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# From Denial to Acceptance: How the Confederacy Came To Terms with the American Civil War

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# From Denial to Acceptance

How the Confederacy Came To Terms with the American Civil War

By Ann Elizabeth Stachowski

May 17, 2013

A thesis submitted to the Department of History of the State University of New York College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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From Denial to Acceptance

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By Ann Elizabeth Stachowski

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## From Denial to Acceptance

### How the Confederacy Came To Terms with the American Civil War

#### **Abstract**

This thesis seeks to answer one of the fundamental questions of history: how did the people, in a given place and time, view their world? This work addresses Confederates, or those Southerners who supported the secession movement and the Confederate States of America, during the American Civil War, 1861-1865. This work seeks to offer a nuanced view into the minds of Confederates over the course of the war by framing their experience with the Five Step Grieving Process. This process, first described by psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, identifies the five major emotions a person experiences while suffering a loss. These emotions are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. This framework allows greater insight into the Confederate culture because it does not force people's lived experiences into a cause, process, effect format. Instead, it allows flexibility in understanding the human condition as many different people faced the loss of a way of life.

The five stages of the Grieving Process provide the structure for this thesis. Research rooted in the diaries, letters, newspapers, and sermons of Confederates allows their lived experience, told in their own words, to illustrate the usefulness of the five-step grieving process as an analytical framework. This approach brings together voices from women, men, soldiers, civilians, government officials and journalists from across the Confederacy. Class lines and geographical boundaries only enhance the efficacy of the framework as the Confederates worked toward accepting the doom of the American Civil War.

## Introduction

The American Civil War carved away huge sections of the Confederacy's male population. One fifth of the white, military-aged men in the South lost their lives during the conflict, a death rate five times higher than the general population. By the end of the war, six hundred and twenty thousand young American men had died, far away from home and often very suddenly. 200,000 of these men hailed from the South. Factors leading to this devastating casualty rate included the scale of the conflict, in which 2.1 million Northerners and 880,000 Southerners fought, the advanced technology of rifles and railroads, and epidemics in hospitals and camps. Death on this massive scale created a bond shared by Confederates since, on average, every household lost at least one loved one to the war.<sup>1</sup>

The extreme frequency of death forced survivors of the American Civil War to alter their views about who was supposed to die, as well as where and how the death was supposed to occur. Before the war started, residents of both North and South expected the very young and very old to die, but the deaths of healthy young men had no place in social understanding of the dying process. Nineteenth century Americans also expected death to take place peacefully, surrounded by family, so that the wisdom of the dying person could be passed on in his or her last words.<sup>2</sup> However, on the battlefields and in the camps, soldiers died quickly. Companions had little or no time to foresee a comrade's death, last words could not always be sent to the family, and the often grotesque way in which men died made sudden deaths much more difficult to bear.<sup>3</sup> This new way of death took its toll on the populace as the American Civil War dragged on.

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<sup>1</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2008: p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. pp. Xi-xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War*. New York: The Free Press, 1987. pp.124-125.

Changing ideas surrounding human mortality accompanied another major challenge to the people of the American South. Besides accepting the deaths of their loved ones, the war also required the people of the South to accept the death of their culture and society. In neither soldiers nor civilians did this realization take place overnight. This process occurred swiftest in soldiers, who lived the reality of the battlefield. Soldiers knew firsthand the South's disadvantage in arms, men, training, and supplies against the Northern forces. Confederate government officials underwent a similar process, though government officials took longer to accept the truth brought by the war. Civilians, often more removed from the carnage and less aware of the differences in resources, took the longest to accept the impending change.

Historian Gerald Linderman discussed this shift in mindset as the death of the ideal of courage. This ideal stated that by behaving courageously and virtuously, God would protect a soldier from injury or death, and lead the soldier's cause to victory. Linderman posited that this idealistic concept of courage drove Northern and Southern men to join the Union and Confederate armies, march into battle, face slaughter at the hands of Union troops, bury their dead, and then do it all over again. According to Linderman's argument, as the war dragged on, soldiers realized that this ideal only led men to their untimely deaths. Through a process of disillusionment, soldiers abandoned the ideal of courage in order to survive the war.<sup>4</sup> While Linderman's thesis offers an easily understandable framework for beginning to comprehend the shift in beliefs about the war, its singular focus on the ideal of courage does not do Civil War soldiers justice. *Embattled Courage*'s focus on the Northern perspective does not allow the author to accurately demonstrate the mindset of the Confederate soldiers over the course of the war. Nor does it address the shift that occurred in Civil War civilians. Linderman's thesis lacks a nuanced understanding of the process by which soldiers lost their faith in a short, bloodless, glorious war and came to the realization that the American Civil War was going to be long, bloody and devastating.

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<sup>4</sup> Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage*. New York: The Free Press, 1987.



*Embattled Courage* also suffers from an unbalanced collection of sources and a bibliography comprised entirely of memoirs. While Linderman argues that all soldiers in the American Civil War, regardless of sectional affiliation, followed the same process of disillusionment, his sources mostly come from Northern soldiers. The costs involved in publishing these memoirs leads to a bias in favor of the upper ranks of the armies, excluding the voices of the everyman. Due to the self-aggrandizing nature of memoirs, the sources also damage Linderman's argument because they portray the authors in the best possible light.<sup>5</sup>

This thesis seeks to address the problems found in *Embattled Courage* by providing an in-depth exploration of the mood of the Confederate people between 1861 and 1865<sup>6</sup>. The sources will include writings of soldiers, civilians and government officials, as well as newspapers and sermons, to offer a comprehensive evaluation of Confederate attitudes over the course of the American Civil War. I argue that the five step grieving process, comprised of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, first described by psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in 1969, provides a significantly useful framework for understanding how Confederate mindsets changed over the course of the war. Dr. Kubler-Ross first described these stages in *On Death and Dying*, in which she studied the processes through which people facing mortal illness understand their situation.

Dr. Kubler-Ross wrote *On Death and Dying* to allow people dying of terminal illness to normalize and understand their experience. David Kessler joined Dr. Kubler-Ross as she reached the end of her life, and the two scholars wrote *On Grief and Grieving*. In this volume, the authors described the five stages of grief, previously reserved for the dying, in the life of family and friends of a dying person. Dr. Kubler-Ross described the grieving process, better understood as the process of receiving catastrophic news, as a major part of the emotional ordeal which terminally ill patients and their

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<sup>5</sup> Linderman, 298-350.

<sup>6</sup> While this paper focuses on white Southerners who supported the Confederacy, thereby becoming "Confederates," for the sake of variation I will use the terms "Confederate," "Confederates," "Southerner," "Southern," and "Southerners" interchangeably for the sake of variety.

families experience while coming to terms with the severity of the illness. This process consists of five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. 5.<sup>7</sup> This process applies to the Confederate experience because the Southern men and women who left behind letters and diaries embodied the Confederacy, and existed in a socioeconomic system which defined everything in their lives. When this system faced destruction, so did everything known to these men and women. Their identities, so connected to this society, also faced annihilation. They faced the American Civil War not only as onlookers grieving an external loss, but as the dying facing the end of the only identity they had ever known.

John Gaddis lauds the ability of the historian to mold time and space to better understand the past.<sup>8</sup> This ability allows this analysis of the evolution of the Confederate mindset through denial to acceptance and all the stages in between. Not every person engages with each stage at the same time, for the same amount of time, or in the same order. Kubler-Ross and Kessler have discussed the ways in which anger can transition into depression, skipping over bargaining altogether, or depression can step backwards into denial, which necessitates flexibility in the interpretation. This does not indicate a weakness in this interpretive framework. Instead, it emphasizes the true applicability of the Kubler-Ross grieving process to the citizens of the Confederacy by allowing the society, made up of humans, to maintain the same emotional flexibility of the people who compose the society. The degree of nuance allowed by the stages of the grieving process allows the model to better illustrate the changes in Confederate perceptions of the American Civil War.

The flexible nature of the grieving process as described by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross acknowledges that the person experiencing grief can experience more than one stage at the same time, for example denial and anger. In order to afford the greatest clarity possible, this thesis is arranged in

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<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, Scribner: New York, 2005, pp. 7-28.; Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, Scribner, New York: 1969.

<sup>8</sup> Gaddis, *Landscape of History*, 17.

the primary order of the stages as described by Kubler-Ross. Each section focuses on one stage as the writings of Confederates reveal it. This format allows insight into the mental worlds of Confederates, and by examining soldiers, government officials, civilians and newspapers a larger comprehension of the way the Confederates viewed the American Civil War emerges.

Dr. Kubler-Ross identified the five stages of grief as they applied to a person losing their society, their whole person, their entire being. Dr. Kessler then worked with Dr. Kubler-Ross to expand this framework from the dying to include those grieving the loss of the dying and dead. Here, I further expand the framework to include people losing their society and social identity, because for the Confederates, their social identity defined them, and without the familiar society in which they knew their identity relative to those around them, the Confederates lost all sense of stability, identity and safety. The five stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance are aptly described by Drs. Kubler-Ross and Kessler, and apply to this study of human emotion. The catastrophic effects of the American Civil War on Confederate and Southern society and identity allows Dr. Kubler-Ross's grieving process to provide a cogent framework for its investigation. The flexible nature of this framework also allows for a nuanced understanding of this process across the Confederacy, because it inherently expects individuals to face the various stages at different times over the course of the war. This aspect of the theory, of course, requires chronological flexibility while discussing each stage, as of all the stages Denial lasted the longest for many Confederates, and individuals reached the different stages at different paces. Some soldiers recognized the death of the Confederacy as early as 1862, while several civilians refused to accept this even to the end of the war. However, this only strengthens the framework as it offers detail and increased nuance in our understanding of how humans face disruptions to their society and social identity.

The writings of Civil War-era Americans offer the clearest window into their consciousness. Therefore, this study will explore how this five-step process came to life in the newspapers, sermons,

journals and letters of Confederate soldiers, government officials, and civilians during the American Civil War.<sup>9</sup> These journals, letters and newspapers come from many sources.<sup>10</sup> Independently published journals and collections of letters comprise the bulk of the sources, as these offer a wide base of evidence geographically and across class and gender barriers.<sup>11</sup>

Any scholar who tackles a project involving the American Civil War must of course face the mountains of literature preceding any such endeavor. The American Civil War has no dearth of historians exploring its causes, consequences, lived realities, military events, society and politics. A selection of the previous research informed this analysis, helping to address several questions. This thesis explores how the Southern defeat affected Confederates, and therefore must address why the Confederacy lost the war. The lived experience of soldiers and civilians provides the heart for my theoretical framework, so a background in men and women in the South, as well as Confederate soldiers' motivations and reality, grounded this research. This examination of the Confederacy investigates the inner world of white female and male Confederates as they faced losing a war for their freedom as they saw it. An investigation of reasons for this loss reveals many causes, each playing a role in the eventual victory of the United States. The background literature reveals many discussions on Confederate defeat. Some of these discussions argue for an inevitable Confederate loss, while many others allow the contingency of history to feature in their analyses.

Many authors discuss a contingent view of the American Civil War, in which certain factors weighed more heavily against the Confederacy than others. Edward Ayers discusses life in Franklin

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<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation. 16 December, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> University collections of letters, diaries, and sermons offer in-depth evidence from specific areas of the Confederacy on easily-accessible websites. These collections include the Documenting the American South project, housed by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Duke Special Collections website, and the Valley of the Shadow Project, supported by the University of Virginia.

<sup>11</sup> The literacy rate across the Confederacy varied based upon class, therefore this study does not offer an exhaustive picture of the lower class of yeoman farmers. However, research discussed below has indicated that the lower classes in the South did not ardently support the Confederacy. Therefore, as this paper focuses on the ardent supporters of the Confederacy, the omission of the lower, illiterate class would have occurred even if access to a detailed written record of their lived experience existed.

County, Pennsylvania and Augusta County, Georgia, through the early years of the American Civil War. Rooted in the documents compiled by the Valley of the Shadow Project, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies* offers a view of the Civil War in which the escalating conflict resulted from interpersonal relationships and conflicts. Ayers discusses the political and social maneuverings which led to war, but which could have taken many different routes and had many different endings, and helps set the stage for the coming conflict and explains the role of interpersonal interaction and division in the Southern decision to secede.<sup>12</sup> Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr. also address the American Civil war by exploring the impact of a changing mentality in *Why the South Lost the Civil War*. These authors argue that the Confederates simply did not will their cause to victory. While the authors explore areas in which this will to win failed, the ultimate question of why the will to win vanished remains unanswered.<sup>13</sup>

Some answers regarding the will to win and the defeat of the Confederacy reveal themselves in *Bitterly Divided: The South's Inner Civil War*. David Williams argues that an inherent weakness in the Confederate war effort was rooted in the contentious nature of the Confederacy itself. His evidence supports the conclusion that many people living in the South did not support the Confederate war effort, often to the point of actively opposing it. This inner civil war, as Williams terms it, led the Confederacy to defeat because only a small minority of the South's populace supported the Confederate war effort.<sup>14</sup> Katherine Guiffre, in "First in Flight: Desertion as Politics in the North Carolina Confederate Army," offers a specific example of this inner strife, as she argues that North Carolina soldiers used desertion as a method of political expression. According to Guiffre, soldiers who could

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<sup>12</sup> Edward Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, W. W. Norton & Co., New York: 2003, pp. 416-418.

<sup>13</sup> Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, University of Georgia Press, Athens: 1986, pp. 428-437.

<sup>14</sup> David Williams, *Bitterly Divided: The South's Inner Civil War*, The New Press, New York: 2008, pp. 2-8.

not gain upward mobility through military service, and men who lived in areas with a great disparity in slaveholdings had a greater probability of deserting than any other men in the North Carolinian army.<sup>15</sup>

Historian James McPherson joins scholars arguing for the importance of historical contingency in the American Civil War. McPherson discusses various aspects of the Confederacy in *Drawn with the Sword*, a series of essays. The essays “The War of Southern Aggression,” “Why Did the Confederacy Lose?,” and “How the Confederacy Almost Won” discuss the military history of the Confederacy from the secession crisis through the end of the war, and implicitly acknowledge the uncertain nature of Confederate defeat. McPherson describes how the South pushed itself into civil war by leaving no options for the North but complete political concession or open warfare. McPherson discusses the reasons for Confederate defeat and redirects scholars to consider why the Confederacy held on as long as it did. As for why the Confederacy lost the military conflict, McPherson pinpoints the flexibility of history. This theory offers value by providing historians with infinite fodder for research as well as imbuing the historical actors with the agency and the events with the import that they deserve.<sup>16</sup> Gary Ecelbarger provides a highly contingent explanation of the Confederate defeat, as *The Day Dixie Died: The Battle of Atlanta*, explores the effect of one military event on the tide of the American Civil War. Ecelbarger argues that by allowing Lincoln's re-election in 1864, the Union victory at Atlanta provided the United States with the political momentum needed to strangle the Confederacy into submission.<sup>17</sup>

A smaller group of historians argue that the American Civil War had to end in Northern victory. David Herbert Donald represents these scholars in this study. In *Why the North Won the Civil War*, Donald compiled essays to support this view of the Civil War from military, social, economic and political perspectives. The collection of historical heavyweights indicated that the Confederacy only

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<sup>15</sup> Katherine Guiffre, “First in Flight: Desertion as Politics in the North Carolina Confederate Army,” *Social Science History*, 21:2 (Summer, 1997), pp.250-251, 260.

<sup>16</sup> McClellan, *Drawn With the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War*, Oxford University Press, New York:1996, pp. 37-54, 113-151.

<sup>17</sup> Gary Ecelbarger, *The Day Dixie Died: The Battle of Atlanta*, Thomas Dunne Books, New York:2010, pp. 11, 232.

had the option of defeat once the American Civil War began because of Northern superiority in industry, economics, population and diplomacy.<sup>18</sup>

A discussion of morale in the Confederacy must naturally offer insight into the inner world of Confederate women. This insight fills many works by many different authors, and informs much of this research. Elizabeth Fox Genovese explores the microcosmic world of the antebellum plantation in her book, *In the Plantation Household*. This tome illustrates the world of women, free and bonded, mistress and slave, on the plantation. By offering insight into the world of wealthy Southern women before the birth of the Confederacy, Genovese places these women in a complex, dynamic world which dictated to Southern women their place in society, and, by extension, their identity.<sup>19</sup> Drew Faust explores the role of Confederate women in *Mothers of Invention*, discussing the ways in which society shaped women's roles as old social structures broke down. Faust dives into documents created by Confederate women as they engaged in what Faust describes as “public discourse about gender and about women's place in the new southern nation.”<sup>20</sup> Faust argues that this discourse, especially in the political sphere, resulted in women withdrawing their support for the Confederate war effort.<sup>21</sup>

Soldiers also have inspired detailed research into their motivations and social reality. Mills Lane edited a collection of letters from Georgia's soldiers. In the introduction to “*Dear Mother: Don't Grieve About Me. If I Get Killed, I'll Only Be Dead*” *Letters From Georgia Soldiers in the Civil War*, Lane illustrates the extent to which Confederate soldiers fought with their neighbors, people whom they had known their entire lives. This supports McPherson's thesis in *For Cause and Comrades* that soldiers continued fighting because of the bonds between the men in a unit, as the men all fought to protect their

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<sup>18</sup> David Herbert Donald, *Why the North Won the Civil War*, Touchstone, New York: 1960, pp. 7-11.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Fox Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill: 1988, pp.29,-30.

<sup>20</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill: 1996, p. xiii.

<sup>21</sup> This monograph informs a large portion of my research due to its focus on the change in women's perceptions of the war and their place regarding the war, and illustrates the effect that losing the support of Confederate women had on the course of the war. That is, an exceedingly detrimental one.

homes from invasion. Lane's introduction offers a brief overview of the course of events in soldiers' military lives, from the romanticized process of enlistment to the boredom of camp life, the experience of battle to the aftermath of destruction.<sup>22</sup> James McPherson's longer analysis of the motivations keeping soldiers of the American Civil War in the armies mirrors Lane's conclusions. McPherson argues that men stayed in the war for the men they fought with, either to exact revenge or because of peer pressure from family and neighbors. The existing bonds, and the social pressure from the community of soldiers' families, served to keep soldiers in the war even as Confederate armies failed to win battles.<sup>23</sup> Insight into religion as a binding force also helps explain Confederate soldiers' motivation. Samuel J. Watson examined the role of religion in Confederate soldiers' world in, "Religion and Combat Motivation in the Confederate Armies," and concludes that the multiple needs served by Southern evangelical religion, including glory, honor and solace, fit perfectly with the lived reality of Confederate soldiers. Watson also provides insight into the religious forces supporting civilian members of the Confederacy as they learned to live without their men.<sup>24</sup> Jason Phillips focuses on the role of rumors in the longevity of the Confederate war effort in "The Grapevine Telegraph: Rumors and Confederate Persistence." The author argues that rumors offer valuable insight into the mentality of Confederate soldiers, and can help to explain the longevity of the Confederate war effort by maintaining an atmosphere of nationalism late into the war. The author argues that this longevity is due to the persistence of positive rumors, helping Confederate soldiers maintain a positive outlook on the Confederacy's military odds.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Mills Lane, *Dear Mother: Don't Grieve About Me. If I Get Killed, I'll Only Be Dead* Letters From Georgia Soldiers in the Civil War, The Beehive Press, Savannah: 1990, pp. xi-xxix.

<sup>23</sup> James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, Oxford University Press, New York:1997, pp. 163-178.

<sup>24</sup>Samuel J. Watson, "Religion and Combat Motivation in the Confederate Armies," *The Journal of Military History*, 58:1 (Jan, 1994), pp. 29-31,55.

<sup>25</sup>Jason Phillips, "The Grapevine Telegraph: Rumors and Confederate Persistence," *The Journal of Southern History*, 72:4 (Nov., 2006), pp.754-756.



Many factors contributed to the mentality of Confederates in this period of rapid change. The broad literature on this topic offers arguments regarding the aspects of Southern defeat, weighing one against the other or offering an in-depth analysis of one of many factors. Many of the contributing influences on Confederate mentality reach back to the pre-Revolutionary atmosphere in the South, and scholars have traced these influences forward through time. Each of the following authors contributes a piece of the puzzle, helping to illustrate the inner workings of Confederates by examining the deep roots of the regional culture. T. H. Breen and James McPherson offer detailed insight into one of these pre-Revolutionary influences. In his monograph, *Tobacco Culture*, Breen examines the discourse of power and trade between planters in the Southern colonies and the merchants in England, and discusses how these discourses led the planter class to support revolution. The planters, who rooted their culture in the honor-based idiom of the Cavaliers from whom they descended, could not bear a threat to their independence or their rank in society, and therefore moved to cut ties with Britain.<sup>26</sup> These themes reverberate within McPherson's essay "Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism," in which he argues that the Southern belief in their uniqueness arose in the early years of the settlement of the Southern colonies. The author uses religious, political and personal sources to bolster this argument, and uses this argument to explain the reasons that the Confederates believed that God supported their cause over that of the Union and that they could win the war. This essay uncovers the deep roots of the Confederate mentality, and ties in with Breen's discussion of the threat to economic superiority which would lead the planter class to foment rebellion.<sup>27</sup> Jason Phillips, in *Diehard Rebels*, discusses the reasons for the longevity of the Confederate war effort, placing the onus entirely on Confederate soldiers' beliefs in Southern invincibility and exceptionalism. He cites several reasons for this worldview, including the religious culture in which the entire South was steeped, experiences in

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<sup>26</sup> T. H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture*

<sup>27</sup> McPherson, *Drawn With the Sword*, pp. 3-23.

combat, the camaraderie described by McPherson and Lane, and the rumors fostered by unreliable communication networks' incorrect reports, and the state of home-front morale. Phillips argues that this culture of invincibility lasted throughout the war, and set in motion the creation of the Cult of the Lost Cause.<sup>28</sup>

Several authors help illustrate the historiography surrounding the great changes wrought by the American Civil War. *This Republic of Suffering*, written by Drew Gilpin Faust, provides insight into the ways of death in the United States, and discusses the impact of the new mode of death brought about by the American Civil War. This new mode of dying violated cultural norms because young men died suddenly, violently, and far away from home. Faust offers an insightful exploration of how the families of men killed in the war adapted to this new idiom of death.<sup>29</sup> Armistead Robinson, in "In the Shadow of Old John Brown: Insurrection Anxiety and Confederate Mobilization, 1861-1863," discusses the impact of John Brown's failed uprising on the Southern planter class, the same class which fomented rebellion months later. The author argues that John Brown's raid brought to the forefront planters' fears of a slave rebellion, and yeoman Southerner's fears of racial parity in the lowest levels of society. This article fits with the larger scholarship on Southern fears regarding slave uprisings, especially after the successful uprising in Haiti, because this uprising posed a threat to Southern planters' identities.<sup>30</sup> James Roark discusses the impact of the removal of slavery as a legal structure of power on the master class. In *Masters Without Slaves*, Roark illustrates the investment in the peculiar institution of all inhabitants of the South, noting the heavy investment in slavery by both the planters and yeoman farmers in the South. He defines the end of legalized slavery as a loss of identity and unity, as loss of class identity and clear guidelines for behavior. This monograph allows

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<sup>28</sup> Jason Phillips, *Diehard Rebels: The Confederate Culture of Invincibility*, The University of Georgia Press, Athens:2007, pp.2-8, 9, 188-189.

<sup>29</sup> Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, pp. 8-12.

<sup>30</sup> Armistead Robinson, "In the Shadow of Old John Brown: Insurrection Anxiety and Confederate Mobilization, 1861-1863," *The Journal of Negro History*, 65:4 (Autumn, 1980), pp. 279-280.

one to better understand why the Confederates fought so bitterly to maintain the Confederacy, showing that the planters had a deep awareness of the danger their identity and place in society faced, if slavery was threatened or eliminated.<sup>31</sup>

Many forces shaped the rhetoric defining the Confederacy, and the rhetoric produced in the Confederacy not only sheds light on the forces organizing the Confederacy and the ways in which Confederates framed their reality to help them survive the war. Many authors write on the rhetoric of the Confederacy, and depict the many facets and functions of rhetoric as a nation-building, role defining force in the Confederacy. Robert E. Bonner discusses the evolution of Confederate attachment to the Confederate battle flag in “Flag Culture and the Consolidation of Confederate Nationalism.” The author argues that the flag created a rallying point, which helped Confederates focus their martial energy as the Stars and Stripes helped United States forces centralize their focus. By discussing the importance of visual symbols to the Confederate people, soldiers and civilians, and linking the power of Confederate adoration of their flag to the general tendency of Americans to rally around the flag as a martial system throughout America's history, Bonner helps inform the factors tying Confederates together across state lines and inspiring Confederates to maintain their martial fervor throughout the war.<sup>32</sup> Drew Faust, in *Confederate Nationalism*, discusses the roles of religion, politics, slavery and moral discourses in the creation of the Confederate identity, and convincingly argues that the process by which Confederates built their national identity exposes the underlying assumptions on which Confederates based their society. This collection of essays provides great insight into these underlying assumptions, and offers this investigation a comprehensive view of the forces discussed by Elizabeth Fox Genovese, T.H. Breen, and James McPherson. Kimberly Harrison uses the diary of Confederate woman Priscilla Bond as a case study in “Rhetorical Rehearsals: The Construction of Ethos in

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<sup>31</sup> James Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, W. W. Norton & Co., New York: 1977, pp. 208-209.

<sup>32</sup> Robert E. Bonner, “Flag Culture and the Consolidation of Confederate Nationalism,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 68:2 (May, 2002), pp. 293-297.

Confederate Women's Civil War Diaries.” The author argues that Confederate women used their personal writings to help them construct the language and behavior necessary to the context of war, and that these women's diaries offer insight into this transformation. This focus on the building of nationalism by fixating on the internal thought processes in a self-conscious manner mirrors Drew Faust's discussion of the public mechanism by which the Confederate nation as a whole constructed its national identity. By drawing this focus to women, Harrison allows insight into the ways in which women, the backbone of the Confederacy, constructed their internal world.<sup>33</sup>

This brief overview of the historiography demonstrates the range of the existing scholarship on Confederate morale and defeat in American Civil War. These scholars provide insight into the aspects on which the authors focus, often in very great depth. Such an intent focus on one aspect of the American Civil War means that, unfortunately, very few authors attempt to put the pieces together or even casually link them. By piecing these aspects together and offering a broader framework, this study attempts to provide a more comprehensive investigation of the Confederate mentality over the course of the American Civil War.

In the introduction to *Masters Without Slaves*, James Roark offers a disclaimer which fits this work quite well: “I do not intend that readers succumb to the planters' own poignant and self-defending rhetoric. This is not an apology or a requiem for the planter class. Their civilization was flawed, their morality blighted...” As Roark presents *Masters Without Slaves*, so I present this research: as history through Confederate eyes, though assuredly not on Confederate terms.<sup>34</sup>

The historiography supporting this thesis offers a great deal of evidence for strong beliefs of Southern exceptionalism, and indicates why Confederates clung so desperately to a dying nation and national identity. With their identities so tied to the culture surrounding the South's peculiar institution,

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<sup>33</sup> Kimberly Harrison uses the diary of Confederate woman Priscilla Bond as a case study in “Rhetorical Rehearsals: The Construction of Ethos in Confederate Women's Civil War Diaries,” *Rhetoric Review*, 22:3 (2003), pp. 243, 258-260.

<sup>34</sup> Roark, *Masters without Slaves*, xi. Quote and paraphrase.

white Southerners could not imagine a world without the clear social structures provided by a slave economy. In defense of their social identities, Confederates had no choice but to go to war. The beliefs in Southern exceptionalism and white supremacy eventually gave way to the realities of life in the dying Confederacy, and the identities so tied up in this national idea.

This thesis explores the nature of Confederates' emotional and cognitive reactions to the long, slow death of the Confederacy. In keeping with Dr. Kubler-Ross's work, I have structured the thesis into five chapters. Each chapter addresses one of Dr. Kubler-Ross's steps of grief, and demonstrates the ways in which Confederates lived this process. The first chapter, Denial, discusses the strategies used by Confederates to wholeheartedly believe that the Confederacy not only could but would win the American Civil War, as well as the raw emotions supporting the mental gymnastics necessary to maintain a state of denial. Anger, the second chapter, explores the myriad targets of Confederate anger, as well as how denial transformed into fierce, stubborn anger towards these many targets. Bargaining follows Anger, and discusses the many reasons Confederates needed to strike bargains with God, as well as the ways in which individuals and the nation attempted to negotiate their victory with the Almighty. The fourth chapter in this thesis discusses the depression of emotion and optimism in the Confederacy. The last chapter illustrates the different ways in which Confederates came to accept the death of the Confederacy and the Confederate war effort. This structure allows a detailed analysis of the factors driving each stage, as well as the expressions of the different stages of the grieving process in the Confederacy. By considering each stage as a separate part of a series, an overarching pattern emerges in the Confederacy as the supporters of the new nation processed the events of the American Civil War.

## Part I: Denial

Dr. Kubler Ross describes denial among the dying as a desperate quest to contradict the terminal diagnosis, and among the grieving as an inability to accept the loss of the loved one. Transposing this description over the American Civil War, the Confederates faced denial not only of their own probable deaths, in the case of soldiers, but the end of their society and their social identities. Denial lasted the longest among civilians, though it persisted among the soldiers for quite some time as well. Many Confederates, after ostensibly transitioning to another stage in the grieving process, fell back into denial at the smallest whisper of potentially good news. This fits with Dr. Kubler-Ross's description, as Confederates as well as the dying spent an exorbitant amount of time and effort – and often money – to avoid facing the termination of their current life.<sup>35</sup>

Confederate records from the beginning of the American Civil War, from private diaries to newspapers, have a distinct tone. The authors sound upbeat, excited, optimistic, even arrogant. Confederate writers foresaw a quick victory and a bashful apology from the Union for being so dishonorable as to threaten the Southern states' rights. The writers determinedly avoid contemplation of a bloody, long, dreadful war, and mentions of the possibility of Southern defeat never appear, except as straw men. This denial continued, for many Confederates, well through the end of the war. For some, as Elizabeth Kubler-Ross found, denial would fade into another emotion, only to reappear later in the course of the war due to some bit of good news. Because of this phenomenon, this section will discuss events ranging in time from the capture of Fort Sumter by Confederates in 1861 to Lee's surrender in 1865.

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<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, p. 51; Elizabeth Kubler-Ross & David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, pp. 8-11.

David Herbert Donald argues that the Confederate cause had no alternative but defeat,<sup>36</sup> but most Confederates felt very differently at the beginning of the war. Confederates expected that European nations would intervene on behalf of the Confederacy and held very optimistic opinions of the Confederacy's military ability. A general belief in the South held that the war would be nearly bloodless and would end quickly. This stage of denial would characterize the Confederate worldview throughout the first months of the war.

Denial of the impending doom of the Southern plantation lifestyle makes sense when one considers Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's argument that the identities of the men and women supporting the Confederacy were entirely tied up within the slavery and plantation systems. The destruction of slavery and the society surrounding the slave system directly threatened the social structure in Southerners rooted their identities.<sup>37</sup> The American Civil War, in the eyes of Confederates, threatened to destroy their way of life and, consequently, their identities. This fear of a loss of self fed the denial of the Confederates as war started, and held on longest among the men and women at home who did not witness the violent destruction of men as soldiers on the front lines did. As they clung to a hope that their way of life, and their own identities and self-definitions would remain intact, the Confederates constructed a web of denial with which they hid themselves away from the political, economic, and military realities of the American Civil War.

In 1860, when states actively began to secede from the United States, Confederate spirits were high. John Cochran, a Virginian, followed the secession conventions closely and wrote home to his mother after learning of South Carolina's secession. He believed that the actions of the United States government constituted a threat to the honor of the slave states and exulted upon South Carolina's

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<sup>36</sup> David Herbert Donald, *Why the North Won the Civil War: Six Authoritative Views on the Economic, Military, Diplomatic, Social, and Political Reasons Behind the Confederacy's Defeat*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966. pp. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*, University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1988, pp. 11,

secession: “South Carolina has gloriously vindicated her honor.”<sup>38</sup> In his next letter home, Cochran discussed the impending Federal attempt to retake Fort Sumter, and Cochran appealed to God “that the Carolinians may be able to sink [the Star of the West] with all on board. And wish most fervently that Scott was on board to share their fate. He seems to have forgotten that he was (not is) a Virginian.”<sup>39</sup> This excommunication of General Scott indicates the deep divide already present in Cochran's mind between the Union and Confederate nations, as well as a belief in Southern exceptionalism. With this, Cochran established the core belief fueling rebel denial: the belief that God would vindicate the South and lead to Union defeat.

On February 14, 1861, Cochran predicted war with the federal government within two months, and declared that “I will be free and will maintain my rights even though I have to fight 'looking a halter gallantly in the face.' I am a man who knows my rights and knowing dare maintain.” Cochran went even further, comparing himself to Patrick Henry and stating that “One of those rights is secession, but if the convention refuses to give us that there is another which I will maintain even at the foot of the gallows and that is rebellion.”<sup>40</sup> By tying the Confederate secessionists to the legacy of the American Revolution, Cochran fell in step with a common belief that the South embodied the legacy of the American Revolution and sought to protect it from corruption by the industrial North. This belief separated Cochran from reality because, by linking the Confederate cause to the Patriot cause of 1776, Cochran illustrated the belief that the South could and would win independence as the Americans had won independence from Britain.

Cochran, a month later, predicted “a general exodus of the owners of slaves with their slaves, and with the money for their lands in their pockets” if Virginia did not secede from the United States. With this exodus, Cochran predicted that “Then will come dishonor and repudiation. Then will this fair

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<sup>38</sup> John Cochran to his Mother, 12/21/60, *Valley of the Shadow Project*.

<sup>39</sup> John Cochran to his Mother, 1/12/8161, *Valley of the Shadow Project*.

<sup>40</sup> John Cochran to his mother, 2/14/1861, *Valley of the Shadow Project*.



land be filled with the presence of hoards of yankees [sic] and other such like vermin.”<sup>41</sup> This language references the belief that Confederates were God's chosen people, analogous to the Israelites fleeing from the oppression of Egypt. Cochran's diction, describing Yankees as hordes and vermin and Confederates as God's chosen people, appears in letters and diaries from many men and women across the Confederacy and throughout the war. By describing those fighting to maintain the Union as vermin, Cochran is able to delegitimize their goals while elevating his. This stereotype also allows Cochran, and the other Confederates who used similar diction, to dehumanize the Union troops and quickly convey a feeling of filth and disease associated with the federal efforts.

Cochran's high spirits demonstrate the rabidity with which Confederates denounced those from the slave states who failed to join the movement for secession, and denied the legitimacy of those who chose to remain loyal to the United States. By discussing joining a rebellion within the state of Virginia, Cochran illustrates the deep schisms between pro-secession and pro-union forces, even at the local and state levels. When he predicted that such a rebellion would succeed, Cochran indicated not only the fervor of his belief but the nature of the beliefs of the people around him. That enough people would join a rebellion to split Virginia in two to prompt Cochran to write: “I again reiterate my prediction that the eastern part of the state will rise in revolt against the western part and will yet achieve its independence even though the rivers run in blood.” suggests a strong sentiment in favor of secession in Virginia.<sup>42</sup> It also indicates Cochran's belief that not only was a bloody revolution necessary to achieve Confederate goals, but such a rebellion would succeed.

A. G. Guskins reveled in South Carolina's secession, writing to his cousin in December of 1860 that “every person in the State shouts glory to God & I say, Amen.” Guskin then portrayed the unity of the Confederacy when he wrote that “South Carolina would be glad if all the Slave States would secede

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<sup>41</sup> John Cochran to his mother, 3/3/1861, *Valley of the Shadow Project*.

<sup>42</sup> John Cochran to his mother, 3/19/61, *Valley of the Shadow Project*.

as our interest is the same. But if they won't we are prepared to take care of ourselves.” These two sentences embody both the optimistic expectation that each state could defend itself from the United States Army should other states fail to come to their aid, as well as the belief that the similar interest binding the South together – slavery – would be enough to urge all states home to that peculiar institution to band together and overcome a perceived encroachment upon slaveholders' rights to hold humans in bondage.<sup>43</sup> Guskin's belief that South Carolina could effectively defend herself against the might of the United States Army is characteristic of the cocky, brazen attitude found in the letters of many young Confederate soldiers early in the war.

In early 1861, Southern men enlisting in the army sent cheerful letters filled with humor home. A general belief in the ultimate triumph of the Confederacy wove its way through letters to family and friends, and soldiers portrayed camp life and war-making as enjoyable – often as more enjoyable than life at home. Soldiers also expected the war to last less than a year. Some, in fact, expected one decisive battle to settle the matter. The tendency toward optimism bordering on hubris appears throughout the Confederate armies, across borders of class, rank, and state.

John Cochran wrote home in mid-April 1861 to report being part of a on-hundred-gun salute in honor of the capture of Fort Sumter. A month later, Cochran was stationed on the Virginia side of the Potomac River. Conveying his arrogant enthusiasm, Cochran wrote to his mother that “I wish that we were on the other side and in full march against Washington,” and further told his mother that “we were in the highest state of exultation at the idea of a fight at last.” In mistaken anticipation of a short, glorious war, Cochran also brazenly pledged that “so long as my arm or my life is necessary it is at the service of my country.”<sup>44</sup> This proud pronouncement echoes Guskin in his enthusiastic support of the

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<sup>43</sup> A. G. Guskins to his Cousin, 12/30/60, *Valley of the Shadow Project*.

<sup>44</sup> John Cochran to his Mother, 4/14/61 and 5/24/1861, *Valley of the Shadow Project*.

war effort, and indicates belief in a short war. Writing home in high spirits was certainly easy in the warm spring weather, as the letters and diaries from April and May demonstrate.

George, a soldier from Georgia who unfortunately lacks a surname, wrote to his sister in early 1861, informing her that if he was “destined to become food for [gun] powder,” he would “strive to furnish very tough food.”<sup>45</sup> Another soldier wrote to a friend about a training session in which he was knocked over by the blast from his musket, joking “‘Oh God,’ I thought, ‘farewell Brother Perkins, sure enough.’”<sup>46</sup> Similar phrases and a lighthearted tone filled letters written from many training camps, betraying a romantic love of war and a dislike of any non-martial activities. Many soldiers in the Confederacy abandoned their university studies to join the Confederate military, and members of these college companies often wrote very enthusiastic letters and diaries as the Confederacy and the United States geared up for war.

In May of 1862, Andrew Brooks wrote to his father to inform him that the company of men from Washington College “will be filled out, in a day or two.”<sup>47</sup> William Miller's mother received a letter informing her that her son did not “mind the fighting part of the business, but I hate the menial work.”<sup>48</sup> Lavender Ray told his sister that “everybody talks, thinks and dreams of war,”<sup>49</sup> and John Cochran wrote home that his unit would “be mustered into service this evening for the war. It has all along been my wish to join for the war, and I was glad that the company determined to serve during the entire war.”<sup>50</sup> Ray, writing during warm weather, expected a short war with little bloodshed or

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<sup>45</sup> Mills Lane, Ed. p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Mills Lane, Ed. pp. 3-4.

<sup>47</sup> Andrew Brooks to James Brooks, 5/28/1861. Valley of the Shadow Project.

<sup>48</sup> Mills Lane, ed. p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Mills Lane, ed., p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> John Cochran to his Mother, 6/17/186?, Valley of the Shadow Project.

hardship, hence his enthusiastic commitment for the entire war.<sup>51</sup> Men, however, expected the war to end within a year, as evidenced by their desire to enlist for six months to one year.<sup>52</sup>

William R. Dyer, a member of Nathan Bedford Forrest's escort, maintained a diary from 1863 through the end of the war. This diary contains brief daily entries, providing commentary on the weather, camp life, and military events. These entries occasionally contain information about Dyer's personal life and his thoughts regarding the progress of the war. Dyer's terse entries do offer insight into his mindset by his comments regarding the course of the war, the mood and activities of the men, and the rates of desertion.<sup>53</sup> In 1863, during the Battle of Vicksburg, Dyer wrote regularly regarding the state of the battle. Between May 26th, 1863 and June 25th, 1863, Dyer repeatedly wrote of the "flattering" or "favorable" news from Vicksburg. After the first of June, Dyer mentioned Vicksburg only once more, and only in passing after Union troops had captured the city.<sup>54</sup> Dyer's failure to mention negative reports of the battle does not represent a failure to obtain news. Dyer kept abreast of the army news, as Forrest's troops in this time often found themselves near telegraph lines. This failure represents the ultimate example of denial of the fate of the Confederacy. By refusing to record the failures of the Confederate forces, Dyer effectively erased those events from his story of the war.

Dyer also recorded other instances of denial, not related to battlefield events. He recorded on August 8th that "favorable" news had come from France. This entry reveals Dyer's belief that Europe

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<sup>51</sup> Mills Lane, ed. p. 19.

<sup>52</sup> John B. Jones, p. 31.

<sup>53</sup> Wayne Bradshaw, *The Civil War Diary of William R. Dyer, A Member of Forrest's Escort*, <booksurge.com>, 2009. This diary is self-published and available on Amazon. It reads much like Martha Ballard's diary, being brief daily accounts of weather and daily activities. Major dates such as the Battle of Vicksburg, the Gould affair, and the assault on Fort Pillow line up with the established dates of those events, and the diary appears to be authentic. William R. Dyer was listed in the roster of Forrest's escort at its inception in October of 1862, at its surrender in 1865, and in the complete roster of escort and staff. These rosters are found in: Michael R. Bradley, *Nathan Bedford Forrest's Escort and Staff*, Pelican Publishing Company (Gretna, LA, 2006). Bradley used records from the papers of George L. Cowen, which are housed in the Carnation Plantation Archives. This led me to reservedly accept the diary as evidence, though it does not remove reservations regarding the end date of the diary. Though Dyer is listed as among the men present at Forrest's surrender, the diary ends on August 11, 1864 without explanation. Perhaps by finding the current keepers of the diary, one could discover the reason for the abrupt end to the diary despite its author's survival.

<sup>54</sup> Wayne Bradshaw, *The Civil War Diary of William R. Dyer*, pp. 10-11, 13, 17.

would openly support the Confederacy. Unfortunately for Dyer, France would not declare open support of the Confederacy without England's declaration of the same. This could not have dissuaded Dyer from expecting help, however, as he fell into step with his comrades in their expectations of European aid.<sup>55</sup>

The soldiers-in-training displayed a great overconfidence in the Confederate ability to win the war, expanding the belief in Southern exceptionalism. Confederate enlistees believed that, despite overwhelming odds against them, the Southern armies could quickly beat the North – even without European aid. John Elliott, a Georgia soldier-in-training, best displayed this optimism when he asked his mother, “What will the Europeans think when they find out that one of the greatest revolutions that has ever taken place was begun and ended without bloodshed?”<sup>56</sup> Further illustrating the absolute optimism of Southern soldiers, Tom Downton wrote to his sister that “I should not like any fighting to be done unless I had some hand in it,” and assured her that “the North can never conquer the South whilst there lives a man to fight.”<sup>57</sup> This sentiment brings to mind not only to the Confederate belief that the South inherited the legacy of the American Revolution, but also the religious belief of Confederates that God watched over them as He watched over the Israelites fleeing Egypt. It also indicates a complete refusal to assess the situation before the war realistically, giving the Confederate faith in themselves more weight than the material factors such as population and weaponry.

As well as overestimating the Confederate position, Southern soldiers drastically underestimated Union forces. Confederate soldiers wrote of the cowardice of Union troops, their stupidity and their lack of dedication to their cause. John Fort wrote to his mother that the enemy “outnumbers us and are fortified in their positions. But I have no idea that they will stand in their

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<sup>55</sup> Bradshaw, pp. 17.

<sup>56</sup> Mills Lane, Ed. p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Mills Lane, Ed. p. 7.

positions but will retreat, for we are certainly able to conquer them. Of this I feel perfectly confident.”<sup>58</sup>

Indicating that he did not fear Union troops, Benjamin Cochran, John Cochran's brother, wrote to his mother that Union troops had “showered their balls” among a group of Confederate soldiers attempting to mine a dam.<sup>59</sup> This description suggests the gentle nature of Union fire, as well as the harmless effects of their military efforts. A description such as this meant to discredit the United States soldiers and, by extension, their military efforts.

William S. H. Baylor wrote to his wife in April of 1862 describing the cowardice of the Union troops: “The enemy are now in the valley at Harrisonburg their advance guard – but I do not think they will move very rapidly upon Staunton for fear of being flanked by us.” Baylor then discussed the condition of the people of Staunton, describing the panic there as “ludicrous and amusing,” singling out for mockery the panic of officers, quartermasters and commissioners. Baylor personifies the Confederate opinion of Yankee soldiers in his scorn both of the Union troops and the fearful men inside Staunton.<sup>60</sup> Moffet Brooks agreed with the general consensus that the United States troops feared the Confederate army. He wrote, “I think they are afraid of Jackson, I wish he could get a sufficient force to drive them back for it will never do for them to get possession of this rich and beautiful valley.”<sup>61</sup> Brooks betrays his denial of reality by indicating that Union troops would turn tail and run from Jackson rather than stand and fight to maintain Union gains.

Spencer Glasgow Welch, a surgeon in the Confederate army commanded by General Joseph R. Anderson, wrote letters to his wife during his period of service in the military. His early letters in 1862 describe the enthusiasm he perceived among the army as a whole. He described the energy of the soldiers around him, as “Whenever the men would come to mud holes and fords of rivers they would

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<sup>58</sup> Mills Lane, p. 22-23.

<sup>59</sup> Benjamin Cochran to his Mother, 6/12/1861, Valley of the Shadow Project.

<sup>60</sup> William S. H. Baylor to Mary Baylor, 4/22/1862, Valley of the Shadow Project.

<sup>61</sup> Moffet Brooks to his Aunt, 4/14/1862, Valley of the Shadow Project.

plunge right in without hesitating a moment.” Illustrating his privileged position on a horse at the rear of the army, rather than with the foot soldiers who refused to hesitate, Welch noted that “This is necessary because an army must never be allowed to hesitate at anything.”<sup>62</sup> When contemplating the likelihood of a battle in the near future, Welch declared that, “We are well prepared for them, and whether we whip them or not they cannot whip us badly.”<sup>63</sup> While later events would prove Welch's assertion wrong, the surgeon continued in his belief of Confederate superiority on the battlefield.

For men like Welch, even the physical destruction wrought on the battlefield could result in reverential optimism. On June 3, 1862, Welch recorded his time in Richmond as an inspiration to him. “While there I had an opportunity to observe the shocking results of a battle, but, instead of increasing my horror of a battlefield, it made me more anxious than ever to be in a conflict and share its honors. To me, every wounded man seemed covered with glory.” Welch “saw a little fellow whose thigh was broken. He was a mere child, but was very cheerful.”<sup>64</sup> Welch fell into step with fellow Confederates in his denial of the bloody reality of the American Civil War. Welch somehow managed to see glory in a field hospital, among soldiers with serious wounds, rather than seeing the horror resulting from battles. Finding cheer in a boy who had broken his femur represents the absolute denial of the realities of the battlefield, and demonstrates Welch's deep immersion in the Romantic literary culture pervading the South.

Welch got his wish for a battle soon enough. On June 26th, 1862, he wrote that “It was a great day between our batteries and those of the enemy,” and told his wife that “You must be cheerful and take things easy, because I believe the war will soon be ended.” On the 29th of June, Welch wrote that “My brother Billie is greatly mortified because he was too sick to be in the fight.” On August 12, 1862,

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<sup>62</sup> Spencer Glasgow Welch, *A Confederate Surgeon's Letters to his Wife*, 1954: Continental Book Company, Marietta, GA. pp. 10-11.

<sup>63</sup> Spencer Glasgow Welch, pp. 11-12.

<sup>64</sup> Welch, pp. 12-13.

Welch wrote to his wife to tell her of the “brilliant victory” at Cedar Mountain.<sup>65</sup> These passages echo the writings of foot soldiers, who slept without tents and did not ride horses. A general belief in a short war, and an expectation of great glory on the battlefield, fueled the optimism of Confederate soldiers.

Spencer Glasgow Welch wrote home on August 12, 1862 that his wife should “Tell your brother he should be glad he was wounded, for it has saved him many great hardships. I never murmur at these trials, though, as long as I can have good health.” On the 18th of August, 1862, Welch addressed the problem of troops stealing food from civilians: “When in health and tormented by hunger, he thinks of little else besides home and something to eat. He does not seem to dread the fatiguing marches and arduous duties.” These passages, though they may seem more characteristic of depression, demonstrate denial clearly. Though Welch recognized the hardships of his condition and those of the men in the ranks, he insisted that the men did not mind any difficulty but hunger, and that having good health ameliorated all the discomforts he suffered. To emphasize this enthusiasm, on the same date that Welch wrote about men so hungry they had to steal food, he also wrote “Whenever we start on a march, I am impatient to go on and fight it out, for we are confident we can whip the enemy.”<sup>66</sup> Welch created this dichotomy, between a starving army in reality and a victorious army in his mind, because he fervently believed in Confederate superiority over the United States Army.

On December 28th, 1862, Welch's flagging hope regained its footing. “It does not seem possible to defeat this army now with General Lee at its head....The Yankees are certainly very tired of this war.” In February of 1862, Welch wrote home about snowball fights between jubilant Confederate men. The happiness stemmed from the winter weather, which “puts a stop to Burnside's advance,” but Welch had “no fear of defeat when [Burnside] does advance.”<sup>67</sup> This absolute assurance of his army's ability to beat Burnside's demonstrates multiple layers of denial, especially in the long term. When

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<sup>65</sup> Welch, pp. 14, 16, 18.

<sup>66</sup> Welch, pp. 20-21

<sup>67</sup> Welch, pp. 39, 42-43.



Welch declared an imminent Confederate victory, he not only believed that his army would win the battle at hand, he extrapolated that unproven victory to the long term, using it as evidence that the Confederacy would successfully secede from the United States. Despite the Confederacy's good fortune in 1862, Welch's optimism still fell short of history by predicting a short war and decisive Confederate victory.

A similar resurgence of confidence occurred in April of 1863, while the Confederate army was gearing up for the spring campaigns. Welch wrote that “I do not believe we shall have so severe a campaign as we had last year, but I am more than willing to endure all the hardships again to be as victorious as we were then. You need have no apprehension that this army will ever meet with defeat while commanded by General Lee.”<sup>68</sup> This belief in Confederate generals, especially Lee, provides the counterpoint to Confederate denigration of Union generals. Welch joined many other Confederate troops in venerating Lee, to the point that these men attributed all Confederate success and Union defeat to General Lee. The belief in Lee supported Confederate denial as the Confederates believed that if Lee stood, the Confederacy could not fail.

Welch's faith in General Lee allowed his optimism to overcome the reality facing him. When Welch discussed General Lee's plans to invade Gettysburg, he described it as “certainly a grand move of his, and if any man can carry it out successfully, he can, for he is cautious as well as bold.” After the battle, Welch described it as “a magnificent sight,” and said, “The scene was certainly grand, taking all the surroundings into consideration.” “Officers tell me that they never saw our brigade act so valiantly before, and when ordered to charge, our men rushed forward with a perfect fury, yelling and driving them, though with great slaughter” to both the Confederate and United States Armies. “Lively and jocose” Confederate soldiers chased the Union army into their strongholds, which “they didn't dare come out of....for well they knew what their fate would be if they met the Confederate Army of

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<sup>68</sup> Welch, pp. 47.

Virginia upon equal grounds.”<sup>69</sup> Several aspects of this quote indicate the depth of Welch's denial. By describing the battle as grand and the soldiers as high-spirited, Welch chose to frame the battle in the Romantic context from his boyhood stories rather than viewing the reality on the field. Welch's continued denigration of Union courage and the United States Army, even after said army had pushed the Confederates out of Pennsylvania, hearkens back to the Confederate belief in inevitable victory in a fair fight, while disregarding the wholly unfair nature of the odds weighing against the Confederacy.

Welch had nothing but praise for his generals during and after the Battle of Gettysburg, despite the major strategic defeat suffered by the Confederate army when they lost the battle. He described the fallen General Pender as “as brave as a lion and seemed to love danger. I observed his gallantry on the opening of the battle.” He described Lee as “no idler, and if the Yankees do not push a battle on him soon, he is almost sure to push one on them,” and later wrote that “The Yankees were gone, as they did not dare give battle to General Lee.” Welch, faced with a possible invasion of Richmond by Union forces, wrote “I can't believe they can ever possibly take [Richmond] with this army opposed to them.” Welch's words further illustrate his unrealistic optimism regarding the Confederacy's military prospects, and continues the trend of hero-worship of General Lee.<sup>70</sup>

Welch's praise for the Confederate generals extended even beyond Lee to encompass many Confederate officers. When he discussed the actions at Fort Pillow by Nathan Bedford Forrest's troops, he described the capture of the fort as “excellent.”<sup>71</sup> This not only betrays his love of all Confederate generals, it reveals Welch as blind to the atrocities committed by Confederates. At Fort Pillow, Nathan Bedford Forrest's troops massacred black troops fighting for the Union army after the soldiers had surrendered. Forrest's troops also murdered the black soldiers' white officer. Welch does not defend Forrest's conduct at Fort Pillow, as he believes that nothing occurred which needed defending. Despite

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<sup>69</sup> Welch, pp. 57, 59, 64, 65, 67, 69.

<sup>70</sup> Welch, pp. 74, 76, 81, 90-91, 92.

<sup>71</sup> Welch, pp. 74, 76, 81, 90-91, 92.

his status as a surgeon who sought to preserve human life, Welch, steeped in the racist culture of the wealthy South, could not bring himself to question the famous generals of the Confederacy.

Welch's fervent brand of optimism and romantic view of the war colored his description of Confederate soldiers who had escaped Union prisons. These soldiers “returned full of just such hair breadth escapes and wonderful adventures” as Welch's favorite childhood stories.<sup>72</sup> A chaplain “returned from a Yankee prison with a high opinion of the Yankees, and I am sorry they did not handle him rather roughly and cure him of his wonderfully good opinion of them.”<sup>73</sup> Here Welch indicates his beliefs that the Yankees deserve no goodwill and that Yankee actions should not be cast in a positive light. This shows Welch's counterpoint to venerating Confederate generals and armies: to cast the Confederacy as God's favored, everything done by Yankees must be in opposition to the will of God.

Other soldiers had similar praise for their officers. Lafayette H. Carneal wrote to his father on October 15, 1862, after a scouting mission in Maryland and Pennsylvania with General Stuart. According to Carneal, “it was one of the greatest scouts General Stuart ever took. We got plenty to eat in Pennsylvania I enjoyed myself very well...There was three shells fell within fifteen feet of me but I did not get hurt and all it seems that the lord was on our side.”<sup>74</sup> Carneal's description of this scouting mission paints a picture of a springtime jaunt through the countryside, with Stuart taking his troops on a picnic. Carneal makes no mention of any injuries from falling shells, either because no such injuries occurred, or because Carneal chose to ignore them. Carneal also repeats the Confederate belief that God supported the Confederate cause, therefore allowing Stuart and his men to escape without injury.

John B. Jones, a clerk for the Confederate Secretary of War, also fell prey to this optimism. Jones believed that the Southern soldiers, armed with the most old-fashioned weapons, could make the

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<sup>72</sup> Welch, pp. 76.

<sup>73</sup> Welch, p. 83.

<sup>74</sup> Lafayette J. Carneal to his father, 10/15/1862, The Valley of the Shadow Project.

Yankees “break and run.”<sup>75</sup> On April 17th, 1861, he wrote that “It is true, State rights gave the States the right to secede. But what is in a name? Secession by any other name would smell as sweet. For my part, I like the name of Revolution, or even Rebellion, better, for they are sanctified by the example of Washington and his compeers.”<sup>76</sup> This proud tone, and Jones's playful paraphrasing of the balcony scene from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrates the general Southern optimism and refusal to take the prospect of war seriously. In this passage, Jones places the Confederates on par with the Patriots of the American Revolution, sanctifying the cause with America's own pantheon instead of using the refrain that God protected the South. Jones repeated the common belief that the North wished only to subjugate the South.<sup>77</sup> In these passages, which mirrored the soldiers’ attitudes, Jones not only overestimates the prowess of the Confederate army but clearly underestimates the skill and courage of the Union forces. Jones, similarly to Welch, shared the common belief that Lee, given “time and opportunity” would “hurl back the invader from his native land.”<sup>78</sup>

Women faced a separate, if quite similar, denial. Women watched their male friends and relatives leave, often never to come home. Women had to learn how to function in a society bereft of Southern men, and operated in this new world by denying its existence. By denying the poor fortunes of the Confederacy, Southern women allowed themselves to preserve their world view and function in a new society. Some women's writings survive only from before the war. Keziah Goodwyn Hopkins Brevard, a plantation mistress, demonstrated Confederate women’s pre-war optimism. She also placed the South in higher moral standing than the North, and believed that the South would win any eventual

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<sup>75</sup> John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*. Earl Schenck Miers, ed. New York: Sagamore Press, Inc. Publishers, 1958. p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*. p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> John B. Jones, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> John B. Jones, p. 58.

conflict between the sections. On October 13th, 1860, Mrs. Brevard wrote that "it is time for us to shew the rabble of the North we are not to be murdered in cold blood because we own slaves."<sup>79</sup>

Kate Stone's diary holds a great deal of evidence for the Southern civilians' denial. A Louisiana planter's daughter, Kate kept a diary throughout the course of the conflict. Her experience of denial mirrored the soldiers', though Miss Stone spent more time in denial than the men at war. At the beginning of the war, Kate's journal entry celebrated her uncle William and brother Bo's enlistment into the Louisiana military. The entry, on May 26th, 1861 betrays a high level of optimism. She wrote that "Our two loved ones left us this morning, but we cannot think it a last farewell. My heart tells me they will come again." and recorded that her younger brothers were upset that they could not join William and Bo.<sup>80</sup> On July 26, 1861, Kate recorded "telegraphic accounts of our first pitched battle fought at Manassas Junction – our side victorious, of course."<sup>81</sup> Kate's use of the phrase "of course" demonstrates the optimistic belief among Confederates in the inevitability of Confederate victory over the Union forces. The Stone family, and most other Confederates, did not realize the true nature of the war on their doorstep, and refused to truly comprehend that their loved ones likely would not come home.

On June 8th, 1862, Kate recorded her fervent hope that "the bad news is all false and the good all true."<sup>82</sup> This formula demonstrates nothing if not denial, as Kate clearly wants to ignore all the news painting an unfavorable picture of the war and believe only the news that demonstrates Confederate ability to defeat the United States Army. Further indicating denial, Kate buried two of the three brothers who went off to war. Even after burying her younger brothers, Kate managed to maintain the

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<sup>79</sup> John Hammond Moore, ed. *A Plantation Mistress on the Eve of the Civil War: The Diary of Keziah Goodwyn Hopkins Brevard, 1860-1861*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1993. p. 39.

<sup>80</sup> Kate Stone, p. 17.

<sup>81</sup> Kate Stone, p. 44.

<sup>82</sup> Kate Stone, p. 118.

belief in her brother William's safe return from the war.<sup>83</sup> When Vicksburg fell, Kate maintained hope in "Lee the Invincible" and his army in the East, and Kate held dear her belief that God would "defend the Right."<sup>84</sup> The fall of Vicksburg greatly discouraged Kate, but she believed that "The people will rally to strike a more deadly blow, to fight til the last armed foe expires, to conquer or die."<sup>85</sup> While this rhetoric helped to reinforce Kate's faith in the Confederate ability to win the war based solely on the fiery passion of the Confederate women at home, it held no connection to the reality of the battlefield, where men often did die rather than conquer. Kate's distance from the battle, both physically and psychologically, helped her maintain her fervent belief that the Confederacy could and would win the American Civil War.

Sarah Morgan Dawson lived in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Her father, a local judge, had already died in action by the time she began her journal in 1862. Despite the deaths that Miss Morgan and all around her had suffered, she continued throwing and attending parties. Miss Morgan felt similarly to most Confederates, in that "I want to fight until we win the cause so many have died for." Miss Morgan offered unusual insight when she wrote, "I don't believe in Secession, but I do in Liberty. I want the South to conquer, dictate its own terms, and go back to the Union, for I believe that, apart, inevitable ruin awaits both." However, Miss Morgan fell back into line with Confederate dogma when she insisted that, "The North cannot subdue us. We are too determined to be free." This sentiment echoes Kate Stone, as well as the soldiers writing home from training camps. This faith in the ultimate victory of the Confederate States of America characterized many Southern documents before and during the war.<sup>86</sup> However, like Kate Stone, Miss Morgan lived in a sphere so far removed from the reality of the

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<sup>83</sup> Kate Stone, 39.

<sup>84</sup> Kate Stone, 230.

<sup>85</sup> Kate Stone, 233.

<sup>86</sup> Sarah Morgan Dawson, *A Confederate Girl's Diary*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913. pp. 7, 32.

battlefield that her fantasy consumed her view of the war, keeping her from understanding the military and political realities of the conflict.

Emilie Riley McKinley of South Carolina refused to fear any Yankee soldier who attempted to search or loot her home. She recorded with pride an encounter between an officer named Mr. Short and a newly freed man who had spoken inappropriately to Miss McKinley: “You think you are free, but you are in greater bondage than you ever were before and if you [are] ever impertinent to a lady again,” Mr. Short threatened to blow the freedman's brains out. Miss McKinley's gleeful acceptance of this chivalry indicates the Romantic view of the war held by Miss McKinley. It also clearly demonstrates the awareness on the part of Miss McKinley that the Confederates fought in the American Civil War to protect the institution of slavery. Miss McKinley's neighbor, one Mrs. Noland, waited until Union troops had finished looting her home, then roasted the last turkey left by the Union troops and held a party in defiance of Union fearmongering. Despite Miss McKinley's stubborn refusal to fear the Union troops, she did record instances of Union troops' cruelty towards both white Confederates and loyal slaves.<sup>87</sup> Miss McKinley's tone toward the invading Union troops mirrors that of Miss Morgan, mixing disdain with an absolutely stubborn lack of fear. These women remained in denial even after Union troops invaded their homes and communities.

Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain shared the Confederate belief that the North wished only to subjugate the South. Mrs. Fain, like many of her compatriots, placed the Confederacy on moral high ground in comparison with the North. By taking the moral high ground, the Confederates reinforced their belief that Confederate forces possessed more courage and ability than the Union forces which outnumbered them. Mrs. Fain believed that after suing for peace, the South had “been treated with duplicity, intrigues and cunning which her high toned peace loving men, were not able to detect.” Like Kate

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<sup>87</sup> Emilie Riley McKinley, ed. Gordon A Cotton, *From the Pen of a She-Rebel*, Columbia, South Carolina (University of South Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 7-8.

Stone upon her brother's enlistment, Mrs. Fain's "heart rises in gratitude and love of God for giving to our Southern homes husbands, sons and brothers who go forth so cheerfully, so nobly for the maintenance of civil and religious freedom." Her optimism, rooted firmly in her faith, filled the first pages of her diary.<sup>88</sup>

Newspapers echoed the optimistic sentiments of soldiers, government officials, and civilians. In fact, the newspapers often served to bolster the flagging spirits of the Confederacy through their optimistic tone and predominant focus on the Army of Northern Virginia. J. Cutler Andrews explored these publications, and found that early in the American Civil War, the Southern papers agreed with and reinforced public optimism. Many of them, including the *Richmond Examiner*, informed readers throughout the Confederacy, and did very well over the course of the American Civil War.<sup>89</sup> One paper described the public in Charleston as "wonderfully impatient' with the delay in the occupation by the Confederate authorities of Fort Sumter."<sup>90</sup> Other newspapers predicted that Forts Sumter and Pickens in Florida "would be given up...when the Confederate States are ready to take [them]."<sup>91</sup> A report in the *Richmond Dispatch* of the taking of Fort Sumter excitedly related the details of the Confederate assault on the fort: "Six o'clock arrives. Our batteries continue, but Anderson does not answer! Shells and balls fly thick and fast around him, but he answers not. His flag still waves. What can the matter be?"<sup>92</sup> For a Confederate who expected immediate surrender by the clearly inferior United States Army garrison, the lack of such a surrender clearly confused the writer. However, he revealed more than confusion. The writer's expression of surprise indicates that this reporter already believed in the military superiority of the Confederacy over the United States and the ability of the Confederacy to effectively defeat any

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<sup>88</sup> *Sanctified Trial: The Diary Of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, A Confederate Woman in East Tennessee*. John Fain, ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004. pp. 8, 17.

<sup>89</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War*, Princeton (Princeton University Press, 1970), 32, 507.

<sup>90</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War*, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, p. 12.

<sup>92</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, p. 15.



United States attempt to maintain control of the South. When General Johnson withdrew from Harper's Ferry in order to avoid capture, he similarly mystified the Confederate newspapers. The newspapers eventually reached a consensus that the retreat "was...a brilliant stroke of strategy on Johnson's part" rather than interpreting the general's decision as a tactic betraying the weakness of the Confederate military relative to the United States Army.<sup>93</sup>

The newspaper response to General Johnson's retreat from Harper's Ferry demonstrates Confederate newspapers' interpretation of less pleasant military news. In an instance of undeniable victory, such as the first battle at Manassas, the fervor of optimism reaches such a high point that the newspaper reports brim with elation. "Our men were perfectly frantic. Regiment after regiment ran up the hill in the wild excitement of pursuit," reported the *New Orleans True Delta*. The *Savannah Republican* proclaimed "Glory to God in the highest! A great battle has been fought and a victory won!" *The Richmond Dispatch* declared "...official statements, special correspondence, and bombastic editorials to extract the full measure of satisfaction from the inglorious Yankee rout."<sup>94</sup> These publications clearly wanted to paint the battle as Spencer Welch's childhood stories imagined war: glorious, excited, and honorable. This Romantic portrayal of battles in the surviving newspapers maintained their essence as the war turned against the Confederacy.

The newspapers kept an exuberant tone when discussing major battles. The *Charleston Courier* reporter de Fontaine wrote of Antietam that "Our center, however, stands firm as adamant, and [the Yankees] fall back."<sup>95</sup> On December 11, 1862, immediately preceding the Battle of Fredericksburg, the *Richmond Enquirer* published an article describing the camp conditions and the high mood of the Confederate soldiers: "Our men joke and laugh around their campfires as they prepare rations for the morrow in careless confidence, for they know we have the men and the generals equal to the coming

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<sup>93</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, p. 75.

<sup>94</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, pp. 85-87.

<sup>95</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, pp. 209-210.

trial.”<sup>96</sup> This echoes the sentiment of soldiers and civilians that the Confederacy would inevitably win the war, because the Confederacy had more qualified generals and men who cared more about the result than Union officers and troops. This portrayal of army life also follows the Romantic bent in discourse surrounding the war, and allowed newspapers, soldiers, and civilians to shelter themselves from the brutal reality of the conflict surrounding them. The journalists chose to incorrectly portray the Confederate army camps, leaving out all of the discomfort, dirt, hunger and disease in order to keep civilian spirits high and reinforce the denial which spread throughout the South.

This optimism in the newspapers continued even in the face of the hardships in Vicksburg. While the *Columbus Sun* reporters did discuss the high prices and shortages in Vicksburg, other newspapers reported on the good spirits of the populace and portrayed an optimistic picture of the conditions inside Vicksburg. On June 11th, *The Mississippian* published a report from a correspondent, who described “our boys at Vicksburg are in good health, fine spirits, have plenty to eat... and are eager to be led against the Vandal Hordes of Old Abe.” This author's description of conditions in Vicksburg matches both Kate Stone's optimism regarding Vicksburg and her description of the United States Army as “vandal hordes.”<sup>97</sup> It indicates a belief that Union troops were not human or worthy of facing Godly, righteous, Confederate men. It also indicates a belief in the inferiority of the United States' military ability, echoing previous sentiments that the South must win the war because the South had the best of everything. Similarly, the *Richmond Inquirer* declared that “Indeed, no one here is starving, nor are there any fears of it entertained. The idea of surrender, for any cause, is never dreamed of here.” With such sentiments published in widely read newspapers, little wonder that civilians such as Kate Stone and Sarah Morgan Dawson refused to believe that Vicksburg had fallen. <sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, p. 224.

<sup>97</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, p. 275.

<sup>98</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, p. 275.

Also encouraging Confederates' unrealistic hopes were the unreliable mail, news and other communications networks. This severely damaged infrastructure led to an incredible amount of rumors, informing Confederates of battles won, only for them to learn later of a Union victory.<sup>99</sup> Moffet Brooks described the dearth of accurate news to his aunt: "We get no papers and cannot get the particulars..." This lack of accurate reports led Brooks to next pen this: "...but I am in hopes we have defeated them badly though our loss is very heavy now is the time for the South to act if we delay, now we are gone, but I will never give up as long as there is a ray of hope, I don't believe there is any chance for them to whip us."<sup>100</sup> By hearing through the grapevine of Confederate victories, Union losses, or other news favorable to the Confederate cause, Confederate soldiers managed to construct an alternate reality for themselves which did not reflect the poor fortunes of the Confederacy.

Samuel Carson served the Confederacy as an officer in the Fifth Virginia Infantry. During the Battle of Gettysburg, Carson was trying to return to the Army from a furlough. He wrote something regarding Gettysburg to Annie Harris, his sweetheart, on June 6, 1863, describing the rumors of battle: "Our loss is very heavy indeed, lost a great many officers- none of our commanding Genls were wounded that we have heard of... The enemy's (unclear: loss) is said to have been very heavy indeed...We captured about 13,000 prisoners and there has been a rumor today that Genl Lee had whipped the enemy badly on yesterday and that he had taken 40,000 prisoners this however needs confirmation....The news we get is so conflicting that it is hardly to be relied on."<sup>101</sup> Benjamin Cochran specifically requested that his mother send him newspapers so that he could read them and get news.<sup>102</sup> These soldiers sought accurate news so that they could create a picture of the war, but because of the nature of the newspapers' optimism, if and when these newspapers arrived, they could only reinforce

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<sup>99</sup> Kate Stone.

<sup>100</sup> Moffet Brooks to his Aunt, 4/14/1862, Valley of the Shadow Project.

<sup>101</sup> Samuel Carson to Annie Harris, 6/6/1863, Valley of the Shadow Project.

<sup>102</sup> Benjamin Cochran to his Mother, 6/23/61, Valley of the Shadow Project.

this alternate reality formed by an over-abundance of rumors. This does not mean that Confederate soldiers did not understand the bias of the newspapers. Soldiers sometimes reached out to alternative sources, such as Union newspapers, when the news in Confederate papers seemed beyond belief. William R. Dyer of Forrest's escort relied on newspapers to obtain news, and when rumors and gossip spread regarding Forrest's resignation, Dyer turned to Union papers to gain accurate information.<sup>103</sup>

Rumors and unreliable information networks also affected the mood at home, providing incorrect information which built up false hopes. Sarah Morgan Dawson, after an attack on Baton Rouge, wrote that “Nothing can be positively ascertained, save that our gunboats are sunk, and theirs are coming up to the city. Everything else has been contradicted until we really do not know whether the city has been taken or not.”<sup>104</sup> Miss Morgan later recorded a rumor that the Yankees would not attack New Orleans, as the British had offered New Orleans protection. Later in the war, Miss Morgan recorded rumors of Union losses, and that the war would end within a month. She also heard that McClellan had surrendered his army to Stonewall Jackson, that McClellan had died, and that Vicksburg would endure.<sup>105</sup> These conflicting rumors left Miss Dawson to make her own conclusion, and she decided that Vicksburg could not have been taken because the brave Confederates inside would not allow it.

This denial fueled the Confederates, civilians and soldiers alike, as they learned to cope with war. Romantic ideals, faulty reporting, unreliable communication and transportation networks, and a fervent belief in the moral correctness of the Confederate cause engendered fervent beliefs, among them that the Confederacy occupied the moral high ground, that the United States government acted in ways which infringed on the rights of slaveholders, and that the Confederate cause would inevitably triumph over the Black Republican invaders from the North. These beliefs, coupled with early

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<sup>103</sup>Wayne Bradshaw, *The Civil War Diary of William R. Dyer*, Booksurge.com, 2009, pp 10, 11, 13, 15, 23-25.

<sup>104</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, *A Confederate Girl's Diary*. p. 16.

<sup>105</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, pp. 20-21, 67, 72, 102, 123.

Confederate victories such as Manassas, set the tone for the Confederate discourse of denial which fills personal Confederate records from the beginning of the American Civil War.

This denial, characterized by a fervent belief that the Confederacy could win the war, continued throughout the course of the American Civil War. Many people left their denial behind when grim news outweighed the news which brought hope, but once hope was rekindled the denial burst back into life. This process follows the findings of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and her associates, and supports Phillips's assertions in "The Grapevine Telegraph" that rumors helped to maintain a positive outlook on the Confederate war effort. Hope that everything will be alright drives humans to keep fighting.<sup>106</sup>

However, when the war continued without relief, anger was often the response.

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<sup>106</sup>Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*; Kubler-Ross & Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*; Phillips, "Grapevine Telegraph."

## Part II: Anger

As their optimistic denial resulted only in heartbreak after heartbreak, Confederates reacted with anger. Many of these authors did not bother to conceal their anger, instead lashing out furiously at whatever target seemed most appropriate at the time. Dr. Kubler-Ross characterizes anger among the dying as a furious response to their terminal diagnosis. Once the patient realizes that the doctors gave the correct diagnosis, the patient feels fury that he or she was targeted by the disease, that the doctors could not save them, that God could allow the disease to strike the patient. Among the Confederates, this anger targets the United States government as well as its representatives in the Confederacy, and irrationally screams selfish blame at those causing the death of the Confederate, Old South society held so dear by Confederate citizens. For those grieving the loss of a loved one, Dr. Kubler Ross describes an anger caused by being left behind, left alone, without the support offered by the person who just died. The Confederates described this kind of anger as well, fighting tooth and nail to maintain the social status quo which gave them their identity and provided their lives with meaning. The Confederates also embody another kind of anger described by Dr. Kessler and Dr. Kubler-Ross: anger at oneself for being able to stave off the end.<sup>107</sup> Confederates had no lack of targets for their anger. Among many, the Union army, Union soldiers and commanders, God and even Southern commanders became targets for soldiers and civilians angry with a war very different from what they expected.

No meek Southern belle, Kate Stone harbored intense enmity toward the Union. Echoing John Cochran's early letters, Kate repeatedly described the Northern army as a "horde" that continually violated the South, again evoking images of barbarians plundering an innocent land. Miss Stone also proclaimed that Kentucky, a non-Confederate state devastated by the war, deserved its fate.<sup>108</sup> When Maryland refused to join the Confederacy, Kate wished to "let the Old Bay State go, if her people had

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<sup>107</sup>Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, pp. 63-65; Kubler-Ross & Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, pp. 11-17.

<sup>108</sup>Kate Stone, p. 90-92, 103.

rather be slaves in the Union than masters in the Confederacy.”<sup>109</sup> The fear of being enslaved by the North, forced into the wage-labor system and treated no better than Confederates themselves treated their slaves, propelled such discontent. The belief that this enslavement would happen reveals a deep enmity and anger toward the North for threatening the easy way of life which Southern slaveholders held so dear. By refusing to join the Confederacy, despite their status as slaveholding states, Maryland's inhabitants transformed into something worse than United States citizens or soldiers. The citizens of Maryland transformed into traitors to the cause, betraying brothers in the fight to preserve slavery. Any anger directed toward Maryland must exist within this framework of betrayal.

The disdain in Miss Stone's writings about the border states which refused to secede from the Union matched only her disdain for Southerners who refused to join the Confederate cause. Deserters, traitors, and men who displayed reluctance to enlist or out-and-out dodged the draft found themselves targets of her irate pen.<sup>110</sup> She denounced draft-dodgers, writing “I would eat my heart away were I a man at home in these troublous times.”<sup>111</sup> Even joining the army after the draft enforcement began did not satisfy Kate Stone, who noted with disgust that those who joined to escape the draft were “better late than never.”<sup>112</sup> The words alone express Kate's disdain for these men, as she eviscerated the draft dodgers as traitors, just as she eviscerated slave states which remained loyal to the Union. More than her words alone, Kate began to focus more on events which angered her, rather than those which provided false hope. She wrote less of victories, and more of the targets of her anger.

Her anger toward the Yankees led her to declare that Vicksburg should be burned rather than allowed to fall into Yankee hands, and that Union General Butler's policies in New Orleans were

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<sup>109</sup>Kate Stone, 146.

<sup>110</sup>Kate Stone, p. 90-92, 103.

<sup>111</sup>Kate Stone, p. 87.

<sup>112</sup>Kate Stone, p. 138.

“tyrannical” and made Kate's “blood boil.”<sup>113</sup> Kate described his later orders, including the mandatory oath of allegiance to the Union, as “infamous,” and his troops earned the epithet “vandal hordes” from Miss Stone.<sup>114</sup> Kate “could have seen every boat and all the men sunk to the bottom without a pang of regret” as she watched gunboats move upriver toward Vicksburg,<sup>115</sup> and predicted an unhappy afterlife for Lincoln because of his sins against the South.<sup>116</sup> Similar to Kate's anger toward Butler, a Virginia man dubbed Butler “the Tyrant of New Orleans,” said that “Satan seems to have full reign” in Virginia.<sup>117</sup>

Kate's anger turned personal when the Union army invaded her home. Yankees infuriated Kate and her mother by stealing Wonka, Kate's favorite pony and only made Kate's fury worse by threatening to kill her for trying to save her pony from them. Kate described the slaves as “a dreadful menace to the few remaining citizens.” In keeping with previous religious sentiments, Miss Stone described the Yankees and freed slaves as “demons, black and white,” who had “possessed” the country. By framing her opponents as evil, unholy and against God, Kate maintained her logic that God supported the Confederate cause.<sup>118</sup> Alice Williamson echoed Kate's anger during Payne's 1864 occupation of Gallatin, Tennessee, sarcastically making note of days with “No murdering going on,” and keeping detailed accounts of all the Southern men imprisoned and killed by Payne's men. Alice also sarcastically referred to Payne as “Our King,” and “the heartless tyrant.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>Kate Stone, p. 100-105.

<sup>114</sup>Kate Stone, 111.

<sup>115</sup>Kate Stone, p. 122.

<sup>116</sup>Kate Stone, pp. 145-146.

<sup>117</sup>Catherine Thom Bartlett, *My Dear Brother: A Confederate Chronicle*. Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, Inc., 1952. pp. 126-129.

<sup>118</sup>Kate Stone, p. 182-184.

<sup>119</sup>Alice Williamson, “Alice Williamson Diary.” *Special Collections Library*, Duke University.



Kate Stone reacted only with anger toward men who deserted the Confederate army, especially when those men hailed from Louisiana.<sup>120</sup> When word of deserters reached Kate, she refused to believe that a man would desert the Southern army.<sup>121</sup> Even in 1863, on hearing of Louisianans deserting the Confederate army, Kate's "cheek crimsons as I write this of our own beloved state, but I cannot believe that she has brought her name to be a disgrace and reproach to her loyal children."<sup>122</sup> This anger brings to mind her blood boiling when she learned of General Butler's military laws in New Orleans.

Confederate officers did not escape Kate's wrath, despite her pride in the volunteer forces. Kate raged about Confederate generals wasting time and money in Kentucky and Tennessee, only to abandon the states in the end.<sup>123</sup> On May 22, 1862, Kate wrote "We are sick of hearing of these prudent, cautious retreats without firing a gun. Our only hope is desperate fighting."<sup>124</sup> Like the newspapers which lacked an understanding of why Confederate forces retreated from Harper's Ferry, Kate Stone did not understand why Confederate generals would act cautiously. Miss Stone believed, as many Confederates believed, that the Confederate army could win when pitched against the Union troops. Because of this, she felt only anger when the actions of Confederate generals, intent on sparing lives and preserving their forces, chose not to face Union forces.

Sarah Morgan Dawson also turned her anger against fellow Confederates. When writing about a Confederate man whom Miss Morgan did not like, she said that "when I heard of his being wounded at Shiloh, I couldn't help laughing a little at [his] being hurt." She expressed her rage towards the civilian men of Baton Rouge who allowed a Yankee officer to step ashore without resistance, stating that if she and other women had been at the landing, the officer would never have landed except under flag of truce. She did give the men credit, however, for telling the Yankee that "the air of Baton Rouge was

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<sup>120</sup>Kate Stone, p. 44.

<sup>121</sup>Kate Stone, p. 60.

<sup>122</sup>Kate Stone, p. 249.

<sup>123</sup>Kate Stone, p. 96.

<sup>124</sup>Kate Stone, p. 108.

very unhealthy for Yankee soldiers at night.” That credit vanished, however, when Miss Morgan heard rumors of plans to burn Baton Rouge to spite the Yankee troops. Miss Morgan had the following advice for the Confederate soldiers: "if our troops are determined to burn our houses over our heads to spite the Yankees, I wish they would hurry and have it over with at once."<sup>125</sup> This anger reflected Kate Stone's, with both women responding with fury to perceived cowardice among the Confederate troops.

Miss Morgan had enough anger to go around, and did not hesitate to direct her ire toward Yankees. May 5th, 1862, saw "Vile old Yankee boats, four in number, [passing] up [the Mississippi] this morning without stopping." Like her compatriot Kate Stone, Miss Morgan directed a large portion of her rage toward General Butler. After Butler banned the display of any Confederate flags or images, Miss Morgan decided to dedicate "all my red, white, and blue silk to the manufacture of Confederate flags. As soon as one is confiscated, I make another, until my ribbon is exhausted...Henceforth, I wear one pinned to my bosom - not a duster, but a little flag; the man who says take it off will have to pull it off for himself; the man who dares attempt it - well! a pistol in my pocket fills up the gap." This spite for Union soldiers and their laws characterized Miss Morgan's writing, and she adopted a far more militant tone than Kate Stone. However, Miss Morgan's threat of armed resistance in this instance went farther than many other expressions of her rage. Miss Morgan also invited Butler to try and "develop a Union sentiment among the people" of Baton Rouge. She wrote, "Come and see if he can! Hear the cure that arises at from thousands of hearts at the man's name." Miss Morgan reflected the opinion of many in her social circle, and often privately wrote of her intent to resist Butler's policies in Baton Rouge.<sup>126</sup>

Miss Morgan illustrated her wrath when she wished that she were a man, so she "could don the breeches, and slay them with a will!" Miss Morgan repeated this sentiment several times throughout

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<sup>125</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, *A Confederate Girl's Diary*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913. pp. 8-9, 23, 112.

<sup>126</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, pp. 22, 93, 111.

her diary, always after some offense by Union troops. After raging against the uselessness of women in the conflict, she wrote that "If they attack, I shall don the breeches, and join the assailants, and fight." She commented that "the kind officers aboard the ship sent us word that if they were molested, the town would be shelled." Miss Morgan then asked, "Does it take thirty thousand men and millions of dollars to murder defenseless women and children? O the great nation! Bravo!" By portraying the Union on the wrong side of morality, Miss Morgan, like Kate Stone, placed the Confederacy firmly in God's favor.<sup>127</sup>

Like many other Confederates, Miss Morgan often railed against President Lincoln. She took President Lincoln to task again, asking "'Any more, Mr. Lincoln, any more?' Can't you leave our wracked homes in repose? We are all wild." In November, 1862, Miss Morgan discussed what she believed was the true state of African Americans in the South,<sup>128</sup> commenting derisively on Abolitionists: "Poor oppressed devils! Why did you not chunk us with the burning logs instead of looking happy, and laughing like fools? Really, some good old Abolitionist is needed here, to tell them how miserable they are. Can't Mass' Abe spare a few to enlighten his brethren?"<sup>129</sup> Again Miss Morgan used hellish imagery to indicate on which side of Saint Peter's Gate she believed the Union and its denizens belonged.

Miss Morgan rooted her anger toward the Union troops in the treatment she and her family received from Northern soldiers, especially in relation to the treatment of African Americans. She expressed great fury at needing a pass, "just as we give our negroes, signed by a Wisconsin colonel," to go in and out of her own home. Because of a shortage of conveyances, Miss Dawson recorded great indignation when she had to ride in a mule-drawn cart, and commented harshly on the men who "were

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<sup>127</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, pp. 22, 93, 111.

<sup>128</sup>This comment followed a description of a party, in which the African Americans around Miss Morgan seemed to fully enjoy themselves.

<sup>129</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, pp. 24, 28, 92, 120, 278.

heartless enough to laugh!" Her anger seethed when she heard that the Union Army had armed former slaves: "Foe and insurrection in town, assailing friends outside. - nice time!" After Union boats sank the *CSS Arkansas* in 1862, Miss Morgan wrote that "The negroes, it is stated, are to be armed against us as in town." Regarding the African American soldiers who died while attacking the *CSS Arkansas*, it "served them right!" Miss Morgan later graciously stated that she "...would rather have all I own burned, than in the possession of the negroes." When Yankees "infested" her house in Baton Rouge, Miss Morgan spewed several pages of vitriol very unbecoming of a young Southern belle, and wrote that "I believe I am positively disappointed! I did want to see them soundly thrashed!" <sup>130</sup>

When Miss Morgan and her family chose to join her brother in New Orleans, their treatment by the Yankees only added more fuel to her anger. Before the family could enter the city, a Union officer attempted to administer the Oath of Allegiance to the women. Miss Morgan's mother became irate, and "Heaven knows *what* she did not say; there was little she left out, from her despoiled house to her sore hand, both of which she attributed to the at first amiable man, who was rapidly losing all patience..." When Union soldiers took Mrs. Morgan prisoner for refusing to take the oath, Miss Morgan went on a rant regarding the oath. She wrote that the Union officers placed great stress on the voluntary nature of the oath, "Yet look at the scene that followed, when Mother showed herself unwilling! Think of being ordered to the Custom-House as a prisoner for saying she supposed she would *have* to! *That's* liberty! that is free will! You have only to take it quietly or go to jail. That is freedom enough, certainly!" Miss Morgan concluded by stating that she would never have gone to New Orleans had she known that she had to take the oath, and that she would suffer the consequences for the sin of perjury by falsely swearing to the oath. <sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, pp. 53, 59, 140, 161, 178, 170, 308, 340.

<sup>131</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, pp. 384, 392-393.

The treatment of others by the Northern army also added to Miss Morgan's anger. When in New Orleans, Miss Morgan learned that thousands of families, mostly those who refused to take the Oath of Allegiance, were being forced out of New Orleans into the Confederacy at large. Miss Morgan railed against this forced exodus in her usual idiom, attributing to the Northern soldiers the worst of intentions. "Pinned up like sheep to starve! That's the idea! With the addition of forty thousand mouths to feed, they think they can invoke famine to their aid, seeing that their negro brothers didn't help them much in the task of subjugating us." <sup>132</sup>

Louisiana's women reacted with fury to the Union invasion and occupation of Louisiana and continued to fume about the cowardice of the Confederate men. Like Kate Stone, Sarah Morgan Dawson noted the furor which met the news of Yankee invasion. Men in Baton Rouge burned their cotton and threw it in the river to keep it out of Yankee hands, and Miss Morgan described a festive atmosphere as thousands of dollars worth of cotton and alcohol were burned and discarded into the river. "Men stood by who owned the cotton that was burning or waiting to burn. They either helped, or looked on cheerfully..."<sup>133</sup>

Emilie Riley McKinley's wrath matched Kate Stone and Miss Dawson's anger almost word for word. Miss McKinley wrote on May 21, 1863, that:

"This day is nearly ended – what a one it has been – long and weary indeed. Can the people in the North know or conceive what we suffer? We are tried beyond endurance, and suffer more than we can tell. We will be obliged to coin words to express our detestation of the hated. Can I ever visit the North again, with my present feelings,

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<sup>132</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, pp. 388-389.

<sup>133</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, pp. 16-17, 28.

unnatural as they may be? I cannot ever go there again. I will not, my blood boils as I write, I can hardly write.”<sup>134</sup>

As Miss McKinley wrote that her blood boiled, so wrote Miss Morgan. As Kate Stone wrote that her suffering exceeded what she could bear with good cheer, so did Miss McKinley. As all three suffered, these women asked if the North could even begin to understand their suffering. This anger wove through Confederate society as the words of the women experiencing the war and supporting the Confederacy revealed it.

While Miss Morgan raged about the property destroyed by the Union forces, Miss McKinley did as well. She discussed the desecration of the local church by the Union “wretches,” and asked “How can anyone dare to desecrate the House of God. I wonder that they were not afraid that their hands would be palsied in the attempt.”<sup>135</sup> Miss Morgan, Kate Stone and Emilie McKinley all experienced the disgrace of having their homes and personal belongings searched by the invading and occupying Union troops. Miss McKinley responded similarly to her two compatriots when Union soldiers, searching her house, desired to look in her personal trunk: “I rushed upstairs perfectly furious, unlocked the trunk, tossed the things out, and asked if they were satisfied. They looked ashamed, as well they might do.” In this instance, Miss McKinley sounded similar to Miss Morgan: “I never was so nearly stifling with rage... I could have killed them with real pleasure... At least they concluded to relieve us of their hateful presence...” In a similar incident, when Miss McKinley walked home and found Union soldiers in her parlor, “My blood rose immediately to fever heat again. At the supper table we all had quite a war of words.”<sup>136</sup> These descriptions of boiling blood appeared in diaries throughout the Confederacy, indicating widespread anger and resentment expressed with similar language.

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<sup>134</sup>Emilie Riley McKinley, *From the Pen of a She Rebel*, p. 9.

<sup>135</sup>Emilie Riley McKinley, *From the Pen of a She Rebel*, p. 9-10.

<sup>136</sup>Emilie Riley McKinley, *From the Pen of a She-Rebel*, pp. 9-10, 52.

The humiliation of such rough treatment by Union soldiers served as fodder for Miss McKinley's fury. She wrote, "What we are brought to, how humiliating. I feel that I cannot stand it." One week later, after having met many Union soldiers at a party, Miss McKinley disdainfully wrote that "We met plenty of officers. I have not yet met a gentleman among them." She then returned to her earlier fury over the desecrated church, listing the damage done: "They have ruined our church, destroyed the organ, shot holes through the walls, slit the Bishop's chair, and we fear that the portrait has been destroyed."<sup>137</sup> In her writings, she swiftly follows any mention of the Union troops with an expression of her anger. Whether an enumeration of destruction, a carefully chosen epithet, or an anecdote relating the horrors of Yankee occupation, Miss McKinley always reminds her readers of why she hated the Union troops. Miss McKinley does this on June 1, 1863, when she wrote that "Two Yankees have just arrived and asked for dinner. They are eating." True to form, she followed these simple statements with an expression of her anger towards the Union troops: "After stealing all we have, they have the presumption to ask for dinner... I never imagined a people could be so punished." Because of these many humiliations, in March of 1864, Miss McKinley wrote that "Southern hospitality towards the North should end."<sup>138</sup> Her denial of hospitality displays the great extent of her anger, as Miss McKinley endorsed removing from Union soldiers access to sustenance, shelter and socialization. However, even Miss McKinley knew that she wrote empty words. Her anger could not bar the door to United States troops seeking entrance. This impotence only served to further intensify her anger, as she was not used to people disregarding her wishes.

Miss McKinley also placed the Union troops on the wrong side of God's grace, asking "I wonder sometimes if they do not spit liquid fire, like Hartz' Devils." She prayed that "God will visit these *devils* with punishment equal to those they are inflicting on us. I would call down curses on their

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<sup>137</sup>Emilie Riley McKinley, *From the Pen of a She-Rebel*, pp. 11, 18.

<sup>138</sup>Emilie Riley McKinley, 21, 70.

heads...” and insisted on June 13th, 1863 that Union troops “cannot tell the truth.” In another Union violation of religious mores, Miss McKinley's friend Julia indignantly said “Just listen to those Yankees singing *our* hymns.”<sup>139</sup> This proprietary attitude toward God and expressions of religious piety provided a framework for Miss McKinley's anger, as well as providing ample fuel as she watched Union troops violate the relationship between Confederates and their God.

Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain's anger had a unique twist. Instead of allowing Yankee atrocities to incite her to thoughts of personally taking vengeance, Mrs. Fain maintained her pious calm and left vengeance to God, similarly to Emilie Riley McKinley. Mrs. Fain expressed her anger by proclaiming that God would take vengeance, and indicating the close relationship Mrs. Fain perceived between the Confederacy and God. This mantra filled Mrs. Fain's diary, and she responded to nearly every provocation against her or her friends by looking heavenward. When Mrs. Fain recorded the ransacking of her house by Yankee soldiers, she wrote that “...our Father who sitteth upon his throne is beholding with an eye of forbearance these deeds of darkness and letting them fill up their cup of iniquity.” Rather than overtly expressing her anger, she gleefully noted that “He who hath said vengeance is mine will repay and will avenge the wrongs we all suffer.” While contemplating all the “outrages” committed by Union soldiers in her neighborhood, including stealing all horses of any value, Mrs. Fain once again allowed God's prerogative of vengeance to subsume her anger. As she recorded what she supposed characterized Northern treatment of runaway slaves, as well as the supposed Northern prerogative to “rob, plunder and destroy the people of the South,” she repeated her belief that God was simply letting the Yankees “fill their cup of iniquity” even fuller, in order that God could exact more severe vengeance. She echoed this belief on April 5th, 1865, the morning after Yankees once again looted her house. Mrs. Fain thanked God for her survival, then wrote that “I feel this night there has been a work begun today the consequences of which I feel will fall on guilty heads. The Lord has said

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<sup>139</sup>Emilie Riley McKinley, 28, 22, 34.



'Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord.' This is sufficient for me to know."<sup>140</sup> This faith that God watched over the Confederacy and would avenge any wrongs done to it gave Mrs. Fain peace in her anger, by ensuring that the United States and the United States Army would suffer at God's hands, and God had infinitely more creativity in His punishments than humans could hope to achieve. This also allowed Mrs. Fain to maintain the moral high ground, by never raising her hand or uttering coarse language toward the soldiers who angered her.

In June, 1864, Mrs. Fain broke character and assigned Yankee raiders the epithet "cruel, bloodthirsty and cowardly bushwhackers." In September, 1864, she repeated this uncharacteristic outburst when she described the Yankee occupation as "galling," and recorded a neighbor's pledge to get remuneration for slaves taken by the Yankees. After Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson won the election of 1864, Mrs. Fain reacted strongly: "This day witnesses the inauguration of President Lincoln and the Vice-President Andrew Johnson (traitor, traitor)." Mrs. Fain could not abide the thought that a man would deliberately stand against the Southern states where he was born, similarly to John Cochran's disparagement of General Scott early in the war. Christmas 1864 also offered Mrs. Fain an excuse to rail against the Yankees. She noted that it was "The second Sabbath since this war began that the Yanks were permitted to destroy its peace and happiness." The Yankees disrupted her Christmas by ransacking her house, attempting to steal her things, and threatening to break open her smokehouse unless she fed them well.<sup>141</sup>

William S. H. Baylor, angry at the United States Army and still pious, wrote home on April 22, 1862 that "'It is a hard matter to give up home to the ruthless (illegible) or an enemy seeking our destruction and the (illegible) wisdom of God can alone see why it is done – Let us submit and pray for

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<sup>140</sup> *Sanctified Trial: The Diary Of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, A Confederate Woman in East Tennessee.* pp. 104, 109, 113, 128, 310.

<sup>141</sup> *Sanctified Trial: The Diary Of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, A Confederate Woman in East Tennessee.* pp. 191, 222, 237, 299, 271, 273-274.

his blessing to restore us to him soon again and in His own good time.”<sup>142</sup> Spencer Glasgow Welch, who spent much of the war writing his letters through romantic lenses, maintained his anger against shirkers and deserters throughout the war. Even as late as October, 1864, Welch vented his disdain for those who could serve but did not. Welch described the men who were exempt from fighting, but who physically could have joined the war effort had they chosen to do so, as “hardened to their disgrace” and stated that “If the South is ever overcome, the contemptible shirkers will be responsible for it.” He also mentioned “miserable skulkers [who] almost die of fright” during battlefield charges.<sup>143</sup> Welch made his anger clear in his choice of words to describe shirkers, skulkers and deserters. By describing these men as disgraced, contemptible and miserable, Welch indicated that these men violated the Romantic ideal to which he held the war, and revealed his anger at these men for not sharing his belief in the Confederate cause.

Welch also directed fury towards those “able-bodied exempts” who promoted the war until the bitter end but never served: “This war can never end until the fanatics, both North and South, are gotten rid of. They are influenced solely by their blind, senseless passions, and reasons never enter their heads. It is always discontented, worthless wretches who bring about revolutions. The North is still infested with such characters, and the South is not far behind.” Welch then commented “What a pity we cannot have them killed, but they cannot be made to fight.”<sup>144</sup> This anger shows divisions within the South, as Confederates looked to those who verbally supported the war to join the thinning Confederate ranks. These passages from Welch's letters illustrate the widespread anger felt towards those who refused to fight in the war. Welch articulately described the type of people hated by soldiers as the war dragged on, using such epithets as “worthless wretches,” “miserable skulkers,” and “contemptible shirkers.” At once demonstrating his anger towards these people and his abandonment of his romantic ideals, Welch

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<sup>142</sup>William S. H. Baylor to Mary Baylor, 4/22/1862, Valley of the Shadow Project.

<sup>143</sup>Welch, 107, 109, 112-113.

<sup>144</sup>Welch, 107, 112-113.

fantasized about ways in which to make these people pay for their support of a war they would not fight.

More than the shirkers, however, Welch hated the United States Army. Welch would rather “remain at war for the rest of my life rather than to have any connection with the Yankees again.”<sup>145</sup> Not only does this demonstrate Welch's anger toward the Union soldiers against whom he fought, Welch felt equal anger toward those people who, in his mind, only dragged the war out longer by refusing to join the Confederate forces and fight for independence.

John B. Jones directed his anger at three groups of people: Yankees, Confederate officers, and speculators. His anger toward the Yankees shone through in his comments regarding the New York draft riots, which he called “*awful* good news.” Jones's animus toward the Yankees also showed when he gleefully described the storming of Fort Pillow by Nathan Bedford Forrest, including Forrest's decision to put “all the garrison, but one hundred, to the sword; there being 700 in the fort - 400 negroes.” This recalls Spencer Glasgow Welch's praise of Forrest and Dyer's lack of comment on the Fort Pillow massacre in its support of the Confederate generals and the overall racism inherent in the Southern slave society of the nineteenth century.<sup>146</sup>

When Yankees ascended the Mississippi river, John B. Jones, assistant to the Confederate secretary of war, chided “marksmen and deer hunters of Missouri” for allowing the Yankees to get past them. Jones also expressed his anger at General Pemberton after the fall of Vicksburg, asking “When *will* the government put 'none but Confederates' on guard?” Jones's fury was evident as he wrote about “the able-bodied rich men” who escaped the draft “by bribery and corruption; and the hearty *officers* - acting adjutant-generals, quartermasters, and commissaries - ride their sleek horses through the city

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<sup>145</sup> Welch, 107, 109, 112-113, 114.

<sup>146</sup> John B. Jones, pp. 244, 29, 241, 267.

<sup>146</sup> The volume's editor took great glee in informing the reader that while illegally butchering legitimate prisoners of war, Forrest was actually in compliance with the rules of war in place at the time.

every afternoon. This, while the cause is perishing for want of men and horses!" His bewildered anger showed when he noted that "The prisoners of war (foreigners) that took the oath of allegiance and enlisted in the Confederate States service, are deserting *back* to the Federal service, under Gen Sherman's promise of amnesty."<sup>147</sup> This confused anger mirrors Welch's anger toward those who escaped service for the Confederates. Jones failed to understand how, after taking an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy, a man could just walk away and leave it behind. Acutely aware of the manpower shortage, Jones also expressed anger because these men had helped to reinforce the ranks, and now reneged on their oaths to the Confederacy and returned to the United States Army to increase those ranks.

Jones's anger against other government officials included those who would allow Confederates to sell cotton and other goods to the Union, despite Lee's orders to the contrary. Jones joined the "furious and universal outcry in the Confederate States against the extortioners and speculators in food and fuel," because "my wife and children are emaciated to some extent." Jones felt betrayed by Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, and the Vice President, who abandoned Richmond for safety with their families without notifying their staff.<sup>148</sup>

Jones recorded anger felt by others as well. The anger felt toward Mr. Memminger, the quartermaster general, by the clerks whose pay Memminger had withheld made its way into Jones's journal. Governor Brown expressed his anger toward the President for requesting troops from the state militia to join the national army, and this made it into Jones's narrative. Jones also recorded the indignation felt by rich planters after the President's and Governor Smith's proposal to bring enslaved people into the army. This proposal would have brought ire from such citizens as Sarah Morgan Dawson and Jones himself, as it would violate all of the norms constructed over centuries by Southern

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<sup>147</sup>John B. Jones, pp. 243, 531, 360, 356.

<sup>148</sup>John B. Jones, pp., 438, 474-475.

culture regarding appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for enslaved persons, and would intimate some level of equality between slaves and their masters.<sup>149</sup>

Soldiers demonstrated an anger all their own. Theodore Montfort harbored “vindictive feelings and bitter hatred” for Yankees because of the young Southern men writing wills in anticipation of dying at Union hands.<sup>150</sup> Deserters, when captured, inspired ire from their fellow soldiers. James E. Beard recorded the execution of a deserter in June, 1862, and voiced the common belief that the deserter deserved his lot.<sup>151</sup> The Volunteers of Lowndes County voiced a similar anger toward one James Howell, a citizen who refused to join the army in an open letter to the civilians of Lowndes County. Because Howell did not enlist, then hired a substitute for the draft, the Volunteers “fear...there is no good in his heart” and that “he will be a great injury to the desolate families left behind.” Because he once deserted a company, the Volunteers described this man as one who “would steal from widows and orphans and soldiers' wives” and “is not a friend to his country.” This letter in its entirety seems to ooze anger from every word, and aims to make James Howell a pariah in his community because of his failure to join the army.<sup>152</sup> This indicates not only that soldiers and civilians reviled deserters, they would go to great lengths to demonstrate their anger. By publicly denouncing Howell as a deserter, then extrapolating that because Howell deserted he was a menace to society, the Volunteers of Lowndes County attempted not only to express their anger but to make clear to any other potential deserters the consequences of deserting the army. Not only would the deserter live with the threat of execution hanging over him, he would have completely disgraced himself in the eyes of the community, and the community would perceive him as a threat to Confederate society because of his failure to endure the war.

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<sup>149</sup> John B. Jones, p. 345, 426, 459.

<sup>150</sup> Mills Lane, ed., p. 108.

<sup>151</sup> James E Beard, “Diary of James E Beard,” *Valley of the Shadow Project*.

<sup>152</sup> Mills Lane, p. 128.

As Confederates processed the gravity of the war, they lashed out. The targets of their anger ranged from Abraham Lincoln to the Southerner who avoided service or aided the Union troops in the area to the African Americans who fought for their freedom on behalf of the United States. Anger often led Confederates to make furious demands of God, the Confederacy and the United States. As Confederates worked through their anger, many reached the conclusion that making angry demands of the Almighty might have backfired and resulted in poor battle fortunes. In order to correct this error, many Confederates tried asking nicely. This led them to begin making bargains with God, for the survival of themselves, their families, or the Confederate society as a whole.

### Part III: Bargaining

Among the dying, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross portrays Bargaining as an attempt by the terminal patient to influence God into reversing His decision to take the patient from Earth. The patient may see bargaining as the counter to angry demands, believing that asking nicely might increase his or her chances of reaching an agreement with God. The end goal of Bargaining is to postpone the inevitable, terrifying end. Among the grieving, guilt often drives attempts to negate the pain by bringing the deceased back into one's life. Dr. Kessler and Dr. Kubler-Ross illustrate the motivations behind bargaining as a way to stave off the pain and reality of the loss. Among the Confederates, the attempts at bargaining not only illustrate the idea of asking God nicely after anger failed, but attempting to postpone the inevitable and stave off the pain and difficulties of having to rebuild a society and identity from scratch.<sup>153</sup>

Even in the beginning stages of the war, the citizens of Confederate States found themselves making bargains with God for the success of the Southern cause. Letters from Southern soldiers have a general pattern over the course of their service. At the beginning of the war, the soldier wrote upbeat, excited, even arrogant letters. Then, after a short time, he became angry at commanders, deserters, men who refuse to serve, the enemy, God, or any combination of the above. Eventually the soldier moves from anger to bargaining, speaking of sacrifices and days of fasting and thanksgiving, seeing if asking nicely will work better than furious demands.

Unfortunately for these Confederates, their optimism and humor were entirely unrealistic. They truly would need a bargain with God to win the war. The Union outmatched the Confederacy in population, industry, technology and capital.<sup>154</sup> The Union also blocked the South's chances of

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<sup>153</sup>Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, pp. 93-95; Kubler-Ross & Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, pp. 17-20.

<sup>154</sup>David Herbert Donald, *Why the North Won the Civil War: Six Authoritative Views on the Economic, Military, Diplomatic, Social, and Political Reasons Behind the Confederacy's Defeat*. pp.21-22.

European intervention. Secretary of State Seward skillfully, and sometimes bluntly, dissuaded European nations from considering formal recognition of the Confederate States of America. By playing on European desire not to enter a war against the United States, Seward refused to officially acknowledge that the American Civil War was more than simply a rebellion to be handled appropriately by the United States Government. This move cemented the Northern advantage in the war by removing the possibility of direct intervention from Europe in support of the Confederate effort.

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Despite the enthusiasm voiced by those who supported the Confederate cause, the internal divisions in the Confederacy made it even more unlikely that the Confederacy would succeed. The states which made up the Confederacy held a very divided population, in which enslaved persons made up one-third of the inhabitants and the three-quarters of free citizens did not own slaves. Most of the non-slaveholding free citizens opposed secession and resented those who forced secession and war onto the populace. According to David Williams, the promoters of secession in Texas had “engineered secession without strong backing from the ‘mass of the people.’” In South Carolina, a lawmaker asked “whoever waited for the common people when a great move was to be made – We must make the move and force them to follow.”<sup>156</sup> With such a small portion of the population actually in support of secession, the Confederate war effort started off with a major disadvantage.

The Confederate government and South as a whole bargained for the Confederacy's success. Jefferson Davis declared June 13th, 1861, the day that Robert G. Smith's unit “routed old Abe's army,” a day of thanksgiving and fasting.<sup>157</sup> Eliza Fain observed a day of fasting and prayer on July 28th, 1861.<sup>158</sup> Harvey Bear, a Southern planter, recorded another day of prayer and fasting on February 28,

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<sup>155</sup> David Herbert Donald, pp. 61-63.

<sup>156</sup> David Williams, *Bitterly Divided: The South's Inner Civil War*, The New Press (New York, 2008), pp. 1-3.

<sup>157</sup> Mills Lane, p. 17.

<sup>158</sup> *Sanctified Trial: The Diary Of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, A Confederate Woman in East Tennessee*. p. 23.



1862.<sup>159</sup> On August 21, 1863, Samuel Carson observed a day of rest and religious observance ordered by Jefferson Davis.<sup>160</sup> Other such days would follow, as the Confederates tried to convince the Almighty to support the Confederate cause.

Military units had daily religious instruction, to help the men remember how to behave in order to gain God's favor. On March 17, 1863, Andrew Brooks wrote to Eleanor S. Brooks, and mentioned that “When I commenced writing I had just returned from preaching, which we have every night.”<sup>161</sup> Members of Nathan Bedford Forrest's escort often attended church or other forms of religious instruction, as William R Dyer, a member of the escort from the beginning, attested in his diary. When the unit stayed in place for longer stretches of time, Dyer recorded going to church at least once a week, though many times he went more often.<sup>162</sup>

April 1862 saw Charles Jones Jr. writing to his mother about the fall of Fort Pulaski and saying that “heroic action and stern resistance” was needed to restore the “moral tone” of the South.<sup>163</sup> On the event of William S. H. Baylor's death, Edward P. Walton wrote to Baylor's widow to inform her of the circumstances surrounding her husband's passing. Walton informed Widow Baylor that her husband had fallen while lifting the regimental colors from the ground in battle, and described Baylor's death in starkly religious terms, describing Colonel Baylor as having “fallen on the altar of patriotism.” According to Walton, Colonel Baylor had fervently adopted Evangelical Christianity, had stopped swearing, and had even started proselytizing among his men. This deal with God allowed Baylor to believe that he had given God a reason to support the Confederate cause, as similar bargains gave other soldiers a sense of control over the future of the Confederacy.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>159</sup>Diary of Harvey Bear, Valley of the Shadow Project.

<sup>160</sup>Samuel Carson to Annie Harris, 8/21/1863, Valley of the Shadow Project.

<sup>161</sup>Andrew Brooks to Eleanor S. Brooks, 3/17/1863, Valley of the Shadow Project.

<sup>162</sup>Wayne Bradshaw, *The Civil War Diary of William R. Dyer*, Booksurge.com, 2009, pp. 10, 19, 24, 25, 29, 38, 43-45, 52.

<sup>163</sup>Mills Lane, ed., p. 114.

<sup>164</sup>Edward P. Walton to Mary Baylor, 10/1/1862, Valley of the Shadow Project.

Civilians found themselves making bargains with God as frequently as soldiers. In May, 1862, Kate Stone nearly begged God for a victory at Vicksburg, and expected that the cowardice of deserters would cause God to withhold such a victory.<sup>165</sup> Mary Jane Fulton believed that the trials of the war “are just for a season, and are purifying us.”<sup>166</sup> Davis declared August 21st, 1863, another day of prayer and fasting, as well as November 15th, 1864.<sup>167</sup> Eliza Fain observed a day of prayer and fasting on April 8th , and again on August 5th, 1864.<sup>168</sup>

Many soldiers saw the thousands of war deaths as a sacrifice that had to be made. Henry Graves's letter to his mother on July 4th, 1862 called the bloodshed a sacrifice on the altar of liberty. In exchange for this sacrifice, Henry expected European intervention in the South's favor.<sup>169</sup> Shephard Pryor wrote to his uncle in December, 1862, explaining that the people of the Confederacy had to make sacrifices in order for God to help the South win.<sup>170</sup> Even Kate Stone shared this belief, describing her younger brother Walter as “another boyish soldier, offering up his life, a sacrifice to his country,” when he joined the army in September 1862.<sup>171</sup>

Soldiers did their part in making individual bargains with God. Many soldiers, immediately before a battle or even just when the realization of their mortality hit home, made their own personal bargains with God. Some swore off cards, others promised to give up drinking. Other renounced other vices such as using profane language thought to anger God, or promised to adopt virtues such as controlling their temper, in order to survive the coming battle or to win the war for the South.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>Kate Stone, pp. 100-102.

<sup>166</sup>Catherine Thom Bartlett, *My Dear Brother: A Confederate Chronicle*. Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, Inc., 1952. p. 145.

<sup>167</sup>John B. Jones, pp. 261, 448.

<sup>168</sup>*Sanctified Trial: The Diary Of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, A Confederate Woman in East Tennessee*. pp. 170, 207.

<sup>169</sup>Mills Lane, p. 159.

<sup>170</sup>Mills Lane, p. 207.

<sup>171</sup>Kate Stone, p. 144.

<sup>172</sup>Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War*. pp. 9-10.

These days of fasting worked hand in hand with the fervent Confederate belief that God would vindicate the Confederates against the invading United States Army and individual soldiers. As Kate Stone, Eliza Fain, Emilie McKinley and Sarah Morgan Dawson, as well as John B. Jones and many soldiers believed, the Confederacy had God's support, and the Confederate cause was righteous and morally legitimate. The invading Yankees, on the other hand, spent most of their time violating God's will and offending Him by desecrating holy places and persecuting His people. The little bargains, and Confederacy-wide days of prayer and fasting, the statewide days of thanksgiving, all fed the Confederate belief in God's support of their nascent nation that the Confederates held.

A fervent religious belief that God would preserve the Confederacy supported Confederate bargaining efforts. The Evangelical tenor of Southern churches showed clearly in Confederates' expressions of faith. Tom Downtin trusted that “the God of Battles will be on our side....and crown us with victory,”<sup>173</sup> and William S. H. Baylor wrote to his wife that “we hope soon to be able to [flank the Union army] – that our force will allow us again to give them battle and by the blessings of Providence drive them from our homes.” When William Baylor advised his parents to leave Staunton, he wrote to his wife that “I am almost sorry to advised at all – Trusting in a kind Providence to look over and take care of them I hope that it will be His pleasure to restore us all to our homes with liberty and happiness smiling upon us and hearts full of gratitude for His mercy and goodness.”<sup>174</sup> In his letter home, Baylor included this passage, clearly illustrating his belief not only in the moral high ground occupied by the Confederacy, but in God's support of the Confederate war effort: “It cannot be that our cause is not just – It cannot be that we have so sinned as to be worthy of destruction – No it cannot be – He may be scourged (unclear: and we deserve it – we may be (illegible) to the last extremity), but if we rely upon God and do our duty the result will be our success.”

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<sup>173</sup>Mills Lane, ed. p. 7.

<sup>174</sup>William S. H. Baylor to Mary Baylor, 4/22/1862, Valley of the Shadow Project.

Many sermons bolster this image of a bargaining Confederacy, as ministers sought to reinforce the South's image as God's chosen people. The Reverend Steven Elliott wrote the sermon "Samson's Riddle" in 1863, in the heart of the war. Reverend Elliott consented to the publication of the sermon if it would aid the Confederate cause, and in the prayer the Reverend presented his congregation "to offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving," so that God could continue his mercy and hold the Confederacy in his favor against the United States.<sup>175</sup> The Reverend Steven Elliott, his 1864 sermon "Vain is the Help of Man," informs his congregation that "Once again have we been summoned my beloved people, to bow ourselves in humiliation before God, and with fasting and prayer to invoke his intervention in our behalf," in order to convince God that the Confederacy deserved his intervention to stem the "bloody tide" of war in their homes. The Reverend admits that "Had I ever looked to the arm of flesh, I should never have hoped for any termination of this conflict but a fatal one. The odds against us were too great, unless we believed that God was on our side, and that his influences would equalize the conflict." While this admission of the reliance of the Confederacy on God's aid seems all-encompassing and clear, the Reverend also notes that God had never failed to answer the Confederate pleas for assistance because of the Confederate morality.<sup>176</sup>

This habit of bargaining with God existed because the Confederates felt the need to convince God and themselves that they deserved victory over the United States and could earn it. The efforts on behalf of the clergy to lead their congregants in this bargaining helped to reinforce other types of bargaining by Confederates aiming at attempting to sway the course of the war. As soldiers functioned on the battlefield and bargained for their very immediate survival, women at home bargained not only for victory in general but that their sons', brothers', husbands', fathers', and friends' safe return. In the face of impotence to improve the Confederacy's fate, and after learning that anger did not achieve the

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<sup>175</sup>Steven Elliott, "Samson's Riddle," 1863. Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina.

<sup>176</sup>Steven Elliott, "Vain is the Help of Man," 1864. Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina.

desired result of changing current circumstances, Confederate ministers, women, soldiers, and politicians attempted to bargain with God on a national scale. This massive attempt to strike bargains with the Almighty helped the Confederate people to feel like they had a measure of control, because by modifying their behavior they could prove to themselves, each other, and God that the Confederacy deserved to win the American Civil War.

## Part IV: Depression

Depression, in the minds of the dying, falls into two categories. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross describes a reactive depression, in which the terminal patient becomes depressed because of the amount of loss involved in treating a terminal illness. Loss of one's body, one's money, one's possessions and one's friends all contribute to this type of depression. Dr. Kubler-Ross also identifies a preparatory depression, in which the patient anticipates the end of his or her own life. Both of these types of depression characterize Confederate depression, in which the Confederates suffered the loss of self, things, and family. The Confederates also experienced this preparatory depression as they prepared to live in a society completely unfamiliar in its structures and rules. Among the grieving, an absolute, paralyzing, primal grief characterizes depression. This deep grief also permeated the lives of the Confederates, as they lost loved ones and loved places to the war.<sup>177</sup>

After Southern soldiers realized the ineffectiveness of bargaining, their letters reveal a dramatic shift in mood. Even the letters in which the soldier tries to strike a bargain with God have some trace of hope in an eventual victory for the South. If the soldier had no such hope, he would not try to strike a bargain. The letters after the bargaining ends are simply listless, sad, and homesick. Many soldiers left no letters, because they chose to simply desert.

The defining characteristic of the letters and diaries is depression, the fourth stage of the grieving process. Soldiers seemed to simply give up on life, expecting to die in every battle, but never mentioning their hopes for the afterlife or any hopes of reunion with loved ones. Soldiers almost nonchalantly mention the death of comrades or the casualties left on the battlefields, and sometimes

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<sup>177</sup> Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, pp. 97-100; Kubler-Ross & Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, pp. 20-24.

border on coarse or disrespectful. After the fervent, feverish hope of the previous letters, the depression of these soldiers is striking.<sup>178</sup>

William Stillwell offered the best description of the depression which affected Confederate soldiers. In this passage, Stillwell goes back and forth between the consequences of surrender and continued strife, finding neither pleasant prospects. In this stage, Stillwell indicated that he was reaching an understanding that defeat was inevitable:

Hundreds of our men are deserting and those that remain are discouraged and disheartened and people at home are whipped and want us to give up. To give up is but subjugation, to fight on is but dissolution, to submit is awful, to fight on is death!... the sins of the people have rose up like a dark cloud between us and God, yes between us and the mercy seat... unless the great God help us we are gone...<sup>179</sup>

This passage demonstrates the complete lack of energy felt by Stillwell, as well as a general lack of hope throughout the Confederacy. Stillwell's sense of the doom of the Confederacy comes not just from his own denial, but from his observations. He sees men fleeing the army, observes that soldiers remaining in the army have lost hope, and indicates that popular support for the war has diminished. Stillwell then offers a reason for this collective depression, claiming that the bargains with God fell through. The sins of the Confederacy outweighed the good done by days of fasting, moral behavior, and other bargains made with the Almighty, leaving God no choice but to let the Confederacy as a whole suffer.

As 1862 drew to a close, Spencer Glasgow Welch began to lose hope. On September 9, 1862, Welch wrote of the army's condition: "We have had some dreadful sufferings, especially on these forced marches. The fatigue and pangs of hunger were fearful." Welch failed to mention that he rode a

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<sup>178</sup> Mills Lane.

<sup>179</sup> Mills Lane, pp. 260-261.

horse for the march, but his description of the march does reflect reality for the average soldier. Welch, later in the same letter, discussed the looting of fallen officers by regular soldiers for clothes and shoes. On September 24th, Welch wrote that “I have seen men rob the dead of their shoes and clothing, but I cannot blame a man for doing a thing which is almost necessary in order to preserve his own life.” Welch commented a couple of weeks later that “half of the men in the army seem to have become thieves.”<sup>180</sup> While Welch's words read as disdain, by looking deeper into the text, Welch reveals an overall sense of fatigue and hopelessness among the soldiers. By looting fallen officers, Confederate soldiers indicated that they had completely abandoned Romantic notions of chivalry and proper conduct and did only what they needed to do in order to survive to get home. This behavior, foreign to Welch, seemed dishonorable. In reality, the soldiers' desperation showed that the earlier optimism had vanished and soldiers had thrown ideas of honor by the wayside.

Welch had this to say about the Union army, indicating his realization that the Union army would lose as many men as necessary to bleed the Confederate forces dry: “They certainly are fanatical. As much as we whip them, they are not disposed to give up.” Nearly a year later, Welch wrote that “The Yankee forces are so large that we cannot expect to gain more decided victories over them. All we can do is to hold them in check until they are discouraged and worn out.” This departure from Welch's earlier Romantic contemplations of the war indicates that even he gave up hope in winning an honorable war. Welch still maintained hope that the Confederates can defeat the Yankees, but he indicates a knowledge that doing so will require more lives lost and more dishonorable fighting methods than he had envisioned at the beginning of the conflict. When reminiscing about his wedding, the surgeon wrote that “Little did we think that devastation and distress would be so soon spread over the entire land. War seems to be a natural occurrence. It has been our misfortune to experience it, and

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<sup>180</sup>Welch, 23-27, 31, 37.



there is nothing we can do but enure it philosophically and try to become resigned to it.”<sup>181</sup> This resignation could indicate an acceptance of the situation, but Welch's overall tone still lacks the energy that characterizes acceptance. He had not yet resigned himself. Instead, the dearth of energy in these words places Welch firmly in the grasps of depression.

As an officer, Welch's letters provide insight into the depression of the average troops. On March 5, 1863, Welch recounted an execution for desertion. “The man was seated on his coffin with his hands tied across his breast.” Welch recorded similarly harsh punishments for cowardice, such as wearing a sign proclaiming one to be a coward and being tied up on display.<sup>182</sup> Welch reported that desertion rates kept increasing, even as punishments grew harsher and more common, indicating the desperation of soldiers to escape a situation which they believed would otherwise end in death. These reports continued on September 16, 1863 and September 27th, 1863. On the 27th, Welch recounted nine executions for desertion on September 26th. One soldier had deserted because a newspaper, the *Raleigh Standard*, “had convinced him that Jeff Davis was a tyrant and that the Confederate cause was wrong.” Welch expressed his opinion that “It is most unfortunate that this thing of shooting men for desertion was not begun sooner. A great many men will now have to be shot before the trouble can be stopped.”<sup>183</sup> Welch's stubborn detachment from the reality facing common soldiers allows him to maintain such a tone in the face of executions. However, a deeper reading reveals the hopelessness of the soldiers who deserted in droves. These men felt such desperation to escape the war that they risked death and dishonor to make their way home.

William Dyer also recorded many instances of desertion and a general low mood in the men around him in his diary. He often went out hunting deserters, and mentioned several occasions on which Forrest pardoned recaptured deserters or those who returned willingly. Dyer, however, also

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<sup>181</sup>Welch, 32-33, 42-44.

<sup>182</sup>Welch, 45.

<sup>183</sup>Welch, 78-80.

recorded executions for desertion. Valuable inferences can be drawn from these passages, which offer us unusual insight into the emotional world of William Dyer and his comrades. In his usual terse language, Dyer recorded “Soldiers much depressed” on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1863. On September 16<sup>th</sup>, an exhausted Dyer recorded their first day of rest in sixteen days. “Nothing transpired to remove the monotony of camp life” on December 10, 1863. These expressions of discontent offer a window into Dyer's mind, because his diary entries often lack introspection, even in such a roundabout way as these two short lines offer. Dyer must have found the depression of the soldiers exceptional in order to record it in his diary, as most often his entries tell us more about the weather and troop movements than about the mood of the troops.<sup>184</sup>

Multiple soldiers sent letters home to their families which characterized this loss of hope. In July 1864, J. M. Davis wrote to his family, and concluded that “We are a gone people without help...”<sup>185</sup> William Dickey told his wife that “there is a great gloom resting over the Confederacy at this time...”<sup>186</sup> On January 21st, 1865, J. H. Jenks informed his wife that “... we are a ruined people. There is no chance for us.”<sup>187</sup> This defeatist attitude indicated the depression which only a miserable war effort can cause. These letters lack any hope for something good to come next, only discussing the impending doom of the Confederacy. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, “17 of the boys left for parts unknown,” and five days later, “Soldiers low in spirits.” In February, 1864, Dyer “Went on a trip after some deserters we caught them and encamped for the night.” Two days later, Forrest pardoned a deserter whom he was supposed to execute by gunshot. Mid-April through mid-May, 1864 saw more deserters, and efforts to conscript men to replace the growing number of deserters. On May fifteenth, 1864, Dyer recorded the

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<sup>184</sup>Bradshaw, 15, 29.

<sup>185</sup>Mills Lane, p. 312.

<sup>186</sup>Mills Lane, p. 315.

<sup>187</sup>Mills Lane, p. 341.

capture of fifteen deserters, and on June ninth, two men from Kentucky who had deserted and been captured met their ends by execution.<sup>188</sup>

Deserters came from across the entire Confederacy, demonstrating that depression did not hit one state's soldiers harder than it hit another's. Samuel Carson wrote to Annie Harris on September 5, 1863. In this letter, he recounted the execution of ten soldiers from North Carolina. These soldiers had deserted, and then killed the officer who tried to arrest them for desertion. He also told Annie that, while his company was headed to Tennessee, he did not want to go. On September 30, 1863, Carson wrote from the Rapidan River near Orange Courthouse. However, Carson had to stop writing because "I am so cold that I can't scarcely write." Carson added on this postscript: "I will write if spared, when the battle is over (if we have one) and give you the particulars." In the postscript, he also asked Annie to pray for him.<sup>189</sup> On October 7, 1863, Samuel Carson wrote to his brother about more desertions among his troops. "A great deal of desertion is going on all through the army, and as many are being shot for the same offence. It seems the more shooting, the more desertion."<sup>190</sup> This increase in desertion reflects the general feeling of hopelessness among the troops, both because of their own circumstances and because of desperate letters from home.

For men to desert in the numbers intimated by these soldiers, the general mood of the soldiers had to be very low indeed. These men joined the Confederate army full of fire, passion and optimism. They detested deserters – until they themselves deserted. The emotional drain that led to these men deserting the cause to which they had previously pledged life and limb was enormous, especially given the opinion held by civilians of deserters. These men had entirely given up hope that the Confederate army could win the war, and decided that it made more sense to be at home taking care of their families when the inevitable occurred.

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<sup>188</sup>Bradshaw, 29, 36-37, 44, 47-49.

<sup>189</sup>Samuel Carson to Annie Harris, 9/5/1863, Valley of the Shadow Project.

<sup>190</sup>Samuel Carson to his Brother, 10/7/1863, Valley of the Shadow Project.

Civilians found themselves equally able to describe the depression that swept the Confederacy. A Virginia planter wrote to his brother in April of 1865 that “The gloomy anticipations which now fill every heart, effectually banish anything like happiness.”<sup>191</sup> This demonstrates that soldiers on the battlefield were not alone in their feelings of hopelessness. The depression in the ranks spread to the populace as the news of the war grew consistently worse, depriving the war effort of popular support.

John B. Jones's depression slipped into his journal infrequently, but poignantly. Jones described the state of the Confederate currency thus: “As well might one lift himself from the earth by seizing his feet, as to legislate a remedy.” This brutal hopelessness spread from only the Confederate currency to the rest of life as well. “My wife wept, my daughter prayed, upon hearing the news” of Columbia's fall, as the loss of the city indicated the impending arrival of Sherman and Grant in Richmond, and the doom of the Confederacy. After receiving news of the defeats at Natchez and Yazoo City, Jones had “Nothing but disasters to chronicle now,” and the loss of General Pemberton's army caused “sadness and gloom throughout the land.” This gloom would only intensify in 1865. When Lee's army surrendered, Jones wrote, “This army was the pride, the hope, the prop of the Confederate cause, and numbered, I believe, on the rolls, 120,000 men. All is lost! No head can be made by any other general or army - if indeed any other army remains.”<sup>192</sup> While the soldiers who surrendered most likely numbered less than one third of Jones's figure, the significance of Lee's surrender to the fate of the Confederacy was incredibly significant. The loss of hope which accompanied Lee's surrender ties in with the South's veneration of its generals. Lee's acknowledgment of defeat, in the eyes of many Confederates, spelled doom for the entire Southern war effort and the Confederate States of America. So many people had placed all their hopes in Lee, so when Lee, the embodiment of the Confederate

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<sup>191</sup>Catherine Thom Bartlett, *My Dear Brother: A Confederate Chronicle*. Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, Inc., 1952. p. 173.

<sup>192</sup>John B. Jones, pp. 317, 501, 535, 241-242, 248.

war effort, surrendered, the rest of the Confederate supporters had to face the reality. If Lee could not win the war, no Confederate general could.

As ever, Jones recorded evidence for others' depression as well. He wrote of "sadness and gloom throughout the land" following the fall of Vicksburg. After recording an exchange between Jefferson Davis and an unnamed girl, in which the President said that soldiers may have to eat rats because the government could not afford mules, Jones wrote that "the President fell into a grave mood, and some remarks about recognition caused him to say twice - 'We have no friends abroad!'"<sup>193</sup> This lack of international support dampened official hopes for Confederate victory, because the Confederates, styling themselves after the Patriots in the American Revolution, understood the necessity of foreign aid in driving out a large, industrialized, imperial power. Without aid from abroad, the Confederate leadership knew that the Confederacy could not succeed.

Dolly Sumner Lunt, a plantation owner's widow, found eloquent words for her depression. She asked in 1864 if she was "not in the hands of a merciful God who has promised to take care of the widow and orphan?" as she recorded her fear of losing her home. While begging a Union officer for protection while soldiers plundered her estate, she "saw nothing before me but starvation." Christmas eve was "an occasion now of sadness and gloom," and wondered "Why must the innocent suffer with the guilty?" Christmas day itself found Mrs. Lunt hiding her face under her blankets and "mingling [her] tears" with her disappointed daughter's.<sup>194</sup> This heartbreaking Christmas story was not unique in the Confederacy. Many people, accustomed to celebrations and happy holidays with plenty to eat, drink and give, did not have the ability to face a holiday lacking even one of those three components. When forced to endure a fourth Christmas of hardship, Dolly Sumner Lunt finally lost hope and surrendered to depression.

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<sup>193</sup>John B. Jones, pp. 241-242, 352.

<sup>194</sup>Dolly Sumner Lunt, "A Woman's Wartime Journal: An Account of the Passage Over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea, As Recorded in the Diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt (Mrs. Thomas Burge)." *Documenting the American South*, University of North Carolina.

Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain's depression surfaced throughout her diary, displayed as feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and a lack of control over the events in her life. On March 18th, 1862, she wept when "The thought has been upon me what if in the Providence of God the North shall be successful. " In October of that year, Mrs. Fain wrote that "my heart is very sad. I feel like giving up at times and were it not for the thought what is thy duty I would sink down." On June 2nd, 1863, Mrs. Fain lamented, "Days are dark and friends of earth are few. Oh how unstable is the friendship of this world . We know not how long we shall be able to rely on those who are dear by the ties of kindred." On January 10th, 1864, Mrs. Fain described her sadness for "The many hearts of wives, mothers and sisters who were bowed with grief on account of its terrible demands. How many of those so loved have been gathered in the promiscuous heap and laid in trenches prepared by unfeeling soldier hands." <sup>195</sup> This passage speaks of Mrs. Fain's sorrow and lack of optimism, as she recognized that almost every person in the American South had lost a friend or family member to the Confederate war effort. It also speaks of the forced departure from traditional ways of death, in which the elderly or very young died at home, surrounded by friends and family, and then were laid to rest in a family plot. This departure wrenched Confederate women, who had great difficulty coping with this new way of death, and often this led women into depression.

Similarly to Mrs. Fain, Sarah Morgan felt without control or friends. On May 17th, 1862, she wrote, "One of these days, when peace is restored... we will wonder how we could ever have been foolish enough to await each hour in such breathless anxiety. We will ask ourselves if it was really true that nightly, as we lay down to sleep, did we not dare plan for the morning, feeling that we might be homeless and beggars before the dawn..." On June 4th, Miss Morgan declared "Let us stay and die. We can only die once; we can suffer a thousand deaths with suspense and uncertainty; the shortest is the best. Do you think the few words here can give an idea of our agony and despair." On September 10th,

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<sup>195</sup> *Sanctified Trial: The Diary Of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, A Confederate Woman in East Tennessee.* pp.38, 48, 73, 143.

1862, Miss Morgan recorded that "It seems to me we are being swayed by some kind of destiny which impels us here or there, with neither rhyme nor reason, and whether we will or no. Such homeless, aimless, purposeless, wandering individuals are rarely seen. From one hour to another, we do not know what is to become of us." On September 20th, she similarly asked, "Does it not seem that this war will sweep off all who are nearest and dearest, as well as most worthy of life, leaving only those you least care for, unharmed?"<sup>196</sup> Miss Morgan's loss of control and the loss of her family and her social world, left her wallowing in deep, lethargic sadness. Her belief that God had abandoned the Confederates, indicated by her belief that only the least godly would survive the war, also fed her depression. If God had abandoned the Confederacy due to Southern immorality, the war could not end well for the Confederacy.

Depression hit Kate Stone as her family fled Louisiana for Texas. Their slaves had taken over their home, and the family fled the slave revolt they feared was coming. On the way to Texas, Kate noted a feeling similar to Sarah Morgan Dawson and Mrs. Fain, that something beyond human influence controlled her life.

...and at night when we stopped, I had only the spirit to lean lazily back in one of our two rocking chairs and watch Annie get supper, or to look up at the stars and think of all the dear friends that the waves of Fate are sweeping farther and farther away from us every day. I had such a longing for home and the dear life of the past that my very soul would grow sick.<sup>197</sup>

This description of "waves of Fate" pulling families apart while the writer lacked the energy to function surfaced in Dolly Sumner Lunt's and Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain's diaries, as well as Kate Stone and Sarah Morgan Dawson's accounts. Characteristic symptoms of depression include a lack of

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<sup>196</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, pp. 33, 220, 23, 63.

<sup>197</sup>Kate Stone, 223.

energy, feelings of isolation, and a feeling that one does not control one's own life. This set of quotes illustrates the commonality of these feelings among the white Southern women whose lives the war had turned upside down. These feelings wove through all levels of Confederate society, from soldiers giving up on going home alive, to government officials lamenting the chances of Confederate victory, and civilians being pulled this way and that by forces beyond their control. The loss of control over their lives often pushed people further into God's hands, as they placed their fate squarely under God's control and surrendering entirely to his will. This helped the Confederates survive this portion of the war, because by giving control of their lives over to God they could trust that everything happened for a reason and that their trials were part of a divine plan.

However, the newspapers did not turn to God for solace in this period. According to J. Cutler Andrews, 1864 ended with “gloom within the Confederate editorial offices and generally among the Southern people.” Andrews offers telling insight into the mindset of the reporters and editors, who for most of the war attempted to bolster public confidence in the Confederate cause. To fail in maintaining a high morale meant that the Confederate press had gained a greater insight into the reality of the war, as demonstrated by De Fontaine's account of the state of the Confederate army on December 11, 1863:

“The surface of the ground is hard as rock, and at every step the frozen edges of the earth cut into naked feet, until the path of the army may be almost said to have been tracked in blood. To remedy the evil, I have seen these men, accustomed as they were at home to every luxury, strip their coats and blankets from their backs, and tie the rags around their feet; I have seen them take the fresh hides of cattle, reeking with the warm blood, and fashion therefrom rude moccasins to last them for the day's march; and I



have seen them beg in piteous terms of passing horsemen for a brief respite to their painful walk...”<sup>198</sup>

This passage offers insight not only into the world of the press, but also into the soldiers' lives at this stage in the war. The men, according to the newspaper accounts, bloody simply from walking, made the best of their situation and did what was necessary to press on. While this may have instilled hope into the general public, these descriptions reflected the reality which led to high rates of desertion and apathy within the Confederate ranks.

These newspaper reports also indicated the mood of the civilian population, as writers and editors fought the general gloom and desperation in the Confederacy. J. Cutler Andrews describes the Southern press as “both heartsick and confused,” to the point that the Richmond Enquirer would encourage readers to support abolition if it would lead to British and French recognition and assistance.<sup>199</sup> In Charleston, a journalist named Alexander described the men who advocated for secession in 1860 as “querolous and despondent,” contrary to reports early in the war of secessionist fervor among the populace.<sup>200</sup>

On April 4th, 1864 an Alabama private wrote the following poem, which perfectly illustrates the deep grief, guilt and exhaustion which characterize depression:

“I am weary of war, of powder [and] ball

I am weary & sick of the glory & all...

Too much blood has already flowed like a river

too many fond hearts have been parted forever

Too many farewells with tears have been spoken

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<sup>198</sup>J. Cutler Andrews, 389.

<sup>199</sup>J. Cutler Andrews, 482-483.

<sup>200</sup>J. Cutler Andrews, 483.

Too many fond circles already been broken

Footsore and weary over paths steep and rough

We have fought, we have bled, we have suffered enough.”<sup>201</sup>

Hiram Smith Williams, the poem's author, faced the same exhaustion and grief faced by Kate Stone and many others. This grief, and its attendant exhaustion, blocked any optimism about the war's end, instead leaving Williams and the others like him with a deep lethargy and despair as all they could see ahead of them was more misery. This sense that bargaining had failed pushed many Confederates into depression, as they realized that the war would not end in their favor.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup>Hiram Smith Williams, 4/4/1864, in James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, p.167.

<sup>202</sup>*Why the South Lost the Civil War*

## Part V: Acceptance

Acceptance rounds out the grieving process. Among the dying, this stage is characterized by a feeling of peace and a general absence of feeling, emotions, and energy. The fight has come to its end. Among the grieving, acceptance signals the realization – literally, the making real – of the permanent absence of the lost loved one. It begins the process of learning to live in this new world without that loved one present. For Confederates, this stage came late in the war, if not after the surrenders themselves, and was characterized by a general realization of the horrific nature of the war and the loss of their antebellum society.<sup>203</sup>

In this stage, while the soldiers still were painfully aware of the probable end of the war the letters take on a new kind of energy. This is not the optimism of the earlier letters, but a more dogged determination that even if the war must end poorly for the South, the soldiers will do all they can to make it a hard victory for the North to win.<sup>204</sup> Civilians shared this same mindset. One Virginian wrote to his brother in April, 1865, that “The cause is lost hopelessly....A life of toil is before us....God knows what is to become of us, but I suppose we shall soon know.”<sup>205</sup> Some Confederates came to this stage early, often soldiers who served in the units at Bull Run which saw the worst of the battle. Others came to acceptance later in the war, soldiers reaching this stage far before civilians, and civilians in occupied areas of the South far before those in areas less damaged by war. This fits with Kubler-Ross's scholarship, in which she found that people undergoing a catastrophic change in their lives reach acceptance at different times relative to their learning of the impending event.

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<sup>203</sup>Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, pp.123-125; Kubler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, pp. 24-28.

<sup>204</sup>Mills Lane.

<sup>205</sup>Catherine Thom Bartlett, *My Dear Brother: A Confederate Chronicle*. Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, Inc., 1952. p. 175.

By 1863, soldiers knew that they were going to die. They in fact saw it as an escape, a release from the suffering and brutality of war.<sup>206</sup> Their main concern, once they realized this, was to make sure they were identifiable to those who would bury them. This led to many practices, including carrying badges with the soldier's name, company and regiment engraved on a silver shield. Southern soldiers more often carried small pocket bibles with their name, address and instructions for family inside.<sup>207</sup> Despite these measures, many soldiers were entirely lost and never identified because of the devastating effects of artillery on the human body.<sup>208</sup>

Acceptance of the war's end often found its way into soldiers' letters home, as they sought to give their loved ones some semblance of the last words which the *ars moriendi* so coveted. As early as 1861, soldiers wrote "last letters" home to their loved ones. Soldiers wrote these heartrending letters in anticipation of the soldier's death in the next battle, since after seeing so many devastating engagements, soldiers knew their chances of survival were low. Sullivan Ballou wrote such a letter to his wife, Sarah, on July 14, 1861, informing her that "If it is necessary that I should fall on the battlefield for my country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter." Reflecting a new belief in a happy afterlife, he told her to "think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again," and assured her that "If the dead can come back to this earth... I shall always be near you."<sup>209</sup> This renewed optimism did not reflect the denial of the early war. Instead, it took into account the likely death of the author and a new hope: that he could return to watch over his family, even though he had died in battle. This new version of hope characterizes the shift in mindset, as Confederates lost hope in the war, but began to hope for something good after conflict war ended.

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<sup>206</sup>Drew Gilpin Faust, p. 176.

<sup>207</sup>Drew Gilpin Faust, p. 119.

<sup>208</sup>Drew Gilpin Faust, p. 128.

<sup>209</sup>Sullivan Ballou, "Sullivan Ballou's Letter to his Wife." <<http://www.civil-war.net>>.

Shephard Pryor wrote a last letter in October, 1861 telling his wife that while he was “liable to be killed in any battle we may have,” she should remember that “there will be thousands of widows and orphans made that will perhaps be in a worse fix than you would be if I should fall.”<sup>210</sup> In December, 1862, Shephard Pryor wrote his wife that “It was a grand sight” to see a battlefield filled with dead Federal troops and that “Such sights as those are grand to those who are used to seeing dead men.”<sup>211</sup> Ira Woodruff wrote to his cousin in November, 1861, giving him instructions to “honor me as a fallen soldier who fought for the honor of his own dear land” if he should fall.<sup>212</sup> While Ballou looked forward to rejoining his wife in spirit after his death, Pryor hoped that his family and friends would remember him as an honorable man, who died fighting for a moral cause.

Southern soldiers were aware of more than their likely death – they foresaw the defeat of the Confederacy long before the civilians did. In December, 1862, William Stillwell wrote to his wife that “we may have to mourn over defeat yet”<sup>213</sup> August 1863 saw many letters home about the South’s inevitable defeat. Sidney Richardson informed his parents that without foreign aid, the South would have to throw in the towel because “it does not do any good to whip them....I think we are ruined now.”<sup>214</sup> In September, 1863, Jeremy Gilmer wrote to his wife that “As long as the contest is one of work and shooting at long range, no people can beat the infernal Yankees.”<sup>215</sup> This simple statement acknowledges the superiority of the Union army in at least one regard: sniping. However, it also indicates a larger pattern of declining belief in Confederate superiority on the battlefield and Confederate ability to win the war.

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<sup>210</sup>Mills Lane, p. 76-77.

<sup>211</sup>Mills Lane, p. 205.

<sup>212</sup>Mills Lane, p. 82.

<sup>213</sup>Mills Lane, p. 199.

<sup>214</sup>Mills Lane, pp. 258-259.

<sup>215</sup>Mills Lane, p. 268.

Some soldiers framed their acceptance of defeat in more political than military terms. In May, 1864, Bolton Thurmond wrote that “I am all out of hopes of us ever gaining our independence. We are a ruined people. Our government is gone up....I hope that peace will soon be made, but there is no chance for it now in our favor.”<sup>216</sup> June 1864 saw two more of Bolton Thurmond's letters to Frances Porterfield, in which he told her “That is what will end this struggle if nothing else, the men quitting....I can't see it [further prolonged war] will be of any benefit to us, only ruining our country and killing our good men.”<sup>217</sup> His second letter told Miss Porterfield that “We were wrong to rebel against a civil government as we did....My honest opinion is that we will be subjugated and that before long.”<sup>218</sup> Thurmond's statement indicates the acceptance that the Confederacy would not win the war, and illustrates the hope that peace would come quickly in order to spare the Confederacy from losing any more men. This pairing of acknowledgment of a negative outcome with the hope of something better to follow characterizes acceptance.

Taking part in an activity that one had previously abhorred also could indicate acceptance of the kind of war the South brought down on America. By May of 1864, Spencer Glasgow Welch himself admitted to looting the bodies of the fallen. His need drove him to take a coat and a rubber cloth after the Battle of the Wilderness. In October, he mentioned the “little axes” with which the Union army supplied its soldiers, and said that “many of our men have supplied themselves with them.”<sup>219</sup> This decision to finally give in to unromantic, unchivalrous behavior indicates that Welch had reached a point at which he understood the war. He knew that the war effort had to end in favor of the Union army, but he still hoped to survive and go home to his wife. This hope drove him to acts he previously cast as unconscionable, in order to stay alive through the rest of the war.

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<sup>216</sup>Mills Lane, p. 293.

<sup>217</sup>Mills Lane, p. 299-300.

<sup>218</sup>Mills Lane, pp. 303-304.

<sup>219</sup>Welch, 95, 111.

Towards the end of the war, even the staunchest Confederates dropped the Romantic smokescreen and accepted the brutality of the Civil War at face value. As other soldiers wrote, Welch described the horror of the battle at Spottsylvania: “[The battle] was perfectly fearful. I never experienced such anxiety in my life. It was an awful day, and it seemed to me as if all the 'Furies of Darkness' had come together in combat. Everybody who was not firing was pale with anxiety, but our noble soldiers stood their ground, fighting with the utmost desperation.” He discussed the performance of both sides, offering the Union army this praise: “The Yanks certainly tried their best yesterday, and they made us try our best too. It was the most desperate struggle of the war.”<sup>220</sup> This description of the battle, and of the equality of both sides of the conflict, indicates that Welch recognized the horrific nature of the war. Rather than comparing this battle to his romantic boyhood adventure stories, Welch admitted his own fear and the fear of the men around him. More interesting, he admitted this fear in a letter to his wife and family, which likely would have passed through many hands as others at home sought news of the war.

Civilians found themselves capable of various levels of acceptance as the war ended. John B. Jones, Dolly Sumner Lunt and Kate Stone, among many other Confederate men and women, illustrate the range of responses among former Confederate civilians upon receiving word of Lee's surrender to General Grant.

John B. Jones had an unusual position throughout the war, and therefore accepted the outcome of the war later than soldiers but sooner than most civilians. As clerk to the Secretary of War, Jones knew from the beginning about the shortages of men, food, and equipment facing the Confederate army. His journal began with his statement that the attack on Ft. Sumter left only the alternatives of “successful revolution or abject subjugation.” Jones also knew that the war would last for more than a year, stating that within a year of the start of the war, the sight of wounded soldiers would no longer

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<sup>220</sup> Welch, 97.

cause a stir in the streets. Jones wrote that "Full many ensanguined plains will greet the horrific vision before this time next year." This knowledge remained in the background of Jones's journal throughout the war, though after the first months it rarely overshadowed his optimism and anger. In November, 1862, Jones wrote that he knew the Union would eventually take control of the Mississippi because of the Confederacy's lack of gunboats and garrisons. His knowledge of the inadequate food stores in the Confederacy made rumors of an impending evacuation of Richmond make sense to Jones, though the manner in which the government handled the evacuation angered him. The Confederacy lacked the food to feed the soldiers in the field, never mind the civilians in the cities. Jones simply was content to have enough flour and meal to feed his family bread for two months, and enough wood and coal for one month. His realism's last gasp before the end of the war came on April 2nd, 1865, when Jones realized that "Gen. Lee may not have sufficient troops to defend both the city and the Danville road at the same time."<sup>221</sup> This acknowledgment that the city would likely not have defenders led Jones to understand the plight of the Confederate war effort. On January 20th, 1865, John B. Jones recorded that "The president is calm. Some think him subdued." Even after Davis's flight from Richmond, however, Jones firmly believed that Davis would not have surrendered as Lee had, and questioned whether the President would ever forgive the General for choosing to capitulate.<sup>222</sup>

Kate Stone was able to accept the death toll of the war, even as it rent holes in her family. Kate said goodbye to two dear friends in July, 1862. At this goodbye, she thought "we both looked through tears when we shook hands, maybe for the last time."<sup>223</sup> In November 1863, Kate wrote that "death does not seem half so terrible as it did long ago. We have grown used to it." She also noted that "People live so fast now. We have no time to mourn."<sup>224</sup> December 10th, 1863, brought news of

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<sup>221</sup> John B. Jones, pp. 1, 10, 37, 45, 54-55, 478-479, 510, 527.

<sup>222</sup> John B. Jones, p. 483.

<sup>223</sup> Kate Stone, p. 132.

<sup>224</sup> Kate Stone, p. 258.



another loss to Kate's home in the death of her brother Coley. She recorded the date Coley died, as well as her brother Walter and love Ashburn, then asked "what charms can peace have when it does come bereft of our nearest and dearest?...These three graves darken the threshold." She notes two days later that her own family was not the only home in mourning, since "Nearly every household mourns some loved one lost."<sup>225</sup> In April, 1864, she remarked that "people do not mourn their dead as they used to. Everyone seems to live only in the present... otherwise I fancy many would go crazy."<sup>226</sup> This acceptance of the death toll, and her coping mechanisms, indicate that she acknowledged the devastation of the war despite the pain it caused her. She mentions that nearly everyone had lost a loved one to the war effort, which means that she did not face her grief alone. Across the Confederacy, civilians grieved for the loved ones they had lost to the war.

However, despite her ability to accept the death toll, Kate had great difficulty accepting the end of the war. While various lines from her journal hint at a realization of the inevitable, Kate always rebounded with hope and fervent faith in an eventual Confederate victory. Kate believed Lee to have won victories over Grant, and expected peace in favor of the South, as late as February, 1865. On April 23rd, 1865, Kate wrote that the Yankee papers reported Lee's surrender and the end of the Confederate army. Kate found all this "too dreadful to believe" and begged God to "spare us from this crushing blow and save our dying country!" Around Kate, "All refuse to believe such a disaster and the home life flows on as usual."<sup>227</sup> On the 28th, Kate gave "All honor to J. Wilkes Booth, who has rid the world of a tyrant" and noted "a great gloom over the town" because "All think that Lee and his army surrendered," though she continued to resist the notion that Johnston may have surrendered:<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup>Kate Stone, p. 262-264.

<sup>226</sup>Kate Stone, p. 277.

<sup>227</sup>Kate Stone, 331.

<sup>228</sup>Kate Stone, 333.

I cannot bear to hear them talk of defeat. It seems a reproach to our gallant dead... the thousands of grass-grown mounds heaped on mountainside and in every valley of our country should teach us to emulate the heroes who lie beneath and make us clasp closer to our hearts the determination to be free or die.<sup>229</sup>

Her resistance to total surrender demonstrates the power of denial. Even in late April of 1865, the memory of her honorable dead fueled her hope that the Confederacy might find a way to continue. However, this denial did not indicate a complete lack of acceptance. Kate realized that the Confederacy lost. She simply sought to hide from it in the memories of her brothers and lover. This desperate inclination to hide from the loss makes her following entries all the more remarkable.

In May, 1865, Kate Stone wrote a long journal entry, grappling with the realization that the loss of the Confederacy was inevitable. Despite this realization, she continued to voice her anger with women who held an “I told you so” attitude and claimed to have predicted the outcome of the war at the beginning. Thankfully for Kate, on May 27th and June 12th, her war had a somewhat happy ending. She was fortunate enough to see two of her brothers come home safe from war.<sup>230</sup>

Sarah Morgan Dawson reacted to the end of the war similarly to Kate Stone. Miss Morgan refused to believe that Vicksburg and Port Hudson fell, though she eventually came to terms with those losses. More difficult for Miss Morgan to handle were the losses of her brothers Gibbes and George. After learning of Lee's surrender, Miss Morgan stubbornly held onto the hope that God would help the South. Only after Lincoln's assassination did Miss Morgan fully comprehend the loss suffered by the South, realizing that "Our Confederacy has gone with one crash - the report of the pistol fired at

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<sup>229</sup>Kate Stone, 334.

<sup>230</sup>Kate Stone, pp. 339-441.

Lincoln." <sup>231</sup> This indicated the knowledge that, by assassinating Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth had only solidified Northern intentions to completely destroy the Confederacy.

Dolly Sumner Lunt accepted the end of the war easily. Though “The state of our country is very gloomy,” Ms. Lunt had the following to say about Lee's surrender:

General Lee has surrendered to the victorious Grant. Well, if it will only hasten the conclusion of this war, I am satisfied. There has been something very strange in this whole affair to me... At the beginning of the struggle, the minds of men, their wills, their self-control, seemed to be all taken from them in a passionate antagonism to the coming-in President, Abraham Lincoln.

Our leaders, to whom the people looked for wisdom, led us into this, perhaps the greatest error of the age... Oh, blinded men! Rivers deep and strong have been shed, and where are we now? - a ruined, subjugated people! What will be our future? is the question which now rests heavily upon the hearts of all.<sup>232</sup>

Mrs. Lunt accepted the end of the war as she accepted its beginning, with full reliance on God to protect her and the other righteous. However, she did hope for peace to return. The war ending, the acceptance of the Confederacy as subjugated and gone, and then the hope that peace would bring some stability marked Mrs. Lunt's acceptance of the end of the war.

On January 10, 1865, the *Mobile Register* published an article stating that “at no time since the commencement of the war has the popular feeling of despondency as to its result been so general and so deep as at the present moment.”<sup>233</sup> As if in agreement, the *Columbia Carolinian* published the following resigned passage regarding Sherman's advance: “Sherman has resumed his advance. It is

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<sup>231</sup>Sarah Morgan Dawson, pp. 394-395, 398, 426-440.

<sup>232</sup>Dolly Sumner Lunt, “A Woman's Wartime Journal: An Account of the Passage Over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea, As Recorded in the Diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt (Mrs. Thomas Burge).”

<sup>233</sup>J. Cutler Andrews, 483.

plain that he, at least, is not attending more than he ought to the rumors of peace fluttering in the atmosphere.”<sup>234</sup> Soon thereafter, Sherman arrived in Columbia, and several days later left behind a city of charcoal and ash.

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<sup>234</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, 488.

## Conclusion

The American Civil War wreaked havoc on the South, from the destruction of private property, livestock and crops, to the massive death toll. At the beginning of the war, soldiers and civilians alike held arrogantly optimistic views about the South's chances for winning the war. Kate Stone wrote in May, 1861, that her brothers going away to war would “have new scenes and constant excitement to buoy them up and the consciousness of duty done.”<sup>235</sup> In June, 1861, Lee and Thad Howell wrote to their grandparents that they “whipped” the Yankees, loved army life, and expected peace to come soon.<sup>236</sup>

Four years later, in January 1865, soldier J. H. Jenkins wrote to his wife, telling her that the Confederate cause was as good as lost.<sup>237</sup> In April, Kate Stone reached the realization that Lee had surrendered to Grant and the Confederacy was lost.<sup>238</sup> Dolly Sumner Lunt welcomed the news of Lee's surrender because it meant the end of the war.<sup>239</sup>

Between these two times, the South clearly underwent a change. Historians describe this change in many different ways. Gerald Linderman discusses it as an abandonment of and disillusionment with the “courage” ideal.<sup>240</sup> Drew Faust describes the shift as a function of how the war changed death itself, from something intimate to something anonymous, gentle to violent, natural to inflicted.<sup>241</sup> An alternate explanation is available in Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's five-step process for receiving catastrophic news, in which a person receiving the news goes through denial, anger, bargaining, and depression before reaching acceptance.

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<sup>235</sup>Kate Stone, p. 17.

<sup>236</sup>Mills Lane, p. 18.

<sup>237</sup>Mills Lane, p. 341.

<sup>238</sup>Kate Stone, p. 333.

<sup>239</sup>Dolly Sumner Lunt, “A Woman's Wartime Journal: An Account of the Passage Over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea, As Recorded in the Diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt (Mrs. Thomas Burge).”

<sup>240</sup>Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War*.

<sup>241</sup>Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*.

The South, ravaged by war, and mourning the loss of its men, came to the realization that the Confederate cause was lost. Reaching this realization took Confederates through denial, anger, bargaining and depression until they finally reached acceptance. This process can be seen at work in civilian diaries written by Kate Stone, Dolly Sumner Lunt, Sarah Morgan Dawson, Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, Keziah Goodwyn Hopkins Brevard, and John B. Jones. The letters and diaries of Confederate soldiers also illustrate this process, as Confederates navigated an alien world of sudden death on a grand scale, rumor, victory and loss.

Confederate citizens recorded the terrifying slide from denial to acceptance in their diaries and letters. An unwillingness or inability to foresee the devastation of the coming war and the constant denial of its increasingly likely outcome fill many of the early Civil War diary entries and letters. Anger at God, commanders, deserters, Yankees and even civilians pervaded letters and diaries from the American South. Attempts to bargain with God by adopting virtues or discarding vices in order to achieve victory fill Confederate writings. Listless hopelessness darkened most letters and journal entries for a time. Finally, the terrible realization that the North was bound to win the bloody, destructive war became impossible to deny. On May 2, 1865, Spencer Glasgow Welch wrote home about his reaction to Lee's surrender at Appomattox: "Every man was shedding tears. Sad as was the sight, everyone felt relieved that it was all over."<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup>Welch, 119.

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