experience".36

Confederate clergymen were convinced that southerners still had not accepted that "the foundation of all security and the basis of all prosperity is in the Divine protection. --Without it the best concerted schemes will fail and the best directed efforts be defeated." Already in November of 1861, Bishop Elliott derided the "spirit of presumption" that had fallen upon the South. After first Manassas, Confederates had praised God--the source of the victory--but now they neglected God and relied upon their own resources. Nevertheless, Elliott warned, God "is jealous of his glory, and especially jealous when he has taken a people, with their rulers, and armies, so manifestly under his own gui-
dance, as he has taken this people." Elliott was convinced that God was "leading us by his own way to our independence and rest, and we must learn to feel, as well as to acknowledge," that "the greatness, and the power" were God's alone. 37

Nevertheless, southerners had apparently not heeded the warning of Bishop Elliott. Chaplain Renfroe quoted an order of General Lee's--an order intended as a pious response to President Davis's proclamation of the particularly gloomstricken fast day of August 21, 1863. "Soldiers! We have sinned against Almighty God! We have forgotten His signal mercies, and have cultivated a revengeful, haughty and boastful spirit. We have not remembered that the defenders of a just cause should be pure in His eyes--that 'our times are in His hands'--and we have relied too much on our own arms for the achievement of our independence." Lee--the epitome of the Christian soldier--pleaded that his men recall that, "God is our only refuge and our strength!" 38

Sylvanus Landrum elaborated upon Lee's moving appeal in an attempt to determine the "true philosophy of our reverses." Landrum concluded that whenever southerners had "fixed our eyes upon God...victory upon victory crowned our battles." However, in recent months, Confederates appear to have forgotten "that the battle is God's, failed to give him the glory." As a consequence, "How suddenly was our condition changed! Vicksburg falls, and Lee re-
treats, leaving thousands of his noble dead amidst the hills of Gettysburg....Why? We have sinned, and God has a controversy with us. This is the true philosophy of our reverses."

Furthermore, Alfred Watson—an Episcopal clergyman in North Carolina—virtually accused southern evangelicals of the murder of Stonewall Jackson, since God had permitted Jackson to be killed because Confederates had "trusted too much in him and too little in God."\(^{39}\)

The response therefore of southern clergymen to the theological conundrum of Confederate reverses was that providence had not indeed abandoned the South—but the South appeared to have abandoned providence. Furthermore, such a response did not compel southern churchmen to impugn the basic justice of the Confederate cause. It did, however, lead to a renewal and an intensification of the Confederate jeremiad in an attempt to discover and to stamp out the roots of Confederate obstinacy and bad faith. Confederate clergymen therefore directed trumpet blasts of outraged indignation against the iniquities of the southern people—inquities that had delayed the still nevertheless "inevitable" vindication of the evangelical Confederate Israel by providence.

Leroy M. Lee—a Methodist Episcopal clergyman in Virginia—reminded southerners that, due to the righteousness of the Confederate cause, "Failure is impossible, except by default of our own efforts, or by reason of our sins and unworthiness." Lee concluded that, "The chief danger
to our cause is among ourselves. Our reverses are the punishment of our sins." Elder J.S. Lamar was also disturbed by "the evidences of God's anger in our midst. Such evidences compelled Lamar "to conclude that we have sinned, and that we need to seek the mercy rather than the justice of God." 40

Confederate clergymen were persuaded that the South's apparent reverses were not the product of the Lord's abandonment of His people, but were instead proportionate to the degree of His favor that God had showered upon the Confederate Israel in the past. Such reverses therefore confirmed—in an implicit manner—rather than abrogated the evangelical Confederate covenant. J.L. Burrows—a Georgia Baptist—warned that, "Those to whom God's law has been made known are more guilty, in the same transgressions, than those who are ignorant of that law....Do you say we are not worse than other nations? Perhaps not. But we have sinned against clearer knowledge and richer blessings than others, and in that proportion is our guilt greater." 41

Southern clergymen bluntly accused particular members of the Confederate covenant nation of a spiritual immaturity that threatened to sap the strength of the southern cause. Furthermore, since the Confederate Israel constituted a "person" in the mind of providence, the lapses of its incorporated members—civilian and military—made an impact upon the course of the war. Confederate churchmen therefore summoned southerners to a sort of spiritual levee en masse
--a moral counterpart to the "people's war" that was in the process of evolution in Washington and in Richmond. C.S. Vedder—a Presbyterian clergyman in South Carolina—demanded that the lapsed or lukewarm members of the evangelical Confederate Israel "ask themselves whether it is not their sin which has brought judgment upon us; whether their want of faith has not hindered the faith of others?...The deliverance of our country will be no blessing to you if your soul is still in fetters."42

Furthermore, southern clergymen compiled somber catalogues of the particular vices that threatened to subvert the evangelical Confederate covenant. D.S. Doggett lamented that, since the war began, "The growth of vice has been enormous; enough, one would think, to sink any country into political perdition." Doggett made scathing references to southern violations of the Sabbath, "open and unblushing profanity," "avarice," "drunkenness," and "a passion for public amusement."43

Confederate churchmen were especially vehement in condemnation of southern political corruption. J.J.D. Renfroe attributed the defeat at Gettysburg to the political disloyalty and legislative corruption prevalent in the Confederate States. Reverend I.T. Tichenor also accused southerners of "abusing our liberties." Furthermore, Tichenor lambasted the demagoguery and the deliberate inspiration of "party strife" by Confederate politicians.44

Nor was the Confederate government itself immune to
such criticism. Sylvanus Landrum posited that, "Nations are punished for the sins of their rulers, as such, and blessed for the sake of the goodness of their rulers. Landrum claimed the rulers of the Confederate Israel were conspicuously wanting in the necessary "goodness." Among the potentially mortal sins of the southern magistracy, Landrum enumerated: the Confederate Post Office's shocking violation of the fourth commandment, and the Confederate Army's open betrayal of the sixth by the tacit permission given to duelling.45

Confederate clergymen were persuaded that southern sin was the source of southern reverses. Furthermore, southern sin was itself the product of the South's habitual neglect of providence--despite the humble protestations of loyalty made upon days of prayer and thanksgiving--and of its stubborn adherence to a spirit of selfish individualism. William H. Wheelwright commented sadly that,

Of late, our enemies have come up against us to battle, and found us with the Ark of God in our camp--formally recognizing the providence of God, wonderfully manifested in our former successes, while in reality we were worshipping false gods. In pious idolatry, aggravated wickedness, calling upon God with our lips, our hearts bowing to idols--using the interim of relief from the attack of our foe, not in the works of grateful piety, in preparations of national vigilance, but in self-indulgence, self-seeking, self-glorification, undermining the very foundations of society, and paralyzing every moral energy.46

The consciousness of southern sin constituted a moral and spiritual dilemma for Confederate clergymen. Southern churchmen insisted that the evangelical Confederate Israel was itself holy--a sacramental nation. Nevertheless, the
corrosive impact of sin appeared to endanger the sanctity of such a southern Zion. The response of the early Church to a similar dilemma was manifest in the stern rituals of anathema and excommunication. The decayed member or members were thereby isolated and lopped off in order to preserve the integrity of the body of Christ. Confederate clergymen evolved a similar solution to the dilemma of southern sin. Although the pulpit was never used to proscribe particular individuals, southern churchmen did use it to isolate and symbolically to cast out of the corporate person of the Confederate Israel particular sins and particular classes of sinners—malefactors whose crimes appeared to constitute a particularly mortal source of danger to the southern sacramental nation. Such a process of isolation seems simultaneously to have constituted a healthful purgation of the body politic and an implicit vindication of the members of the Confederate Israel in general—members who presumably were not culpable of such heinous enormities.

There was a remarkable consensus among southern clergymen as to the identity of the "sin against the Holy Ghost" that automatically cast an individual or individuals outside the Confederate pale. That sin was "extortion." Furthermore, the working definition of extortion was as broad as it was illuminative of the Confederate evangelical mind. Extortion constituted any attempt on the part of an individual or class of individuals to make a profit at the expense of a southern nation that was locked into the poten-
tial death grip of a war of national independence.

Like the biblical proslavery argument, the critique of extortion concentrated upon itself all the most characteristic fears and concerns of southern evangelicals. Extortion represented the invasion of the Confederate body politic by the twin viruses of selfish individualism and gross materialism. Furthermore, these were supposedly northern inspired viruses that secession was intended to protect the Confederate Israel against. Presumably, the quarantine of 1861 had not met with adequate success. At the same time, extortion implied a negation of the corporate ideal of the Confederate Israel—a reversion to the moral and social anarchy that already haunted the nightmares of conservative southern churchmen. Moreover, such a negation challenged the claim of Confederate evangelicals that the South had somehow managed to a degree at least to preserve itself against the prevalent moral and spiritual diseases of nineteenth-century liberalism. Confederate clergymen dreamed of Edmund Burke and were therefore petrified at the prospect of awakening to confront the smiling countenance of John Stuart Mill.47

Reverend I.R. Finley appealed to the ferocious prophecy of Ezekiel to determine the causes of the delayed Confederate peace. "There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel; Thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you. ...Thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast great-
ly gained by thy neighbors by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God." Bishop Elliott lamented the potential impact of such extortion upon the Confederate cause. "When I perceive the love of money which is rapidly pervading the Confederate States—that love of money which the Apostle calls the root of all evil—I tremble lest we shall yet be pierced through with many sorrows." A purely practical consideration motivated Reverend T.V. Moore's condemnation of speculators, since Confederate extortion appeared to reduce to nonsense a number of the previously compelling arguments in support of southern independence. Moore asked, "What have we gained by escaping the leeches and blood-suckers of one Confederacy, only to fall into the fangs of the sharks and cormorants of another?"48

The Confederate evangelical treatment of extortion parallels the curse in Genesis that accompanied the fall of man. Just as original sin shattered the bonds of love between men and between man and God, in the same manner extortion threatened to rend the "seamless garment" of the Confederate social fabric and to erect a "wall of hostility" between God and the southern sacramental nation.

Anguish and outrage are apparent in the southern clergy's comments upon extortion's implicit danger to the corporate Utopia of an evangelical Confederate Israel. D.S. Doggett lamented that, "Thousands, instead of standing shoulder to shoulder, in the unequal strife, discovered the chance to strike, not for their altars and their fire-
sides, but for money....Such a development of avarice, by the very means which should have crushed it; the presumably patriotic impulses of a time of war, the world has, perhaps, never witnessed."  

Extortion made a mockery of the pious corporate symbolism of the Confederate fast day. Bishop Pierce was astonished that—instead of turning to each other to offer mutual help and support—"We are devouring each other. Avarice, wills, full barns, puts the bounties of Providence under bolts, and bars, waiting with eager longing for higher prices." Chaplain Renfroe also heaped opprobrium upon the "extortioners, speculators, blood-suckers, Shylocks, deserters and Tories, oppressing the poor and the needy, preying like vultures upon the vitals of our country, and conspiring in demon conclave against the liberties of our posterity."  

In consideration of Renfroe's low estimate of the southern "aristocracy"—discussed in the previous chapter—the democratic chaplain's suggestion of a "demon conclave"—a conspiracy against Confederate "liberties"—implies that class tensions were also apparent in the southern evangelical campaign against extortion. Nevertheless, extortion was also of considerable concern to southern evangelicals more conservative than Chaplain Renfroe, since—as Drury Lacy pointed out—it endangered institutions that were essential to a sane and stable social order—including the Church—not to mention the prevalent corruption of public
life that it inspired. Therefore, as usual, the defense of the Confederate Israel created a curious coalition of southern evangelicals whose social and political convictions were not otherwise compatible.51

The principal concern of southern clergymen, however, was that extortion constituted a shocking denial of the evangelical Confederate covenant—a flinging back of the graces of providence into the face of a wrathful God. Reverend J.L. Burrows assured his listeners that the "worst enemies we have to fear are to be found among ourselves. They are those who provoke God's displeasure against ourselves by wanton violations of His laws." Burrows made sure that his audience understood his meaning by the use of specific references to those "who, in selfish greed, are oppressing the poor...and enriching [them]selves at the cost of [their] country's welfare." Reverend William Norwood insisted that "avarice" was identical to "idolatry, because it estranges the heart from [God]." Norwood directed his anger in particular against speculators in southern towns who hoarded supplies of food in order to increase the price and to farmers who raised "the price of provisions by withholding their produce from the market." Leroy M. Lee also condemned members of the "producing and trading classes of the land" who did not even stop at speculation in military goods. Such obstinate moral blindness was certainly a form of idolatry, since it "substitutes wealth, and worships it as God."52
Southern clergymen were adamant that extortion constituted spiritual treason against the evangelical Confederate Israel. The extremest penalty--"excommunication" and denial of participation in the graces of the southern sacramental nation--was to be visited upon those guilty of such a crime. As Reverend J.W. Tucker put it, "Every man who in times like these takes advantage of the necessities of the people, to wring from them prices which must produce general bankruptcy, national and individual, should be a marked man. The people should remember him, and if times ever get better, he should be made to feel the vengeance of an enraged and injured people." Tucker therefore appealed to the most solemn sanctions to isolate and to punish the moral and spiritual "fifth column" within the evangelical Confederate Israel.53

Nevertheless, Tucker's use of a tentative "if" is startling. It suggests a temptation that must have preyed upon the minds of a number of southern evangelicals--the temptation to conclude that "times" would not in fact "get better" and that the evangelical Confederate Israel was a delusion and a mirage. The principal challenge of southern reverses and of the delayed peace to Confederate clergymen was to dispel such demons and to see in contemporary reverses a source of hope affirmed--rather than simply of sin unmasked or of future punishments threatened. Southern churchmen therefore appealed to the letter to the Hebrews, and reminded a stricken South that, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasten-
eth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."[Heb.12:6]
Punishment and suffering were therefore signs of God's love and demonstrations of the proposition that providence was not in fact finished in its dealings with the evangelical Confederate Israel. There was a more conspicuous element of prophecy than most evangelical southern churchmen perhaps imagined in such meditations upon the "blessings" of defeat. The "rod" was to be the South's comforter and companion for many more years than most Confederate evangelicals could compel themselves to contemplate.

Confederate clergymen concurred that the war was a "disciplinary dispensation" intended to strengthen and inspire the southern sacramental nation. Nevertheless, the sheer scope and duration of the Confederate penance startled even the southern churchmen who had anticipated a protracted war. Therefore, when Bishop Elliott addressed his parishioners in September of 1864, he conceded that, "Our punishment is...a dispensation of death. The war has produced no results but slaughter and bloodshed...and so it will continue until God's wrath is satisfied." Nevertheless, Elliott denied emphatically that "a dispensation of death" was the prelude to a dispensation of defeat. The bishop contended that he had "not been disturbed by our recent reverses. They mean blood and death and nothing more. Subjugation is as far off as it ever was and never can take place."54

A year and a half earlier, Elliott had started to de-
velop the theme that led eventually to his grim declaration of defiance in September 1864. At that time, Elliott had assured his parishioners that the continuance of the war was in the best interests of the Confederate Israel and that present reverses were in fact the sources of subsequent strength and vindication. Providence could not possibly abandon the evangelical Confederate covenant. Elliott conceded the battered South's inclination toward peace, but insisted that, "God has thought it best for us that this cruel war should endure yet longer and should be waged with an increased ferocity, if not with augmented forces. Our sins are to be more heavily punished, at the same time that our faith is to be more thoroughly sifted, and our submission to his will made more complete and perfect." Elliott was persuaded that the previous manifestations of the pro-southern sympathy of providence were conclusive. No matter that present reverses served to dilute the impression--God was still the champion of His Confederate Israel. "We may feel sure, seeing how visibly he has fought for us...that whatever he may order for us in the conduct of this struggle, shall be for our ultimate blessing, and that we ourselves shall one day see it and confess it."

Elliott went so far as to conclude that, "Everything forbids us to be too solicitous for peace." In other words, God's Confederate "son" must learn to love the paternal chastisements of the rod of providence.55

Reverend William H. Wheelwright attempted to persuade
his congregants that peace in February of 1862 would constitute a disaster to the Confederate States, and that the continuance of the war was a sign of God's concern toward the South. This was the case because providence had not completed its process of "discipline" of the Confederate elect. "If now peace were declared, many who would return to their homes would be unfit for their hallowed associations, their very presence would pollute the pure atmosphere breathed by virtuous mothers, wives and sisters."

A year and a half later—in the despondent aftermath of Gettysburg—Reverend I.T. Tichenor was compelled to conclude that the South was still not "prepared for peace."56

Nevertheless, since one of the purposes of the war—although not, to be sure, its ultimate purpose—was to punish southern sins and to inspire the sorrow of repentence, Reverend Henry H. Tucker was confident that, "When we become what we ought to be, there can be no motive in the divine mind to continue the chastisement, and the war will cease. R. Wilmer—the Protestant Episcopal bishop of Alabama—in the Spring of 1864, claimed that there were "indications of this result to be seen among us already." Wilmer alluded in particular to the impressive revivals that had taken place in the Confederate army. Wilmer concluded that such revivals vindicated the wisdom of providence in permitting the war to continue. The purpose of present suffering was to set providence's stamp of divine approval upon the formation of the Confederate character. Therefore, "We must
look to the results of trial and discipline upon [the] future character [of Confederate veterans], if we would take account of the solid good that we hope for and thus vindicate to ourselves the truth of the declaration, 'Thou shalt know hereafter.'”

Reverend Joseph M. Atkinson agreed that, "God had good reason to send sorrow; but when sorrow has done its appointed work—when, by the sadness of the countenance the heart has been made better, we may expect the darkened cloud to withdraw and a glorious burst of sunlight to appear." Bishop Wilmer’s consequent diagnosis was that, in order to ensure the "long life" of the evangelical Confederate Israel, it was necessary to let "the fever have its course, until the elements of disease [are] burnt out of the body.”

Southern clergymen convinced themselves that reverses were simply an extension of the penitential sacrament embodied in the Confederate fast day, and were therefore in fact an affirmation—rather than a suspension—of the Confederate Israel's election. Reverend J.W. Tucker was even able to declare that, "God is on our side—is with us in this conflict—because[italics mine] we have had reverses.” Reverend Tucker appealed to the statement of St. Paul that, "If ye are without chastisement, then are ye bastards and not sons.” Tucker concluded that, "This principle of the divine administration applies to nations as well as to individuals," and the Methodist clergyman alluded in support of this conclusion to God's treatment of the Old Testament Jews—the spiri-
tual antecedents of contemporary Confederates. 59

Confederate clergymen therefore elaborated upon the necessity inherent in southern reverses and upon the good that was supposed to accrue to the Confederate Israel because of such reverses. Chaplain Renfroe assured the Confederate soldier that the purpose of such a protracted and painful conflict was to test the confidence of southerners in providence and in the righteousness of the Confederate cause. "It is as necessary to test a people's patriotism as it is to try their religion. The Lord is proving our confidence in him and our country's cause. He is leading us to see ourselves, that we may know whether we be in earnest in our struggle for liberty, and at the same time he will teach us we are but men, and that he alone can fight our battles." Renfroe went on to reflect that, "Anybody can do well in times of prosperity, but in the days of adversity true courage manifests itself most gloriously." 60

Bishop Wilmer speculated that such a ferocious war was in fact the means of providence to discipline and preserve God's own herrenvolk—the Anglo Saxon South. "It is in this way...that God in his providence preserves a race of men upon the earth. At certain periods, when the race has degenerated and is about to be swallowed up of cares and pleasures...He causes the whole nation to pass into the furnace, melts it down, and poors it into new moulds of thought and character." The fact that such a process was in fact at work in the Confederate States was
evident, since "they, who have attracted to themselves most of human favour, in this war, have been, with very few exceptions, men who feared God and wrought righteousness." 61

Reverend J.W. Tucker concluded therefore that, "God has sent our reverses for our own good. They were necessary to humble our pride; to stop our foolish and absurd boasting, and to make us feel the importance of the conflict in which we are engaged." Nevertheless, James Warley Miles warned Confederates that, "If national trials do not awaken in a people a reliance upon Providence,...they may become the prey of the most abject degradation and the most vulgar tyranny." 62

Nevertheless, despite Miles's ominous suggestion, southern churchmen continued--despite the reverses that cascaded down upon the South in the second half of the war--to insist upon the permanence of the evangelical Confederate covenant. Such reverses in fact appear merely to have intensified--and in any event were powerless to obliterate--the acute southern evangelical conviction of the Confederate nation's elect status. Just as the mutual endurance of catastrophe tends to draw two lovers closer together, so did the tragedy of the Civil War strengthen the union between providence and the evangelical Confederate Israel.

Reverend D.S. Doggett assured his listeners--on April 8, 1864--that, "Step by step, have we been led through the bloody scenes of our national drama, by the most manifest interpositions of [God's] hand....Was it to deceive us?
Have we been brought so far, only to be abandoned in the last stage of the journey, as a monument of Divine delusion?" Such a conclusion was anathema to the veterans of the evangelical Confederate crusade. Doggett preferred instead to "interpret the illustrated past as an index of the more glorious future, while we go forth again under the same celestial guidance." The intoxicated conclusion of Bishop Elliott--the only conclusion consistent with the laws of providence and the righteousness of the Confederate cause--was that "God" was still nevertheless "on our side, while we are suffering defeat and disaster." Furthermore, the tendency of such a conclusion was to lead the Confederate Israel "to repentence and a happier condition."63

Southern evangelicals were persuaded that the laws of providence, and not--as has been shown--the preservation of the peculiar institution, were the bases of Confederate nationalism. Such laws permitted Confederates to detect in the war a Manichaean combat between primal good and fundamental evil--a combat the only conceivable conclusion of which would be the vindication of the good. Southern evangelicals therefore interpreted the progress of the war in terms of such an identification between the Confederate cause and the contents of the eternal moral law. Furthermore, such an identification provided a "sacred history" to the evangelical Confederate Israel--an alternative to the already discredited sacred history of
the despised Union.

Such was the confidence of southerners in the evangelical Confederate covenant, that when the tide of war turned against the South, such reverses were simply integrated into the sturdy structure of Confederate sacred history. Confederate clergymen appealed to a venerable Christian tradition—the sanctifying impact of intense suffering—to demonstrate that Confederate reverses were in fact tokens of God's love—and not emblems of His disdain.

Such an appeal also provides a key to the southern evangelical response to an outcome that is never addressed directly in the extant evangelical Confederate sermons—the ultimate loss of Confederate political independence. The associated problems of suffering and of the curious survival of the evangelical Confederate Israel—despite the apparent finality of the incident at Appomattox Court House—are therefore the subjects of a sixth and final chapter.
ENDNOTES

1. Alexander Gregg, *The duties growing out of it, and the benefits expected, from the present war. A sermon, preached...on Sunday, July 7th, 1861...* [4156] (Austin, 1861), 3-4 (first quotation), William Meade, *Address on the day of fasting, and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States, June 13, 1861...* [4167] (Richmond, 1861), 3 (second quotation).

2. Henry Niles Pierce, *Sermons preached...on the 13th of June, 1861, the national fast appointed by His Excellency Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States....* [4181] (Mobile, Ala., 1861), 11.

3. Thomas Sanford Dunaway, *A sermon delivered...in connection with a day of national fasting, humiliation and prayer, April, 1864....* [4138-2] (Richmond, [1864]), 5.

4. Daniel I. Dreher, *A sermon delivered...June 13, 1861. Day of humiliation and prayer, as per appointment of the President of the Confederate States. * [4138] (Salisbury, N.C., 1861), 14 (first quotation), Gregg, *duties, 5 (second quotation).*

5. John J.D. Renfroe, "The battle is God's." *A sermon preached before Wilcox's Brigade, on fast day, the 21st August, 1863....* [4186] (Richmond, 1863), 3 (first quotation), Thomas Verner Moore, *God our refuge and strength in this war. A discourse...on the day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, appointed by President Davis, Friday, Nov. 15, 1861....* [4173] (Richmond, 1861), 6 (second quotation), 9 (third quotation).

6. Gregg, *duties, 13 (first quotation), 14 (second quotation).*

7. Moore, *God our refuge and strength in this war, 6 (first quotation), 6-8 (second quotation).*

8. Stephen Elliott, *How to renew our national strength. A sermon preached...on Friday, Nov. 15th, 1861. Being a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States....* [4147] (Richmond, 1862), 6-7.

9. David Seth Doggett, *A nation's Ebenezer. A discourse delivered...Thursday, September 18, 1862: the day of public thanksgiving, appointed by the President of the Confederate States....* [4136] (Richmond, 1862), 8.

A sermon preached to the Pulaski Guards...on the second Sunday after Trinity. Being the Sunday before their departure to join the army in Virginia....[4152] (Savannah, 1861), 4 (first quotation), Meade, Address, 4 (second quotation).

11. Sylvanus Landrum, The battle is God's. A discourse...on the day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, appointed by President Davis, August 21st, 1863....[4163] (Savannah, 1863), 10.

12. Joel W. Tucker, God's providence in war; a sermon, delivered...on Friday, May 16th, 1862....[4198] (Fayetteville, 1862), 10.


20. Ibid., 6-7.


22. Ibid.


27. T.S. Winn, *The great victory at Manasses' Junction; God, the arbiter of battles, a thanksgiving sermon, preached...on the 28th day of July, 1861*. [4209] (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1861), 6.

28. Stephen Elliott, *God's presence with our army at Manassas! A sermon, preached...on Sunday, July 28th, being the day recommended by the Congress of the Confederate States, to be observed as a day of thanksgiving*. [4144] (Savannah, 1861), 6.


33. The authors of a provocative volume entitled *Why the South Lost the Civil War* go so far as to suggest that the amalgam of the logic of providence and Confederate military reverses—in addition to the suppressed guilt that southerners supposedly felt over the ownership of slaves—led to the collapse of southern morale that—in the minds of the authors—was the ultimate cause of the Confederate disaster. Nevertheless, such an hypothesis—at least when applied to the contributions of evangelical southern churchmen—seems to distort the actual nature of the interaction between southern evangelicalism and the process of Confederate defeat. Both popular southern morale and the pulpit eloquence of the southern clergy were invariably reactions to the contemporary situation of the Confederate army—and not vice versa. Therefore, despite the stimulating freshness of the thesis of Beringer et al., the more traditional conclusion that the battle for the Confederate Israel was lost on the plains of Gettysburg and in the burning streets of Atlanta before it was lost in the elegant pulpits of the elite clergy.
or in the troubled consciences of devout southerners, still seems the most plausible. Richard E. Beringer, et al., Why the South Lost the Civil War (Athens, Ga., 1986), 12, 356-58.

34. Renfroe, "The battle is God's", 5 (first quotation), Stephen Elliott, Ezra's dilemma[sic]. A sermon preached...on Friday, August 21st, 1863, being the day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States....[4142] (Savannan, 1863), 6 (second quotation).


36. William H. Wheelwright, A discourse delivered to the troops, stationed at Gloucester Point, Va., February 28th, 1862....[4205] (Richmond, 1862), 10 (first quotation), Renfroe, "The battle is God's", 15 (second quotation), Henry Holcombe Tucker, God in the war. A sermon delivered before the legislature of Georgia, in the Capitol at Milledgeville, on Friday, November 15, 1861, being a day set apart for fasting, humiliation and prayer, by His Excellency the President of the Confederate States....[4196] (Milledgeville, Ga., 1861), 17 (third quotation), Stephen Elliott, "Samson's riddle." A sermon preached...on Friday, March 27, 1863. Being the day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States....[4151] (Macon, Ga., 1863), 19 (fourth quotation).

37. [Otto Sievers Barten], A sermon preached...on the fast-day, June 13, 1861....[4126] (Richmond, 1861), 5 (first quotation), Elliott, How to renew our national strength, 9-10 (second quotation).

38. Renfroe, "The battle is God's", 19.

39. Landrum, The battle is God's, 11 (first quotation), Alfred A. Watson, Sermon delivered before the annual council of the Diocese of North Carolina...May 14, 1863....[4204] (Raleigh, N.C., 1863), 25 (second quotation).

40. Leroy Madison Lee, Our country--our dangers--our duty. A discourse...on the national fast day, August 21, 1863....[4164] (Richmond, [1863]), 12 (first quotation), J.S. Lamar, A discourse delivered...on the Confederate fast day, Friday, Nov. 15, 1861....[4161-1] (Augusta, Ga., 1861), 9 (second quotation).
41. John Lansing Burrows, Nationality insured[sic]! Notes of a sermon delivered...Sept. 11th, 1864...[4129] (Augusta, Ga., 1864) 6-7.

42. Charles Stuart Vedder, "Offer unto God thanksgiving.": a sermon delivered...on Sunday, July 28, 1861...[4201] (Charleston, 1861), 15.

43. David Seth Doggett, The war and its close. A discourse, delivered...April 8th, 1864...[4137] (Richmond, 1864), 9-11.

44. Renfroe, "The battle is God's", 20 (first quotation), Isaac Taylor Tichenor, Fast-day sermon...delivered before the General Assembly of the State of Alabama, on Friday, Aug. 21st, 1863...[4186] (Montgomery, Ala., 1863), 12 (second quotation).

45. Landrum, The battle is God's, 12-13.

46. Wheelwright, Discourse to the troops, 10.


49. Doggett, The war and its close, 10.

50. George Foster Pierce, Sermons of Bishop Pierce and Rev. B.M. Palmer, 16 (first quotation), Renfroe, "The battle is God's", 16 (second quotation).

51. Ibid., Drury Lacey, Address delivered at the general military hospital, Wilson, N.C., on the day appoint-ed by the President as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer...[4162] (Fayetteville, 1863), 6-8.

52. Burrows, Nationality insured[sic]!, 8 (first quotation), William Norwood, God and our country. A sermon, preached...on the 27th day of March, 1863, the day appointed for prayer and humiliation by the Pres-ident of the Confederate States...[4174] (Richmond, 1863), 12-13 (second quotation), Lee, Our country-- our dangers--our duty, 14-21 (third quotation).

53. Joel W. Tucker, The guilt and punishment of extortion:
a sermon preached...on Sunday, the 7th of September, 1862. [4198-1] (Fayetteville, 1862), 14.

54. Stephen Elliott, "Vain is the help of man." A sermon preached...on Thursday, September 15, 1864, being the day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, appointed by the Governor of the State of Georgia.... [4153] (Macon, Ga., 1864), 10.


56. Wheelwright, Discourse to the troops, 12 (first quotation), Tichenor, Fast-day sermon, 9 (second quotation).

57. Tucker, God in the war, 16 (first quotation), Richard Hooker Wilmer, Future good--The explanation of present reverses: a sermon preached...during the Spring of 1864 [4206] (Charlotte, N.C., 1864), 15 (second quotation).

58. Atkinson, God, the giver of victory and peace, 5 (first quotation), Wilmer, Future good, 10 (second quotation).

59. Joel W. Tucker, God's providence in war; a sermon, delivered...on Friday, May 16th, 1862. [4198] (Fayetteville, N.C., 1862), 7.

60. Renfroe, "The battle is God's", 11 (first quotation), 12 (second quotation).


62. Tucker, God's providence in war, 7-8 (first quotation), James Warley Miles, God in history. A discourse delivered before the graduating class of the College of Charleston...March 29, 1863....[4170] (Charleston, 1863), 26 (second quotation).

63. Doggett, The war and its close, 19 (first quotation), Elliott, Ezra's dilemma[sic], 8 (second quotation).
Chapter VI—"Mine is not a Kingdom of This World": The Survival of the Evangelical Confederate Israel

Confederate evangelicals claimed to possess the "special privilege" that John Calvin promised to members of the Church. The patriarch of Geneva was persuaded that "it is the special privilege of the church to know the meaning of the judgments of God and their direction and purpose. God does indeed prove himself a just judge of the world by inflicting punishment on evil men. But because all things seem to happen by accident, God enlightens his sons by his Word, so that they may not walk blindly like unbelievers."¹

Calvin's pronouncements possessed considerable authority in a Confederate South that was still dominated—either directly in the case of products of the Reformed tradition or indirectly in respect to the less dogmatic but still nevertheless pervasive Calvinism of Baptists, Methodists, and Episcopalians—by the spirit and contents of the Institutes. Confederate clergymen therefore assured southern evangelicals that the "direction and purpose" of "the judgments of God" were manifest in the science of providence—a science based upon the dictates of the Scriptures—and that the laws of providence were also clear, lucid, and accessible to the investigations of a reason illuminated by faith. Furthermore, the fundamental statute of providence was that God blessed and protected His righteous servants, but cursed and committed to the outer darkness the desecraters of His Name.

Based upon such premises, evangelical Confederate
clergymen constructed a luminous and apparently satisfying account of the contemporary southern crisis—an account that, furthermore, transformed the abused South into a sacramental nation, a source of spiritual blessing to the nations themselves that vilified the slave states. Such an evangelical pro-Confederate *apologia* ensured the temporal vindication and subsequent prosperity of the Confederate nation.

The temptation of the modern secular mind is simply to dismiss the evangelical pro-Confederate *apologia* and to see in it the perversion of the religious impulse to meet the dubious needs of contemporary political "propaganda." Nevertheless, such a conclusion implies that the commitment of Confederate churchmen to the claims and preoccupations of evangelical doctrine was not genuine—a position that a simple perusal of the stern Confederate jeremiad or of the sometimes spirited assaults of southern clergymen upon the abuses of slavery is adequate to subvert. Evangelical southern churchmen made a dedicated—and occasionally a deeply moving—attempt to set aside the constraints of sectional interests and to assume the perspective of God—the sovereign source of providence—in evaluations of the contemporary southern tragedy. Although the Confederate evangelical God seems to us, nevertheless, to speak at times in a distinct southern drawl, such lapses are attributable to the common frailty of the human condition—a frailty that tempts us to reduce the demands of God and of the moral law to the preservation of the persons and the possessions
that we cherish—and therefore are not adequate cause to
doubt or to suspect either the sincerity or the religious
commitment of Confederate clergymen.

Confederate clergymen therefore labored to instill
in southern evangelicals a deep sense that the Confederate
Israel—the persona of the South in the drama of salvation
—was a fact. Furthermore, such a "fact" was impervious
to the impact of the succession of southern defeats that
constituted the concluding stages of the war. Southern
denominations simply insisted that such defeats constituted
a "sacrament" of God's love toward the Confederate Israel—
similar in nature to the love implied in the stern paternal
chastisement of a willful child.

Nevertheless, the impact of Confederate reverses upon
southern evangelicals was profound. Although evangelical
southern churchmen never publicly conceded the possibility
of a loss of southern political independence, nevertheless,
a transformation of the central concepts of Confederate
evangelical discourse—providence and the evangelical Confederate
covenant—occurred in the course of the conflict.
Such a transformation indicates a perhaps not entirely con-
scious transition to an admission of approaching defeat
—an admission that would still, however, permit the paradox-
cial survival of the Confederate Israel sans Confederate
States.

The war therefore witnessed a metamorphosis of southern
attitudes toward the nature of providence—a metamorphosis
that involved the eventual collapse of the lucid, rational providence of 1861 and the reappearance of an emphasis upon the transcendant incomprehensibility of the mandates of God. Furthermore, the evangelical Confederate covenant itself ceased to be considered conclusive evidence of eventual southern political independence and was in fact transformed into a promise of the eternal rewards implicit in the endurance of temporal defeat. Grant and Sherman therefore appear to have provided a solution to the southern evangelical "problem" of prosperity—and of the spirit of reliance upon self and consequent disregard of providence that such prosperity seemed to inspire. The solution was to see in prosperity the source of God's wrath and in suffering the demonstration of His love. The evangelical Confederate covenant had therefore come full circle. Defeat now, rather than success, was the unmistakable token of its genuineness.

Confederate clergymen never ceased to insist that providence was rational or that the interventions of providence in history were manifestations of the wisdom and righteousness of God. As Reverend W.B. Howe demanded to know, "Shall wisdom and order be everywhere else, save in God's dealings with man?" Nevertheless, the length and devastation of the Civil War served to undermine the confidence of southern evangelicals in the capacity of individuals—even conceding the illumination of the Holy Spirit—to grasp the "reasons"
of God manifest in contemporary events. Bishop Wilmer admitted that the human intellect—since it is confined to the investigation of "surface" appearances—cannot comprehend the motives that impel the interventions of God. "They, who look no deeper than the surface, and content themselves with estimating the merits of the [present] controversy, are sure to be disappointed in all their calculations as to its extent and duration." The source of such "disappointment" was the absence of that intimate knowledge of the contents and merits of the human heart—a knowledge that is solely accessible to God. Therefore, the dubious prophets of the South were unable to "look...backward to past sins, which demand retribution, nor forward to the ultimate good, which is to be subserved."²

Such an assessment implies a devaluation of the human intellect—a devaluation that is furthermore in stark contrast to the confidence of southern evangelicals in 1861. Bishop Wilmer appears to suggest the the intellect—a prey to "appearances"—is in fact powerless to disclose to a man the contents of the two entities that are most crucial to him—his immortal soul and the mind of his God. The consequence of such a reassessment of the capacity of human reason was to elevate the logos—the reason—of God to the status of numen and mystery. The paradoxical implication of such a position was that the impotence of human reason therefore compelled Confederate evangelicals to transform the reason of God into a dogma of faith—a dogma not itself
accessible to human reason. Such a dogma provided consolation to stricken southerners in place of the rational illumination that Confederate clergymen ceased to consider possible. Bishop Wilmer was therefore able to insist—despite the confusion and spiritual dislocation that the war inspired—that "underlying the present strife, and its immediate occasions, there are deeper reasons [italics mine] at work, guiding and controlling all events, and putting to naught all human wisdom. Hence it is that all have failed to indicate the extent and duration of the present war."\(^3\)

Such a metamorphosis of providence to the status of transcendant mystery permitted southern evangelicals to persist in the confidence that God was benevolent—despite the apparent absence of any perceptible tokens of such benevolence. As Reverend J.W. Tucker put it

We may not understand the mysteries of his providence, nor comprehend the far reaching plans of his administration, but we should feel assured that goodness prompts, holiness governs, wisdom directs, and divine power controls all for our own good and God's glory....We should not be anxious or fearful in reference to the final result. God will work it out in his own good time. Until then, we must bow with resignation to the dark and mysterious dispensations of his providence.\(^4\)

Furthermore, since providence was a mystery, and the human intellect unable to grasp the transcendant wisdom of its interventions, Confederate clergymen claimed that it was impossible to castigate the justice of God—a considerable and understandable temptation to battered southern evangelicals. The standards of justice that the weakened human intellect had devised were useless to evaluate the
mandates of providence. Reverend I.R. Finley reminded his listeners that God "cannot fail in any instance to render to his every creature that which is strictly right....It does not militate against this declaration that the ways of God to man, on the earth, may seem to be unequal. It is not for the finite to scan the Infinite." Furthermore, Finley asked his congregants to recollect that man "is a fallen being, with a corrupt nature" and therefore unable to comprehend the transcendent logic of providence.  

The consequence of such diatribes as that of Reverend Finley was to restore the chasm that separated faith and reason—a chasm that the confidence of southern evangelicals in 1861 had appeared to eliminate. Confederate clergymen at the start of the war had been persuaded that reason was competent to anticipate, to understand, and to cooperate in the interventions of providence. After Gettysburg, however, southern clergymen concluded that reason was not merely incompetent to understand the nature of providence, but was in fact entirely irrelevant to the process of the interventions of God in history. Reverend Finley therefore prompted southern evangelicals to concede the temporal insolubility of the problem of evil and to submit themselves to the incomprehensible assaults of a "righteous" providence. "The permission of evil in this sin-cursed world,...the apparent success of the wicked, and failure on the part of the righteous,...are problems, the solution of which is not to be arrived at with the means at hand in the present state of being....Nor
is it [a] necessity, either to the perfecting of the Divine plans, or to our own happiness, that we should be able to dissipate the 'clouds of darkness' that are 'round about the Lord.'" Furthermore, Reverend Finley warned that, "To seek to penetrate farther is as impious as it is imprudent." 6

Finley’s pronouncements indicate that the period of the "gentleman theologian" in southern evangelicalism was past. Prosperity in the Old South had encouraged a generation of southern churchmen to seek the assistance of the intellect in defense of the Faith. Nevertheless, the devastation of the Civil War and its potent simultaneous demonstration of the impotence of reason and the predominance of evil was to complete the consecration of southern evangelicals to the service of mystical fatalism and pious irrationalism—a consecration that would persist into the twentieth century. 7

Simultaneous to the Confederate evangelical assault upon the "presumption" of intellect was the culmination of the clergy's meditation upon the "problem" of prosperity. There had always been a paradox implicit in the evangelical pro-Confederate apologia. Southern clergymen claimed that the prosperity of mid-nineteenth century America had prompted it to disregard the interventions of providence and to cultivate a spirit of impious reliance upon self. Furthermore, such cultivation was the source of the poisoned seed that later blossomed into the harvest of secession and civil
war—the punishments of providence directed against the consequences of American prosperity.

Bishop Pierce in fact confided that, "One of the moral secrets of this wretched war as we call it (perhaps it may turn out to be merciful,) in my judgment, is to arrest the corruption of prosperity—to unsettle, agitate, break loose the people from their plans and hopes...and, by upheaving the incrustations imposed by long years of peace and security, to let into our darkened minds the light of truth and ventilate the dormant conscience." Reverend C.C. Pinckney agreed that the war was caused neither by abolitionists in the North nor by secessionists in the South. Rather, "it is manifestly God's decree against our national pride. We have been victims of prosperity."8

Bishop Atkinson elaborated upon the accusation implicit in the "temptations" of prosperity. "Prosperity tempts us by inclining us to forget God, and to love the world which so smiles upon us, by slackening the rein on the knees[sic] of our appetites and passions by opening the door to vices which our very circumstances might otherwise shut out from us, by nourishing selfishness, by deadening sympathy, and by weakening faith."9

Nevertheless, the paradox was that at the same moment that the Confederate clergymen condemned the impact of prosperity upon the old Union, they also prayed to providence to bestow political independence and subsequent temporal prosperity upon the South. Nor were southern churchmen
insensible to such a paradox. The impact of early successes upon Confederates seemed to mirror—in an uncanny manner—the previously mortal impact of prosperity upon the United States. Bishop Elliott confessed that the impact of the smashing success at first Manassas "upon ourselves is what I most fear....If we suffer ourselves to be elated and to ascribe our success to ourselves—if we...forget the Lord our God—then shall our peril be imminent, for the Lord hateth the proud, and smiteth those who would rob him of his glory."  

Two and a half years later—in the aftermath of Gettysburg—Bishop Elliott lamented the accuracy of his earlier prophecy. The bishop conceded that, "It is the aggregate of sinfulness that is working our ruin; that is eating out the heart and spirit of the cause....The consequences which grew out of continued victory led to presumption and presumption led to security and the feeling of security begat within the community the desire of wealth, which circumstances seemed to place within every man's grasp." The anguish of Bishop Elliott was due to his tortured awareness that success—such success as he had prayed to God to bestow upon His Confederate Israel—had matured imperceptibly but undeniably into extortion—the "sin against the Holy Ghost" and the potential sentence of death upon the evangelical Confederate Israel.

The implication that Bishop Elliott drew was eventually to transform the nature of the evangelical Confede-
rate covenant and—in a paradoxical manner—even to permit it to survive the collapse of the Confederate nation. The dangers of prosperity compelled Bishop Elliott to conclude that, "Peace is not always the safest condition which a fallen being can enjoy." Since peace apparently tended to "an entire relaxation of moral principle," then "the wholesome discipline of adversity" seemed to constitute "the very kindest application which God can make to our necessities, for it at once tears the mask away, and points us to the stern reality of life." 12

Bishop Elliott appears to assert that previous prosperity had temporarily blinded southern evangelicals to the authentic nature—the "reality"—of the human condition. Such a condition was based upon the presence of sin—and upon the suffering that was the inevitable product of sin. The only source of certain consolation that was available to corrupt man was reliance upon providence and upon the unmerited grace of God. Material prosperity, however, blinded men and women to the nature of the human condition and prompted them to neglect or to ignore the preferred "manna" of spiritual grace. The implication of such an argument was that suffering and privation were simultaneously "safer" and closer to the "reality" of the human condition than was a delusive prosperity. Furthermore, the position of the "suffering servant" was the most advantageous in which to stand in order to appropriate the graces of God.

Such a profoundly Calvinist perspective implied fur-
thermore that the "suffering servant" was also the chosen
d servant of God--the claimant of His "love." This was pre-
cisely the perspective upon Confederate suffering that so-
ern clergymen assumed. Confederate churchmen therefore
claimed to detect in the contemporary devastation of the
southern nation the appropriate consequences--and not the
repudiation--of the sympathy of providence toward the Con-
federate Israel.

Orthodox Calvinism therefore shaped the response of
southern evangelicals to the Civil War. Perhaps the most
conspicuous element of Calvinism is its dramatic contrast
between the pervasive corruption of the human condition
and the transcendant purity of the Creator. Such a sense
of the radical absence of similitude between the corruption
of man and the demands of a pure God was in part the inspi-
ration of the Calvinist doctrine of providence. The need
of men and women to depend upon the interventions of provi-
dence--and not upon the individual resources of the human
person--was the product both of the sovereign status of
God and "f the moral and spiritual helplessness of man.
Furthermore, such a sense of the helplessness of the bat-
tered human spirit and of the sheer ceaselessness of the
continual assaults made upon it by demonic elements deter-
mined the Calvinist perception of man's temporal "pilgrimage." Such a troubled "pilgrimage" was in fact a constant
state of war--a war furthermore more critical in its impli-
cations than even the "War for Southern Independence."
As Reverend James Warley Miles put it, "God calls us individually to battle in a field where He stands ready to help us and where if we repel Him not, victory is certain. That field is within us; that battle is with self; with all that is unworthy, and degrading, and unholy."\textsuperscript{13}

Bishop Meade's moving confession was therefore emblematic of the southern evangelical perspective. "In reviewing my life, since my entry to the ministry [Meade was in fact celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination], I can truly say, that not a day, or a working hour, has been spent, that the word evil may not be justly applied to it, because so largely partaking of sin. I know that I have never performed one single act without some sin intermingling with it, either as to the motive or manner."\textsuperscript{14}

Such a pervasive sense of personal corruption and of the spiritual combat that such corruption inspired tended to level the distinction between the evils of adversity and the blessings implicit in prosperity, since—as Bishop Atkinson put it—"Everything which comes to us from God is in some sense a temptation; that is, it tries us, reveals our character, and brings us a benefit or an injury, according to the use we make of it." All things are therefore either "medicines in the hands of the Great Physician" or "poison," depending upon the manner of our reception. Furthermore, Bishop Atkinson concluded that, "It is not necessarily good for us to meet trouble, but...it is of all things the best and most Christlike"
Bishop Atkinson's appeal to the "victory" implicit in the endurance of the suffering sent by providence serves to indicate the nature of the ultimate southern evangelical response to Confederate defeat. The implication of Bishop Atkinson's meditation is that prosperity or adversity *per se* are not important. The temporal circumstances of nations and individuals imply neither the wrath nor the approval of God, since both prosperity and adversity constitute a "test" or "trial" of the individual's commitment to Christ. Nevertheless, the performance of individuals in response to such "tests" constitutes an important and a decisive engagement in the spiritual combat of providence—an engagement that furthermore represents an epiphany, or revelation of the covenant between God and His servants.

Confederate clergymen developed the theme of a covenant implicit in the endurance of adversity early in the war in response to the trauma of unanticipated Confederate defeats. As Bishop Elliott put it, "We are learning the sublime truth of our daily dependence upon God, and we are learning it, where only it can be learned, in the school of adversity and affliction." Bishop Atkinson reminded southern evangelicals "that through much tribulation we must enter the Kingdom of Heaven....Let us then be satisfied with whatever lot he sees fit to send us, and only so seek to serve him, that when we stand at length in his presence, he shall say to each of us, 'Well done, good and
faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of the Lord.'"
Furthermore, C.S. Vedder was persuaded that adversity was
the means of providence to impel the Confederate Israel
into the embrace of God, since "great spiritual or temporal
necessities drive us to the cross."\textsuperscript{16}

The length and devastation of the war led therefore
to an intensification of the southern evangelical medita-
tion upon the Confederate covenant of adversity. Bishop
Elliott--in the aftermath of Gettysburg--assured his parish-
ioners that the present suffering of the South was in fact
the confirmation--the splendid demonstration--of the cove-
nant status of the Confederate Israel. "Those whom God
is intending to make a nation to do his work upon earth,
are precisely those whom he tries most severely. The law
which God has established for nations as well as individ-
uals, that any stand of virtue...must be gained through
the discipline of suffering, is always inflexibly worked
out."\textsuperscript{17}

Nevertheless, despite Bishop's Elliott's continued
appeal to Confederate nationalism, a combination of the
psychological impact of the war upon stricken southerners
and the spiritual consolation implicit in a covenant of
adversity served to undermine--in an implicit manner--the
political dimensions of the evangelical Confederate cove-
nant and to transform it into an eschatological phenome-
non--a transformation that involved the delay of the anti-
cipated blessings of southern political independence until
the denouement of the Last Day. Alfred A. Watson—an Episcopal clergyman in North Carolina—serves to illustrate such a shift. Watson appealed to southern evangelicals to endure the devastations of the war, in order to ensure the eschatalogical—and not the political and temporal—vindication of Confederate southerners. "Loss of property—hardships—defeats even—subjugation itself[italics mine]—their horrors will all fade out, when in the blaze of Heaven, all earthly interests will fade away. Let us do our duty here and now, as citizens, as soldiers, as churchmen....So we may hope to take part of that glorious triumphal procession, one day to follow the footsteps of our ascended Lord." The central plea in Watson's exordium was, "Let us set our affections on things above."18

The covenant of adversity also served to eliminate the reproach implicit in Confederate reverses, since—if suffering was a demonstration of the sympathy of providence toward the southern sacramental nation—it was not necessary to conclude that reverses were indications of the wrath of God. Bishop Wilmer expostulated in the Spring of 1864 that

I may even suppose that there has been a general and a sincere acknowledgment of God's providential government, and yet, I maintain that we may be called upon to suffer reverses with which all our past affliction may be deemed light, and that, not withstanding, His love and faithfulness remain unimpeachable....Do we need, after six thousand years of human experience, to be reminded that, 'The Lord loveth whom he chasteneth, and scourgeth ever son whom He receiveth.'19

The ultimate development of the Confederate evangeli-
cal meditation upon these themes—the covenant of adversity and the curse implicit in prosperity—is contained in a startling statement that Bishop Elliott made in his post-Gettysburg fast day sermon. Contemporary circumstances seemed to persuade Elliott that, "It is very often by their fruits only—the one reaping in the end honour and admiration; the world's immortality; the other—the ashes of all their expectations that we can finally separate the wheat from the chaff, the pure gold from the worthless dross."  

Although in August of 1863, Bishop Elliott was still probably not prepared to concede the possibility of Confederate defeat, nevertheless, less than two years later, the implication of the bishop's pious sentiment was to permit southern evangelicals to claim an apolitical but still nevertheless splendid spiritual "victory" at Appomattox Courthouse and therefore to appropriate the continued consolations of the evangelical Confederate in the depths of Reconstruction. In any event, a synthesis of the doctrines of providence and of the evangelical Confederate covenant made it possible—in a psychological sense—to southerners to survive the loss of political independence, since—as Reverend William Rees put it—"Because [God's] government is absolute, universal and eternal; therefore, if God be our friend and protector, individually and nationally, no calamity can befall us, but what will ultimate in greater blessing, and higher good to us."  

Furthermore, as the sermon of Reverend Watson implied,
the last years of the war witnessed a return to the "other-worldliness" of evangelicals in the Old South—and therefore also to a subtle translation of the evangelical Confederate covenant into the realm of metaphysics. Confederate clergymen now concentrated—not upon the political issues of the conflict—but instead detected in the war an "allegory" of the spiritual combat that was the central component of the human condition in its temporal pilgrimage. "This," in the words of H.R. Raymond, "is the [spiritual] war, that is of more immediate interest to us than any other possibly can be....If we are prepared for the conflict, though we die, palms of victory will be in our hands, and we shall be kings and priests unto God and reign with Christ his Son forever." Appalled southern evangelicals could see that the temporal and political dimensions of the Confederate crusade were no longer subject to southern control. Nevertheless, the war as a "allegory" of the eternal struggle between "Babylon" and "Israel" was subject solely to the limitations of the southern evangelical imagination.22

Such a renewal of the emphasis upon evangelical "other-worldliness" seems to imply both a reappearance of the individualism that was endemic to evangelicalism in the Old South and a denial of the corporate implications of the evangelical Confederate covenant. Nevertheless, the other-worldliness of ex-Confederates was still shaped and transformed by the memory of the demands of the war and of the southern sacramental nation. Although the postwar South
would not in fact conform to the corporate prescriptions of the Confederate clergy, nevertheless, the perception of a peculiar southern covenant and of the common participation of southerners in a separate and distinct sacred drama was to temper the tendency toward unrestrained individualism in the post-Confederate southern evangelical churches. Such perceptions of a common southern evangelical "sacred history" were to inspire both an almost ecumenical solidarity among southern evangelicals and a spirit of cooperation and mutual conviction that was to shape the still tremendous ous contributions of the southern denominations to the missionary enterprise of the Church.

Furthermore, Reverend Raymond's exordium contained the nucleus of the "myth" that was later to provide the "historical" basis of the cult of the Lost Cause. Such a myth was to claim that Confederate evangelicals had indeed been "prepared for the conflict," and that, therefore--despite the death of the Redeemer Nation--, the Confederate crusade ended in "victory" and in the "vindication" of the "crucified" South.23

Reverend A.M. Randolph had already anticipated such a conclusion as early as June of 1861, when he thanked "God"...that he has turned the hearts of this people to himself in fasting and prayer...--that he has humbled our human pride, and inspired the nation's heart with Christian faith. If...these manifestations be real...--if the result of this national trial has been to turn us devoutly and earnestly
to the living God, then we have already gained a greater victory than any which the history of this struggle can record." The descendants of Confederate southerners would therefore claim—in vindication of the evangelical Confederate Israel—that the partisans of the Lost Cause had in fact attained to what Reverend Alexander Sinclair considered the undeniable source of national greatness—"a national life devoted to the fear of God." A convenient lapse of memory in respect to the Confederate jeremiad—the stern record of evangelical Confederate lapses—therefore permitted subsequent generations of southerners to transform the dream of an evangelical Confederate Israel into a sober record of actual historical accomplishment.24

Confederate defeat therefore led to a transformation of the southern evangelical conception of the "victory" that providence promised to provide the people of God—a transformation that in fact constituted the translation of such "victory" into the realm of the eschatological. Furthermore, the implication of such a translation was that temporal defeat and the ultimate vindication of the southern sacramental nation were not in fact incompatible. The truth was that orthodox Calvinism, and its emphasis upon the suffering and persecution implicit in the earthly pilgrimage of the predestined, permitted southern evangelicals to detect—even in defeat—the demonstration—and not the denial—of the evangelical Confederate covenant.25

In February 1863 Reverend William Rees repeated the
claim of Bishop Atkinson that prosperity and adversity per se were not the principal issues. Importance, however, was attached to the moral and spiritual condition of the persons who had attained to prosperity or who endured adversity. The meaning of the temporal condition of individuals was therefore contained in the presence or absence of a covenant between the individual and God. According to Reverend Rees,

Although evil of all kinds is the consequence of sin, yet all evil that is suffered is not the merit, or punishment of sin. Providence, being the mediatorial administrative government of God, where often the innocent suffer natural evil; yet, that is for his discipline and salvation...; hence, natural evil, such as affliction, adversity and bereavements, accomplish the highest moral good; therefore, there is but one thing for us to make sure, viz.: that God is for us, for we love him; since 'all things work together for good to them that love God.'

The implication of Reverend Rees's definition of providence is that--once the idea of an evangelical Confederate covenant was secure in the minds of southern evangelicals--Grant and Sherman were no more competent to eliminate the memory of such a sacred contract than Nebuchadnezzar had been to obliterate its biblical predecessor in 587 B.C.26

Elder Thomas S. Dunaway--a Baptist clergyman in Virginia--drew the appropriate conclusion in April 1864. Dunaway was determined to correct "an idea which I have heard some advance, when they say that if our cause is just and right it will succeed in any event; and if it fail it is conclusive that our cause is a bad one, and God is displeased with our institutions." Dunaway's sense of diplomacy was
adequate to prevent his attribution of such an idea to any of his brethren in the ministry who had perhaps suggested it in better days. Nevertheless, Dunaway proceeded to revise the laws of providence to make them coincide with the contemporary prospects of Confederate defeat. The Baptist elder claimed that, "An accurate acquaintance with the ways of Providence as manifested in the Scriptures, will disabuse our minds of this error. It is possible that in the sovereign wisdom of God"—a wisdom that was much less lucid and much more numinous and incomprehensible than it had been in 1861—", it may be for his glory to give a temporary triumph to error, and therefore failure to truth for a time." Dunaway assured his listeners, furthermore, that such a "temporary" silence on the part of God did not imply that the evangelical Confederate covenant was no longer operative. In fact, "God may, for wise purposes, often withhold success from his most faithful servants even in his own cause[italics mine]....If success be the proper test of truth, why has the Gospel comparatively had so little success? And why is it that Satan has so triumphed over the hearts and minds of men?"27

Dunaway furthermore approved the position of his peers that worldly success or defeat was secondary to the personal conviction of predestination—a conviction that reduced the burden of temporal circumstances to the status of sheer trivia. Dunaway appealed to such a position in order to console southern evangelicals. "If we humble ourselves
before God--turn from our wicked ways, and then humbly relying on him, diligently use the means which he has appointed, then and then only success...is proof that our cause is a righteous cause." The converse would therefore appear to be also true. Defeat could not erase or diminish the "victory" implicit in submission to the laws of providence and the defense of a righteous cause.\textsuperscript{28}

Reverend J.W. Tucker was perhaps the earliest evangelical southern churchman to draw Dunaway's conclusion. In a sermon delivered May 16, 1862, Tucker attempted to demonstrate that contemporary reverses were an indication of God's mercy. Nevertheless, he also claimed that, "Our victories[italics mine] indicate the presence of God with our armies in this conflict." The implication was that--since the evangelical Confederate covenant was a fact--whatever occurred in the course of the war--stupendous success or complete disaster--was a "demonstration" of the covenant between God and the chosen people of the South.\textsuperscript{29}

The career of Confederate evangelicalism is a splendid illustration of the adaptability of the religious imagination. Nevertheless, the evolution of the evangelical covenant and of Confederate evangelical attitudes toward the nature of providence pursued a pattern not unprecedented in the adaptation of religious men and women to the "reverses" that are characteristic of the human condition. The fact--a fact steeped in irony--is that the response of southern evangelicals to the loss of southern political
independence is remarkable in its parallels to the response of biblical Judaism to the sack of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

The original Judaic covenant was--like its nineteenth-century Confederate successor--tribal and political in nature. Nevertheless, once the idea of a covenant is stamped upon the religious imagination, it is not a simple matter to erase it. Therefore, when the political component of biblical Judaism collapsed, the contract between God and the people of Israel was therefore transformed into a "eschatological" bond--dependent upon moral and ethical, rather than upon political conditions.30

In the same manner, the collapse of the Confederate nation cannot be translated into the defeat or disappearance of the evangelical Confederate covenant. Ex-Confederates continued to insist that southerners were--in a special sense--a chosen people. Furthermore, the "lost" quality of the Lost Cause was in fact a misnomer to such southerners. The war instead constituted a "victory" and a vindication of the South in the only court that mattered to southern evangelicals--the court of Heaven. Therefore, in a paradoxical manner, the response of southern evangelicals to the inquiry, "How did southerners react to defeat?" could have been, "They didn't--because they were not defeated." Furthermore, the insistence upon the "eschatological" nature of the evangelical Confederate covenant permitted southern evangelicals to respond to defeat in a manner similar
to the response of Christ to Pilate's inquiry into the Messiah's supposed claim to the monarchy, "Mine is not a kingdom of this world."

The subsequent career of the southern evangelical churches also serves to indicate the perpetuation of the evangelical Confederate Israel and of its peculiar preoccupations. The moral and spiritual support that the evangelical denominations in the South have provided to Bourbons, antievolutionists, and the adherents of the "New Religious Right"—in dubious succession—demonstrates the determined survival of the Confederate evangelical crusade against the proponents of liberalism in all its reprehensible manifestations. Furthermore, the participation of the southern churches in the campaign to preserve segregation is a demonstration—not merely of the racism that still possessed the southern evangelical mind—but also of the conviction that the South and all its institutions—including Jim Crow—was the product of the interventions of providence and of the blessings of God upon the southern sacramental nation. The cult of the Lost Cause itself—and its celebrations of the "victory" implicit in southern defeat—also served to perpetuate the Confederate covenant of adversity and the southern evangelical identification between suffering and sanctity—that is, at least until the advent in recent years of Oral Roberts, the Reverend Falwell, and the new "gospel of prosperity."31

Bishop Elliott had summed up the Confederate evangelical position in the sermon he delivered in the aftermath of
Gettysburg.

From the beginning of the revolution in which we are yet so sternly engaged, we have boldly assumed the position, that we were fighting under the shield of the Lord of Hosts....This has been our boast and our consolation. It has supported us under all our sacrifices, and has cheered us through all our days of darkness....Not only has it been chanted in the sanctuaries of Christianity, but our civil rulers have recognized it in their papers of State, and our great Captains have proclaimed it from the head of their armies in victory as well as in defeat[italics mine]....All our official documents will go forth in the future with the sacred inscription "DEO VINDICE," and announce to the world our trust and our strength.32

Such was the confidence of southern evangelicals in the permanence of the Confederate Israel that Reverend William C. Butler was already able to declare--in the sunny aftermath of first Manassas—that, should the South in fact suffer defeat,

[God's] hand would one day, in the coming history of nations, be outstretched over the spot, the hallowed, honored spot that we now occupy, and the principles, buried here by the shock of our defeat, would be given a resurrection of honor, glory and immortality, vindi-cated before the eyes of God's Intelligent Universe, in a world that, through opposition, struggle and de-feat[italics mine], had at last reached that perfect form of human government in which the just, constitutional rights of each and all are guaranteed and given to each and all.

Circumstances would indeed demonstrate to Reverend Butler and to his contemporaries—and it was furthermore a lesson that subsequent generations of southern evangelicals would in fact preserve—that--prior to millenium and resurrection --the Confederate Israel was compelled to endure the agony of Gethsemane and of Golgotha.33

Submission to the loss of the Confederate States was
to prove—in a paradoxical manner—the ultimate demonstration of the Confederate Israel's obedience to the laws of providence and was therefore the perfect emblem of the supernatural inspiration and ultimate eschatological vindication of the southern sacramental nation. Reverend Charles Minnegerode comprehended such a paradox and transmitted the new "gospel" of the southern Passion to his parishioners in one of the last available Confederate sermons—delivered upon January 1, 1865. "But if we fall, let us fall with our faces upward, our hearts turned to God...and all is not lost! We have retained our honor, we have done our duty to the last, and lived and died as the servants of God, lived in faith and died in the hope of glory."³⁴
ENDNOTES


2. William Bell White Howe, Cast down, but not forsaken! A sermon delivered...December 15th, 1861...[4160] (Charleston, 1861?), 9 (first quotation), Richard Hooker Wilmer, Future good--The explanation of present verses: a sermon preached...during the Spring of 1864...[4206] (Charlottesville, N.C., 1864), 14 (second, third, fourth quotations).

3. Ibid.


5. I. Randolph Finley, The Lord reigneth. A sermon preached...August 16, 1863...[4154] (Richmond, 1863?), 8.

6. Ibid., 6-7.


8. George Foster Pierce, The word of God a nation's life. A sermon: preached before the Bible Convention of the Confederate States...March 19th, 1862...[4179] (Macon, Ga., 1862), 17 (first quotation), Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Nebuchadnezzar's fault and fall: a sermon, preached...on the 17th of February, 1861...[4182] (Charleston, 1861), 10 (second quotation).


10. Stephen Elliott, God's presence with our army at Manassas! A sermon, preached...on Sunday, July 28th, being the day recommended by the Congress of the Confederate States to be observed as a day of thanksgiving, in commemoration of the victory at Manassas Junction...[4144] (Savannah, 1861), 19-20.

11. Stephen Elliott, Ezra's dilemma[sic]. A sermon preached...on Friday, August 21st, 1863, being the day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States...[4142] (Savannah, 1863), 214.
12. Stephen Elliott, "Samson's riddle." A sermon preached...on Friday, March 27th, 1863. Being the day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States....[4151] (Macon, Ga., 1863), 1617.

13. James Warley Miles, God in history. A discourse delivered before the graduating class of the College of Charleston on Sunday evening, March 29, 1863...[4170] (Charleston, 1863), 29. See also Haroutunian and Smith, Calvin: Commentaries, 37-50.

14. William Meade, Sermon preached...at the opening of the convention of the P.E. Church of Virginia...in the fifty-first year of his ministry....[4168] (Richmond, 1861), 17.


16. Stephen Elliott, "New wine not to be put into old bottles." A sermon preached...on Friday, February 28th, 1862, being the day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, appointed by the President of the Confederate States....[4179] (Savannah, 1862), 5 (first quotation), Thomas Atkinson, "On the causes of our national troubles." A sermon....[4125] (Wilmington, N.C., 1861), 15 (second quotation), Charles Stuart Vedder, "Offer unto God thanksgiving": a sermon delivered...on Sunday, July 28, 1861....[4201] (Charleston, 1861), 3 (third quotation).

17. Elliott, Ezra's dilemma[sic], 1617.


22. H.R. Raymond, A sermon with reference to the death of David Y. Huntington...Preached...on the 8th February, 1863....[4184] (Marion, Ala., 1863), 7.

23. On the "religious myth of the Lost Cause," see Charles Reagan Wilson, Baptized in Blood: The Religion of
the Lost Cause, 1865-1920 (Athens, Ga., 1980), 37-57.

24. Alfred Magill Randolph, Address on the day of fasting and prayer appointed by the President of the Confederate States, June 13, 1861....[4183] (Fredericksburg, Va., 1861), 78 (first quotation); Alexander Sinclair, A thanksgiving sermon, preached...on Thursday, September 18th, 1862....[41881] (Salisbury, N.C., 1862), 14 (second quotation).

25. "The suffering of the righteous" is such a central theme to Calvinism—the dominant perspective upon evangelical doctrine and devotion in the Confederate South—that Joseph Haroutunian and Louise Pettibone Smith are able to claim that, "It is no exaggeration to say that if one overlooks the mystery of the world's animosity to the gospel and to those who adhere to it, one is bound to misunderstand Calvin profoundly. Calvin's perspective was to prove convenient—in a tragic manner—to southern evangelicals, since it permitted them to provide an account of the Confederate collapse in terms of ideas and themes that were already intimately clear and familiar to them. Haroutunian and Smith, Calvin: Commentaries, 37-39, 39 (quotation).

26. Rees, Sermon on divine providence, 6-7.

27. Thomas Sanford Dunaway, A sermon delivered...in connection with a day of national fasting, humiliation and prayer, April, 1864....[41382] (Richmond, 1864), 18.

28. Ibid., 19.

29. Joel W. Tucker, God's providence in war; a sermon, delivered...on Friday, May 16th, 1862....[4198] (Fayetteville, 1862), 8.


33. William C. Butler, *Sermon: preached...on the Sunday after the battle of Manassas...* (Richmond, 1861), 1819.

34. Charles Frederic Ernest Minnegerode, "He that believeth shall not make haste." *A sermon preached on the first of January, 1865...* (Richmond, 1865), 15.
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