

THE HIGHEST STYLE OF HUMANITY:
RELIGION, THE NEW SOUTH CREED, AND HOLLAND NIMMONS MCTYEIRE

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ABSTRACT

THE HIGHEST STYLE OF HUMANITY: RELIGION, THE NEW SOUTH CREED,
AND HOLLAND NIMMONS MCTYEIRE

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Through an examination of the religious ideology of Holland Nimmons McTyeire as evidenced in his sermons, editorials, and other writings, this thesis sheds light on the relationship between religion and the New South creed. Although he developed his ideology in the antebellum era, his ideas carried over into the postwar era albeit changed because of his war experience and the New South context. Because McTyeire believed that the South lacked a stable social structure, as he felt God desired, new leaders had to be established. Without the traditional leadership of the gentry, middle class professionals rose to power and McTyeire helped push the Methodist Episcopal Church, South to be accommodating toward their business practices, ambitions, and social prestige. His ideology essentially merged with the New South creed to become a plan of action to advance the southern Methodist church by modernizing its ecclesiastical structure, professionalizing its ministry, and defending its beliefs and institutions. Ultimately, McTyeire declared victory for his plan of action while ignoring many convenient realities that indicated otherwise. In the end, McTyeire's actions hastened the shift of southern Methodism from a populist religion of the heart toward an all-white, high-brow, and wealthy denomination.

INTRODUCTION: LONDON, 1881
MCTYEIRE, THE FIRST ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE, AND THE NEW SOUTH
CREED

On September 7, 1881, Bishop Matthew Simpson of the Methodist Episcopal Church approached the pulpit at John Wesley's chapel on City Road in London and delivered the opening address at the First Ecumenical Conference, a watershed moment for proponents of a fraternal body of worldwide Wesleyans. Those present believed that the meeting was proof of Wesley's prophetic vision, best exemplified in his famous declaration, "I look upon all the world as my parish." Out of four hundred clergy and lay delegates speaking some thirty different languages, Bishop Simpson represented the largest and wealthiest body of Methodists in the world, those primarily from the northern and midwestern parts of the United States. Simpson had led an illustrious life and often rubbed elbows with political elites and was thus well qualified to make the opening address. Baptized by Francis Asbury as an infant, the clergyman became close friends with Abraham Lincoln and later delivered the eulogy at the president's funeral. After Simpson's address ended and the delegates received communion, the Reverend George Osburn of the British Wesleyan Conference gave the official welcome and cited Wesley's quotation, "What hath God wrought?" so that those present could contemplate Methodism's growth from a small sect into a powerful worldwide religion with millions of adherents.¹

¹ John J. Tigert IV, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire: Ecclesiastical and Educational Architect* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1955), 1-2.

Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, then mounted the pulpit and gave the official reply to Rev. Osburn's welcome.² Bishop McTyeire brought warm greetings to England and described his tour of the continent where he saw many of Europe's great sites including Galileo's lamp in Pisa, Cicero's forum in Rome, and Virgil's tomb in Milan. But McTyeire especially wanted to visit England and declared, "What Palestine is to a Jew, what Italy is to a Roman Catholic, that [is what] England is to a Protestant."³ Nothing could match the wonder of Charles Wesley's tomb or the spot of John Wesley's conversion. McTyeire reminded his listeners that in order to see the chapel where Wesley held the first class meeting "you have to be here in England – not in drowsy Pisa, but in busy, bustling Bristol."⁴ In closing his brief remarks, McTyeire declared the unity of world Wesleyanism:

Canadians, and Texans, and Gothamites, and dwellers in the valley of the Mississippi, in Georgia and California, in Japan and China, in India and Australia, in Europe and the parts of Africa about Cape Town, strangers and sojourners in London, Caucasian and colored, Episcopal and Non-Episcopal, Connectional and Congregational – but, by the grace of God, Wesleyans all!...I reciprocate with all my heart your desire that God's blessing should be upon this gathering, and that we may take away from this Council and Conference great blessings for our people.⁵

It was a great moment for McTyeire. Standing at the pulpit in John Wesley's own chapel addressing a group of delegates from across the world certainly showed his importance within southern Methodism, and was no doubt one of the proudest moments in his professional life.

² McTyeire is properly pronounced 'Mick-tear.' For the sake of convenience, any references to the 'Northern Church' are to the Methodist Episcopal Church. Conversely, the 'Southern Church' refers to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Unless otherwise clarified in the text, all references to the 'church' are to the southern Methodist variety.

³ Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 248.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 251.

Born on July 28, 1824 in Barnwell District, South Carolina, McTyeire had been a faithful Methodist since his boyhood. Although his parents, John and Elizabeth Amanda McTyeire, were not members of the planter elite, they were a prosperous but sturdy yeomen family of Scotch-Irish extraction that owned several slaves. Holland spent most of his boyhood on the family farm near Barnwell, but in 1838 the family moved to Uchee, Alabama, just across the Georgia line near Columbus. Holland's parents were devout Methodists and took both religion and education very seriously. At the same time the family relocated, Holland's parents enrolled him in the Cokesbury Institute in Abbeville District, South Carolina to begin his formal secondary education. The Methodist school also operated a sizeable farm and required students to work to help make the institution viable. McTyeire would not stay at Cokesbury very long, but according to one biographer "his experience at the school gave him direction to his life."⁶ It was here that McTyeire experienced a religious conversion and decided to devote his life to the ministry.⁷

⁶ Frank Gulley, "Holland Nimmons McTyeire," in *American National Biography*, vol. 15, eds. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 198.

⁷ *Ibid.* Despite his significance as a churchman, historical treatments of McTyeire's life and career are limited. O. P. Fitzgerald and C. B. Galloway, *Eminent Methodists: Twelve Booklets in One Book* (Nashville: Publishing House M. E. Church, South, 1897) provide an early hagiographic account of McTyeire. The most comprehensive study remains Tigert's biography of McTyeire, published in 1955. While in depth and accurate, Tigert was McTyeire's grandson. Although the author did not avoid criticizing the bishop, he generally defended McTyeire's career, even describing him as a stalwart of academic freedom with a deep liberal streak. McTyeire was many things, but liberal is not a particularly accurate description. In general, however, Tigert gives a spirited rendition of the bishop's life and correctly emphasizes the importance of his career. More recently, Paul K. Conkin (*Gone With the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University* [Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985]) is one of just a few academic historians to look at McTyeire in substantive way. Focusing almost exclusively on McTyeire's career at Vanderbilt, Conkin described the bishop as a stubborn conservative, an often incompetent administrator, and the very antithesis of academic freedom. While he did recognize McTyeire as a great leader within the Southern Church, the nature of an institutional history limits Conkin's analysis. A minor work worth noting is Albert William Martin, Jr., "Holland Nimmons McTyeire and the Negro," (M. A. Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1961). As the title suggests, this thesis provides a general overview of McTyeire's relationship with African Americans, mostly in the context of his ecclesiastical career. Martin provides many useful facts surrounding McTyeire's life, especially his tenure in New Orleans.

After matriculating to the Collinsworth Institute in Talbotton, Georgia for two years, McTyeire enrolled at Randolph-Macon College near Richmond, Virginia. If his years at Cokesbury were formative, McTyeire's stay at the Methodist college profoundly "shaped him for his future work."⁸ Here he developed passion for logic and rhetoric and was recognized by his colleagues for his fierce debating skills. McTyeire graduated in 1844, a very trying year for the Methodist Episcopal Church. At the General Conference that year, the church divided into separate denominations for northern and southern Methodists because of irreconcilable differences arising over the issue of slavery.⁹ A year later in 1845, southern Methodists convened in Louisville and inaugurated the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The same year, the Virginia Annual Conference admitted McTyeire on trial. The young preacher and the young church thus began their relationship, and they would evolve together. Ultimately, both strove for greatness and righteousness. Neither could truly find it.

McTyeire's first appointment was in Williamsburg, home of the College of William and Mary. Despite his young age of twenty-three and poor skills as a preacher, he became widely regarded for his striking intellect and strong leadership ability. He subsequently received an appointment to the prestigious St. Francis Street Methodist

References to McTyeire in monographic literature are few and far between. Historians such as Mitchell Snay, John Patrick Daly, and Eugene D. Genovese all made passing references to McTyeire's writings on slavery. Hunter Dickson Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts: A Social History of Southern Methodism, 1865-1900* (Richmond, Va.: The Dietz Press, 1938) mentions McTyeire frequently and correctly describes his historic importance to the Southern Church, but there is no extended analysis of McTyeire in this still otherwise useful classic. Most recently, McTyeire's career has become fodder for encyclopedia articles. In addition to Gulley, see A. V. Huff, Jr., "Holland Nimmons McTyeire," in *The South Carolina Encyclopedia*, ed. Walter Edgar (Columbia, S. C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 617.

⁸ Gulley in *American National Biography*, 198.

⁹ The best overall treatment of the 1844 General Conference is Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 246-282.

Church in Mobile, a church with a substantial elite population. While he made strong connections in Mobile, including meeting his future wife Amelia Townsend, the itinerancy kept McTyeire moving and he received brief appointments in Demopolis, Alabama, and Columbus, Mississippi. He soon married Townsend and was later accepted into full connection with the Alabama Conference. By 1849, he became an elder, quite an accomplishment for a man his age. That same year, McTyeire and his new bride moved to New Orleans at his own request. There, he ministered to both mixed race congregations and all-black churches. In addition to his pastoral duties, he became the founding editor of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, the primary organ of denominational news to the Deep South, in 1851.¹⁰

In 1858, after almost a decade of fruitful labor in the Crescent City, he won the editorship of Nashville's *Christian Advocate*, the chief denominational newspaper of the Southern Church. His memorable tenure in Nashville coincided with the sectional crisis and the first year of the Civil War. While most of the journal dealt with religious issues, church publications, and ecclesiastical news, McTyeire did discuss political issues, and by 1860, there was no doubt that his loyalties stood with the Democratic Party and, later, the Confederacy. After the fall of Nashville to Union forces in February 1862, McTyeire fled to Alabama and preached the remainder of the war. These were difficult years for the church, but in 1866 the church reorganized itself and elected McTyeire to the episcopacy.

McTyeire became the church's most powerful leader in the postwar period. Historian Paul Conkin described his leadership style as a "mixture of loyalties, intense personal ambitions, and rigid self-control [which] made him an effective executive, or as

¹⁰ Gulley in *American National Biography*, 198.

those who admired him so often put it, a great and inspired leader.”¹¹ McTyeire’s physical appearance and personality intimidated many colleagues. He was tall, solidly built, generally imposing, and many found his cold countenance and combative nature unsettling. For all of his leadership ability, however, McTyeire lacked charisma and was by all accounts a very shy and standoffish man. His quiet reserve and unflinching facial expressions made McTyeire’s enemies suspect that he was keeping secrets. This only made his adversaries dread him even more.

In addition to being a skilled leader, McTyeire was a clear thinker who left behind many letters, sermons, essays, and editorials. Taken together, these writings present a coherent sacred-secular ideology linking the temporal and spiritual worlds through Biblical principles. One cannot discount contemporary influences on McTyeire’s worldview. For example, in the antebellum era an intellectual movement known as moral philosophy, which tried to “give a rational basis to God’s moral law,” also guided McTyeire’s thinking.¹² An heir to the Scottish Enlightenment, moral philosophy stressed conscience as a way to prove the worth of “moral judgments.”¹³ Several ideas characterized McTyeire’s ideology, which he rooted in a literal interpretation of the Bible. He believed that God ordained all social structures, and it was one’s sacred duty to study the scripture in order to understand their responsibilities based on their station. The idea of social duties gave McTyeire a decidedly paternalistic bearing in his administrative

¹¹ Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 14.

¹² Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 82; also see E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1978), 127-33.

¹³ Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 82; the use of the word *progressive* is not to be conflated with its meaning in the Progressive Era. For purposes of this thesis, the term *progressive* is taken to mean one who favors wide-ranging change in order to improve some type of organization or social system to bring it closer to righteousness without altering its core infrastructure.

life. In addition, his various positions within in the church obviously shaped the periods of his career. Before the war, McTyeire's position as both a preacher and an editor meant that he was closer to southern Methodists than bishops and as such most of his message was evangelical and focused on personal salvation. Consider also that a strong progressive streak marked McTyeire's career and this also informed McTyeire as he propagated his ideology in hopes of bringing all people to Christ while simultaneously teaching them their proper role in society.

After McTyeire became a bishop and after the South lost the Civil War, his sacred-secular ideology evolved because a new historical context and his new position in the church shifted his focus away from individuals towards the denomination as a whole. After the destruction of the war, many in the South wanted new leaders to advance the South socially and economically. Historian Paul M. Gaston found that, in the minds of these progressives, the term *New South* "bespoke [of] harmonious reconciliation of sectional differences, racial peace, and a new economic and social order based on industry and scientific, diversified agriculture – all of which would lead, eventually, to the South's dominance in the reunited nation."¹⁴ To accomplish these goals, New South leaders fashioned the so-called New South creed, which was "born to inspire a program of action, [and] expressed faith in the South's ability to bring about its own regeneration in partnership with sympathetic northerners."¹⁵ While the creed expressed the way these white southern elites like McTyeire believed the world should be, it gradually became a delusional perception of reality.

¹⁴ Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

An in-depth study of McTyeire shows that the New South creed did indeed have an important religious dimension heretofore unrecognized by historians. McTyeire's sacred-secular ideology, which had deep roots in the antebellum and war periods and insisted that society needed a stable and hierarchical society, merged with the New South creed and became a plan of action to uplift the South. This motivated the bishop to take action to make the church a bastion for the leaders of the new economic order, exemplified by the growing professional class including middle class bankers, jurists, doctors, editors, merchants, and educators.¹⁶ In order to make the church more welcoming to the southern middle class, McTyeire wanted to transform the ministerial character of the Southern Church from a group of rustic parsons into professional religious scholars to better reflect middle class aspirations and sensibilities. Founding a theological seminary to provide professionalized studies became the greatest crusade of McTyeire's career. In addition, McTyeire dreamed of a Methodist university that would also provide professional training for aspiring young southern professionals and allow the region to keep its best minds at home and thus fortify the middle class. Like many other New South advocates, the bishop would have to engage in pitiful levels of self-deception, especially surrounding race and class in southern history in order to see his vision through.¹⁷

¹⁶ The term *middle class* is difficult to define with any degree of accuracy because there is little agreement among historians on whether the words describe cultural attitudes or people with certain incomes or occupations. Drawing from the work of English Marxist historian E. P. Thompson, Jonathan Daniel Wells, found that the southern middle class was both "an objective component of the social order, as well as a cultural construction." *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 10. As such, the middle class spoken so freely of in this study generally describes politically conservative southerners with middling incomes and occupations generally thought of as middle class (bankers, doctors, lawyers, and so on) who likewise hold Victorian attitudes concerning religion, marriage, family, gender, and society in general.

¹⁷ The continuity versus change debate is a central theme in southern historiography. Following a model created by Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard (*The Rise of American Civilization* [New York: Macmillan, 1927]), C. Vann Woodward found that the Civil War and emancipation toppled the planter elite and in its wake, a new middle class with different values assumed cultural hegemony over the South,

Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951). For Woodward's other Beardian interpretations see *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* and *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). There are others who stress change, but Woodward's work is both seminal and enduring. The continuity argument first found expression in the work of W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941). Many historians have challenged Woodward's central thesis, including Jonathan M. Wiener *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) and Dwight B. Billings, Jr., *Planters and the Making of a "New South": Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), who argue that the South took a "Prussian road" (rather than classic road) toward capitalism because the continuing hegemony of planter and agrarian elites kept the region decidedly reactionary. Eventually the change versus continuity dichotomy stifled debate. In a seminal historiographic article, James C. Cobb argued that the debate presented a false dichotomy and he insisted that the planter and industrial class were both distinct in certain ways, but, in the end, their political, racial, and social views represented a distinct arch between the Old and the New South, "Beyond Planters and Industrialists: A New Perspective on the New South," *Journal of Southern History* (February 1988): 45-68. Cobb's work is most germane to this thesis because the various incarnations of McTyeire's sacred-secular ideology lends credence to his argument. Closely related to Woodward, but with more focus on various aspects of daily life in the South is Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). As far as the New South Creed and southern myth-making, Gaston's work remains an excellent starting point. Others include Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in the Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1980) and Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Religion the New South is still very much a growing field and as of yet does not have a seminal or masterful synthetic work. Nevertheless, many talented scholars have looked to religion to understand various aspects of postwar southern society, particularly in regards to women. Jean E. Friedman argues that the evangelical community created an insular and oppressive world that prevented the women's movement from making any progress in the South (*The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985]). Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996) looks at women in black churches and sees how their religious involvement enabled them to become powerful political actors on the southern stage and fight the advancement of Jim Crow. Other trends persist. Samuel S. Hill, Jr. has repeatedly argued that by noticing similarities in southern churches rather their doctrinal differences, religion has made the South more orthodox and concerned with personal salvation than other American regions. Hill finds that this reactionary bent in has kept southern religion inward looking. See for example, *Southern Churches in Crisis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967). Meanwhile Christopher H. Owen (*The Sacred Flame of Love: Methodism and Society in Nineteenth-Century Georgia* [Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1998]) and Paul Harvey (*Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997]) have analyzed specific denominations to better understand race and southern society. By looking at male honor culture and evangelicalism in the rural South while providing a useful analysis of the decline of church discipline, Ted Ownby (*Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990]) finds that churches could not effectively change the honor culture with ecclesiastical discipline so instead worked to improve society as a whole, as with prohibition. One of the most lively and innovative work of southern religion, and also relevant to this thesis, is Beth Barton Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), where the author vigorously takes issue with Hill and demonstrates that southern churches were not captives of religious culture, but that southern ministers were on the vanguard of progressive politics in order to conceal their own bourgeois aspirations. For more on this historiography see Paul Harvey, "Religion in the American South Since the Civil War," in *A Companion to the American South*, ed. John B. Boles (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 387-406.

McTyeire's career can help historians understand how the trauma of war that ushered in the New South creed hastened the shift of southern Methodism away from a populist religion of the heart towards a pro-southern church with an all-white and more exclusive constituency as reflected in the attitudes and actions of its leadership.

While most of this thesis sticks to chronological narrative, the first chapter examines his ideas and through an analysis of sermons, essays, and editorials reconstructs McTyeire's sacred-secular ideology in the antebellum period. Chapter two shows how the sectional crisis, Civil War, and its immediate aftermath pushed McTyeire towards a sometimes virulent pro-southern attitude and eventually to a New South mentality. It also demonstrates how McTyeire rose to become a progressive leader for the church in his efforts to modernize ecclesiastical administration that ultimately allowed middle class southerners into the power structure of the church. Chapter three details how the New South creed fully merged with McTyeire's sacred-secular ideology to ultimately lead the bishop to push the Southern Church away from its populist roots toward a more middle class mindset by advocating a theological seminary. Finally, the last chapter examines ways that McTyeire hoped to shape southern memory. By helping the Southern Church establish a separate church for blacks remaining loyal to the church and publishing a book on the history of Methodism from a uniquely southern point of view, McTyeire showed how self-deception played a major role in shaping southern memory of religion.

Within the New South context, McTyeire's speech before the London Ecumenical Conference becomes much more symbolically significant because of its embedded New South symbolism. For example, consider McTyeire's portrayal of the bustling English city of Bristol in comparison to the dreary town of Pisa in Tuscany. In 1881, England led

the world in political power, wealth, industry, and progress. In addition, England's powerful middle class had surpassed its aristocracy in terms of wealth and fully embodied the strict morality of the Victorian age. Meanwhile, the provincial trappings of Rome held Pisanos captive and offered little promise for progress, even after Italian unification. McTyeire praised England as the epitome of progress mixed with Christian virtue, in effect raising it up as a realistic aspiration for which the South should strive so that it could claim its rightful place in the restored union. In reality, however, the South certainly looked far more like Pisa than Bristol. Of course, McTyeire often did not concern himself with taking an honest look at reality.

McTyeire's words of Wesleyan unity at the London conference also appear noteworthy when considering the New South creed. Whatever differences the groups had, and they were certainly vast, they still had a common religious genealogy that awakened feelings of love and kinship. This was particularly germane for American Methodists. In spite of deep animosities remaining between the northern and southern churches, the symbolism of sharing the stage with Simpson was surely not lost on McTyeire, Simpson, or the American delegates. In the same way, reconciliation with the North was an important feature of the New South creed. While McTyeire and Simpson appeared to be symbolically putting historical animosities behind them, the elitist southern bishop was not being completely honest with himself. As he would show just a few years later in his historical treatment of Methodism, there was still unfinished business between the northern and southern churches. Of course, by this time, McTyeire had mastered the art of self-deception in order to move his church and the region toward a splendid era of prosperity in which the sun now, at least in his eyes, rose and set in the South.

CHAPTER ONE: ORDAINED OF GOD
MCTYEIRE'S ANTEBELLUM SACRED-SECULAR IDEOLOGY

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.
Romans 13:1-2, KJV

Throughout his antebellum career as a southern Methodist clergyman, Holland Nimmons McTyeire followed the evangelical impulse to lead sinners to salvation and help individuals live life more abundantly. Through sermons, McTyeire spread a message that exalted God's great omnipotence, described how He organized the temporal world, and taught congregants how human behavior could be improved by accepting Christ as their savior and adhering to Biblical teaching. In the antebellum South, any evangelical could see human behavior that needed modification. Historians have demonstrated that because the entire southern social structure rested on protecting slavery, the Old South exercised a particularly brutal patriarchy that ultimately enabled a very sinful society.¹ McTyeire certainly endorsed the structure of southern society, but he saw problems with specific human behavior within this paradigm. While he never articulated his philosophy in a single place, McTyeire's sacred-secular ideology presented a cogent system of thought and was rooted in a literal understanding of the Bible. For some, the Bible had the power to dramatically topple society and leave a holier and more equitable replacement in its wake. Others, like McTyeire, believed that the Bible reinforced and improved upon the existing system.²

¹ Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 1-11; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 25-61; 352-61.

² Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 505-27;

As he anchored his entire philosophy in the Bible, McTyeire's sermons are the best place to see how religion directly informed his worldview, even if he did not often give direct advice on daily life to his congregants. One must go to McTyeire's essays and editorials, particularly on the issue of slavery, to see how Biblical principles manifested themselves into specific actions that reinforced society. The behavior McTyeire

Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 175-76. Eugene D. Genovese remains a central figure in southern religious historiography because he set much of the agenda over forty years ago. There remains debate over whether the South was culturally unique, and many scholars agree that the North and South had more similarities than differences. Utilizing a Marxist framework, Genovese argued that southern distinctiveness grew out of its pre-bourgeois social and economic order. He found the master-slave relationship at the center of southern civilization, which defined its social structure and ideology. Genovese did not, however, argue in favor of southern exceptionalism. His use of Marxist theory led him to place the South in a broader international context of labor systems. *The Political Economy of Slavery* (New York: Pantheon, 1965), *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Pantheon, 1969). In addition to his masterful *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974), Genovese argued in favor of planter hegemony throughout his career, even after his disavowed Marxism and became a conservative Catholic. Most recently, Genovese and his late wife Fox-Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*, found that southern slaveholders had a rich intellectual culture, rooted primarily in Christianity that dominated intellectual life the Old South. While Genovese and Fox-Genovese have set the tone for this field, other prominent scholars have made seminal contributions, including Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1987). In addition, cultural historians like Wyatt-Brown (*Southern Honor*) have found that the South operated on a unique honor culture that pervaded many aspects of daily life. The question of religion's role in the South's antebellum intellectual culture, as evidenced in both Tise and Genovese, looms very large in studies of southern intellectual history. For example, Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, found that religion played a central role in crafting the proslavery argument and pushed the South to secession in 1860 and 1861. Taking into account the different intellectual paradigms of the nineteenth century, Snay found that moral philosophy and other such trends crafted proslavery theology that bloomed fully during debates with abolitionists from the North. Gradually, a moral consensus developed among the preachers and theologians of the South and eventually preachers and religious editors like McTyeire eventually gave the Southern cause a divine sanction. While the denominational schisms of the 1840s lend credence to the argument of a distinctive southern culture, not all religious historians agree. Diametrically opposed to Snay is John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery, and the Causes of the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002). Daly finds Snay's necessary evil/positive good dichotomy reductive. Daly argues that one must look in a more national context to fully understand religion's role in the bringing about the Civil War. In addition to probing the economic realities of antebellum America, Daly asserts that ideas concerning the unalterable will of God and just what freedom actually meant should guide future historical inquiries. This chapter shows that McTyeire was part of large-scale sociopolitical and religious discourse. However, Genovese's argument that the master and slave relationship shaped southern society is particularly relevant to the sacred-secular ideology discussed here, as evidenced in McTyeire's sermons, essays, and editorials. The idea of relative social duties is a bit broader than master and slave relations, but it does lend credence to Genovese's argument of planter hegemony because influential clergymen like McTyeire clearly believed that the South's social order, with planters at the top, was ordained by God himself. Because there is so little unique about McTyeire, his worldview encapsulates many of the various findings of these historians, even those who disagree about the nature of the influence of religion in the Old South.

advocated was well within the grasp of any motivated individual and had the power, he believed, to change the world for black and white, man and woman, and rich and poor.³ But this would only work if everybody was willing to accept their station in life as God's will.

The central idea undergirding McTyeire's entire philosophy was the notion that God ordained all social structures. In fact, God organized all life in nature on a vertical scale, with some things being naturally superior to others while simultaneously stressing the unity, harmony, and beauty of the whole. By life, McTyeire meant a noun, a humor that existed inside living things and given only from above. God granted "vegetable life," "animal life," and "intellectual life" to plants, animals and humans. Vegetable life, for example, was relatively simple, but the further up the scale, the more complex God's creation became. The highest form of life came directly from heaven, what McTyeire called "spiritual life." Spiritual life was given by salvation in Christ, obtained by only earnest prayer, and began when a person is born again and it was bestowed *directly* by God at a specific moment than could be pinpointed in time. This is why, McTyeire claimed, that one who is saved is "repeatedly said to be a 'new creature.'"⁴ This made Christians naturally superior to other humans. While demonstrating that God ordered the universe hierarchically, McTyeire lent great credence to the South's rigid social structure.

For McTyeire, the notion that all men were created equal was both scripturally unsound and dangerous. In a sermon on the parable of the talents, the notion of relative

³ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 3-7; Edward R. Crowther, "Holy Honor: Sacred and Secular in the Old South," *Journal of Southern History* 58 (November 1992): 627; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, "The Divine Sanction of the Social Order: Religious Foundations of the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55 (Summer 1987): 211-229.

⁴ Holland N. McTyeire, "Life More Abundantly," John J. Tigert IV Collection, Box 3, Folder 3, Special Collections of the Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee (J AHL-VU).

social duties based on social status found scriptural justification. He proclaimed, “All men are *not* born equal. Men are differently endowed by God.”⁵ In fact, he believed Thomas Jefferson’s preamble to Declaration of Independence was “imported from the French infidels and red republicans.”⁶ McTyeire insisted that the Bible preached temporal inequality because Christ himself proclaimed that to whom much is given much is required, implying the sense of relative duty social leaders held towards the less fortunate. Intelligence, wealth, and class position were talents and granted by God, which left humans with a burden to act in accordance with their station and thereby glorify the Father. In fact, even if God has given somebody equal intelligence, gifts of status were greater.

McTyeire had no problem squaring his belief in human inequality with the principles set forth in the tenth chapter of Luke, which contains the story of the Good Samaritan and Christ’s insistence that individuals love “thy neighbour as thyself.”⁷ Following the example of the Good Samaritan, he acknowledged that all men, even sworn enemies, were neighbors. Falling back on his knowledge of biblical language, McTyeire taught that “[t]he original word for ‘as,’ refers to kind not degree, quality not quantity.” Thus, individuals must love others with “the same kind of love that we bear to ourselves, but no duty binds us to an equality of love.” McTyeire criticized preachers who have insisted that this famous verse means equality because it does not read “thou shalt love thy neighbor...as much as...thyself.” McTyeire further reassured his congregation that “[s]urely no law makes it my duty when I see a man in danger to put

⁵ Holland Nimmons McTyeire, *Passing Through the Gates and Other Sermons*, ed. John J. Tigert (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1889), 271.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Luke 10:27, 29-37, KJV.

myself in equal danger for his rescue; to give to one starving that morsel or draught of water which I want as much as he, and without which I shall die.” Furthermore, Jesus had his favorite disciples and it was right that people love their family members more than neighbors. In fact, nowhere in the Bible does it say to “hug to our bosom every man alike.” Individuals could show Biblical love in a variety of ways that including respecting other’s property, though charity, and by other acts of generosity. Furthermore, there was no excuse for slander, dishonesty, theft, or injury to a neighbor. Love was patient and peaceful, hid other’s faults, and was optimistic. It hid sorrows, did not pass harsh judgment and was full of hope. McTyeire ended with warm words for the congregation, “Religion is the highest style of humanity; but...[love] is its sweetest style.”⁸

While demonstrating this kind of love would fill individuals with the love of God and help them better carry out their social duties in accordance with the spirit of Christianity, it was still a difficult standard to meet. McTyeire gravely acknowledged that man had a natural propensity for sin. In fact, “[f]ew men are aware the extent of this inclination.”⁹ Some would admit that evil is strong, but insisted that it could be controlled by their own efforts. These individuals were slaves to their own foolishness and sin, which would breed “misery...[and] poverty.” There was reason to take heart because the laws of both God and society were diametrically opposed to evil, but nevertheless it was impossible to prevent man from sin. He pleaded, “Let man be awakened. How weak he finds his moral powers. How false his purposes.”¹⁰ Thus far, McTyeire demonstrated to various audiences that an active deity controlled the earth, ordered society based on His

⁸ McTyeire, “The Love of Our Neighbor,” Tigert Collection, Box 3, Folder 3. No date given.

⁹ McTyeire, “Free Indeed,” Sermon 11, Holland Nimmons McTyeire Sermons, 1844-50, JAHU-VU.

¹⁰ Ibid.

will, expected individuals to conform to their station, and show their fellow man love in all situations in spite of their great flaws. While this was enormously difficult, only Christ made men free and gave him the strength to reject evil and love his neighbor as himself. In another sermon, McTyeire offered words of hope to any person dissatisfied with their station, a clear reference to slaves, by reminding them that God would turn earthly degradation into eternal glory, declaring that “[w]e have our daily walking to toil, and often to disappointment, my friends. But it shall not be so always.”¹¹ McTyeire quoted the Seventeenth Psalm to further demonstrate his point, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”¹²

While his antebellum sacred-secular ideology was meant to reform behavior to improve southern society through Christian salvation, McTyeire did not limit his ideology to personal conduct. Broadly speaking, he asserted God was aligned with good and virtuous nations. Most misery was directly related to sin and likewise blessings sprang forth from righteousness. Indeed, “God...exercises a moral government over the world.”¹³ Of course, there were individual examples of the wicked prospering and the good suffering, but God would finish what was started. It was easy to look around the world and see God’s general disposition toward virtue and vice. The slovenly drunkard and the prosperous and pious farmer were both temporal expressions of God’s pleasure and disdain. Similarly McTyeire, showing his racial assumptions, claimed that virtuous nations like the United States flourished while the heathen of Africa suffered in perpetual darkness, poverty, and war.

¹¹ McTyeire, *Passing Through the Gates*, 229. McTyeire preached this sermon many times throughout his career, to both black and white congregations. He first delivered it to a black only group in New Orleans, and afterwards to both mixed race and white only audiences.

¹² Psalms 17:15, KJV.

¹³ McTyeire, “Reaping what is sowed,” Sermon 19, McTyeire Sermons.

Overall, McTyeire's sermons stressed the omnipotence of God and His creation, the sinful nature of man, the necessity of salvation through Jesus Christ, and the great joy that came from being born again by a living savior, all undergirded by feeling of hope. Of critical importance was the notion that duties based on temporal status define all human relationships. The god that McTyeire spoke of was no hands-off creator, but an active deity. Everything on Earth bore his divine fingerprints and the very idea of anything being socially constructed was downright sacrilegious. While McTyeire clearly articulated his worldview as related to Biblical principle, it was often not demonstrated from the pulpit with practical lessons for daily life. Through his essays and editorials, however, the application of these principles became quite clear. While he wrote on many subjects, his views on how slavery should operate provide the most complete and compelling illustration of McTyeire's antebellum sacred-secular ideology in practice.

McTyeire's attitudes and writings on slavery developed at a time when many southerners had come to believe that slavery represented a positive good for both slaves and society. The gradual shift of slavery representing a necessary evil in the eyes of southerners to its climax a positive good for society is a topic of much historiographic discussion and debate. While historians concede that this simple dichotomy is reductive, most acknowledge that is useful to a certain degree. Broadly speaking, the liberalism of the American Revolution made many aristocrats and intellectuals question the morality of slavery in a nation that professed that all men were created equal. Evangelicalism emerging in the early national period, including Methodism, rejected slavery in no uncertain terms as directly opposed to Christ's message of salvation for all people. Nevertheless, church leaders like Francis Asbury were reluctant to speak out too loudly

on slavery and it eventually became accepted as a necessary evil that could not be effectively eradicated because of logistical and legal considerations. A number of factors made southerners rethink their peculiar institution including Nat Turner's rebellion, debates over slavery on the floor of the Virginia state legislature, the nullification crisis, and William Lloyd Garrison's spirited advocacy of immediate abolition. As sectional tension and abolitionist attacks from northern clergymen increased, southern clerics began to defend slavery, traditionally viewed as a political issue, as biblically sanctioned. As the debate grew more intense, abolitionists forced southern preachers and writers to "clarify the relationship between religion and politics."¹⁴ As southern religion and politics grew closer together, southern clergymen became more outspoken and defenses of slavery transformed the institution to a positive good by the 1830s.¹⁵

After becoming editor of Nashville's *Christian Advocate* beginning in 1858 and continuing until the fall of Nashville in early 1862, McTyeire often wrote on slavery. He proclaimed that slavery was "found in the structure of human society, and in the nature and necessities of the world. In some form or another it has always existed since the fall,

¹⁴ Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 29.

¹⁵ This is the interpretation offered by Mitchell Snay in *Gospel of Disunion*. This argument is particularly useful to understand how religion specifically played a role in the antebellum slavery debate, and thus one of the more germane secondary works to illuminate this thesis. Of course, this is an old historiographic discussion. In 1940, Clement Eaton set the agenda for decades to come with his seminal *Freedom of Thought in the Old South* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1940) by asking how liberal southern aristocrats influenced by the Enlightenment gave way to the more provincial and conservative leadership of the Calhoun era. Charles S. Sydnor provides an early and useful survey on sectionalism in *The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819-1848* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948). From the same series, Avery O. Craven provides more details of the later stages of the slavery question in *The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953). Tise's *Proslavery* remains required reading as he explicitly delineates historical myth about proslavery ideology from its reality in his important work from the 1980s. Most recently, Lacy K. Ford examines this question anew in *Deliver Us From Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Rather than focusing on north versus south, Ford divides the South into two regions, the Upper South and the Lower South, to find salient differences within the southern states. He also divides his periodization, from the Revolution to the mail campaigns of the mid 1830s, into three distinct phases marked by political, economic, and social change in order to clarify the "necessary evil/positive good" dichotomy.

and will exist till God shall say, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’” In addition to spirited attacks on abolitionists, McTyeire criticized the most vociferous defenders of slavery because they often neglected their duties as masters. These virulent spokesmen overworked their slaves, fed them slop, and housed them in shacks. As such, southern society had to live with the consequences of individuals neglecting their Christian duties, “[h]is ill-fed negroes steal from his neighbors, and they are a nuisance to the neighborhood....He presents these very abuses which are seized upon by its enemies and made capital of before the world.”¹⁶ McTyeire further proclaimed that these individuals should turn toward Christianity and “take the New Testament in their hands, and address themselves to the duties of masters and servants.”¹⁷ In fact, southern Methodist preachers had failed to do their duty to properly explicate social duties toward slaves.

There are texts, inspired of the Holy Ghost, on relative social duties; and among them the duties of masters and servants. Why are our pulpits so silent on these texts? Are they apocryphal? Are they not suited to our latitude? The fear of being considered an abolitionist by some hot-head should not deter the gospel minister from prudently, soundly, and faithfully discoursing on this subject.¹⁸

Like countless others, McTyeire believed that slavery suited blacks because of their supposed racial inferiority. He explained that “Negroes, in the ecclesiastical as well as civil and social capacity, get on best under the care of the white race.”¹⁹ He paternalistically used the word *care* quite literally. Unlike many of his colleagues, McTyeire took great pains to specifically enumerate the duties white masters had to their black servants to safeguard society and glorify God. In 1849, the Southern Baptist Convention offered a \$200 prize for the best essay on the subject. An interdenominational

¹⁶ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 2 August 1860.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 September 1860.

panel judged the essays, and awarded McTyeire first prize. In addition to the money, the Convention published his essay in 1851 along with the first two runners-up and McTyeire received wide circulation throughout the South.²⁰

McTyeire began his essay by noting that the New Testament outlined the duties of Christian masters, among other temporal roles. It was not enough to study one's role inside the family because an individual had many different duties that must be copiously examined. For example, "One maybe be a good neighbor and yet be at fault as a husband or father; or he may be a good husband, a good father, and yet a bad master."²¹ The relationship of master to servant was noteworthy because it was the *exact* relationship that God had with humans and the stakes of both master and servant in this relationship were very high indeed because "[t]he duties a master owes to his servant are binding upon the conscience as those the servant owes to the master: neither can be neglected without sin."²² While the slave's duties were important, as the higher being, the master had a god-like burden. After all, slaves had no legal recourse for any wrong perpetuated by their masters and "[h]is misery is voiceless" because their duties provide that they do not run away or talk back.²³ McTyeire also reminded masters that they were servants of the Lord and this alone should inspire "every God-fearing man that is a master upon earth!"²⁴

For McTyeire, relative social duties could be extensive and were based on compassionate love. For example, he argued that slaves were only human and could only

²⁰ Eugene D. Genovese, *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 30-31.

²¹ H. N. McTyeire, C. F. Sturgis, and A. T. Holmes, *Duties of Masters to Servants: Three Premium Essays* (Charleston, S. C.: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 8.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

work so much without harming their health. Tropical weather, for instance, made a difference when considering workloads as did the personal abilities of individual slaves. Along with rest time throughout the day, slaves should receive at least seven hours of sleep per night. In addition to good season-specific clothing and quality housing, masters must see that their slaves got a “wholesome and sound” diet that included a variety of meats, fruits, grains, and vegetables.²⁵ Moreover, because servants spent so much time outdoors engaging in strenuous physical labor, they required more food, pound for pound, than their masters. It even mattered *how* servants consumed their food. He claimed, “Man is an animal that must take his food leisurely: to enjoy it, it must be brought into contact with the nerves of taste; to be benefited by it, it must, before reaching the stomach be rendered thoroughly digestible.”²⁶ If that were not enough, McTyeire contended that sick slaves must have convalescence under a medical professional. When a slave became too old or feeble to work, the master’s responsibility only deepened. The master “will indulge him; feed him from his own table; treat him with mingled tenderness and respect, and see to it that others treat him likewise. For such a...cheerful old age should every faithful servant be permitted to hope.”²⁷ If a master could not see to his duties for any reason, it was best to sell servants to avoid sin.²⁸

McTyeire claimed that blacks, like all humans, needed to live in an ordered society with clear expectations and consequences for actions. Any kind of punishment from masters must be used to correct misbehavior, and never for revenge. Moreover, a master must never rule his bondsmen by fear because “[i]t is expensive, and, indeed,

²⁵ Ibid., 18

²⁶ Ibid., 18-19.

²⁷ Ibid., 34-35

²⁸ Ibid., 9-25.

impossible, to keep them always in awe. This is the *regime* that makes eye-servants, runaways and outlaws.”²⁹ A plantation must be run like a government with clear rules and consequences that demonstrated a master’s expectations, or else slave society degraded into “mere herding.”³⁰ To deny servants such regulations was to deprive them of the pleasure of living in an ordered society, something that God in fact ordained and required.

McTyeire saved some of his harshest words for masters who did not respect the sacred institution of marriage stating blisteringly that such disregard “is *inexcusable*.”³¹ While arguing that blacks did come from a passionate culture, they were mostly degraded by masters who did not insist on strict marital alliances and instead allowed rampant fornication in slave quarters. A master must provide virtuous and everlasting monogamous marriages for his slaves and teach them their proper familial duties based on biblical principles. As with racial and class structures, marriage reinforced the idea of an ordered society and masters should foster kinship ties to give slave society cohesion and they should live together as natal families if possible. Naturally, this would make the servile population much less inclined to rebellion. Finally, McTyeire bristled in anger at those masters for whom “[h]eart strings and tears stand not...in the way of dollars and cents” and who broke up servant families for the sake of profit.³²

Most importantly, however, McTyeire argued that masters had duties toward slaves as religious beings. He wrote that “[t]he master has souls as well as bodies under

²⁹ Ibid., 27.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 33.

³² Ibid.

his care.”³³ It was the worst kind of abuse to deny slaves access to salvation and thus damn them to hell for eternity. In addition, McTyeire believed it was best for whites and blacks to worship together so that “no distinctions of religion arise between them.”³⁴ Religion that cut across racial and class lines was the best form of religion because all worshiped the same Father and same savior. If a master lived in or near an urban area, he could simply allow his slaves to attend local churches. But if an owner lived in the countryside, as most did, he should get together with his neighbors to build a chapel and provide good provisions for religious instructions. It was not enough to simply build a chapel, but masters had to actively encourage evangelism to his slaves and even pay for a preacher. This should not be seen as just a duty, but a privilege and the master should visit the chapel with his family from time to time. But masters must take further action to see to his slaves’ spiritual welfare. McTyeire argued they must make sure that slaves were present at his own family’s worship and prayer time. If masters did not actively pursue this, he believed, they could rest assured that their slaves would revert to heathenism and various forms of devil worship.

McTyeire made especially clear that relative social duties were an integral part of Christianity and helped determine one’s ultimate salvation because on the Day of Judgment all persons will be judged in the eyes of the Lord based upon their duties on this Earth. Damnation would fall upon unjust masters, “Depend upon it, O Christian master, your servants will confront you before His bar with whom is known no respect of persons, and how can you be approved when they complain – ‘No man cared for our

³³ Ibid., 36.

³⁴ Ibid., 38.

souls?''''³⁵ While these words were more progressive than most, McTyeire's essay was not unique in that he defended slavery and wrote on the duties of Christian masters. In fact, little of his thought was especially original. Importantly, however, it shows how McTyeire's scripturally-based sacred-secular ideology manifested into specific expectations and consequences for personal conduct. While this particular illustration dealt with masters relating to their slaves, it showed how McTyeire believed a large sector of southern society needed to operate. Clearly, every person had duties, rooted in evangelical love, based on their position in the divinely ordained hierarchy. Part of living a godly life and receiving salvation included examining the Bible for their social duties and carrying them out in a spirit of grace and love.³⁶

While McTyeire's writing on slavery provides the clearest demonstration of his philosophy, other aspects become apparent when examining many of his editorials. For example, in an essay entitled "How to Avoid a Bad Husband," McTyeire spelled out, in broad terms, the duties a husband owed his wife while simultaneously showing a preference for a middle class way of life. For example, he pleaded with women not to marry for money, to avoid a "dandy-like [man], in his silk gloves and ruffles," or anybody so tight-fisted with money that he might needlessly reduce them to rags. He attacked the notion of arranged marriages and warned women to notice how a man treated his mother and sisters, because that would indicate how he would treat his future bride. A man who drank alcohol, gambled, or was in the slightest bit profane was extremely dangerous. McTyeire closed with advice directly for men, simply urging them

³⁵ Ibid., 46.

³⁶ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Mind of the Master Class*, 1, 490-92; Tise, *Proslavery*, 103, 121-22; Daly, *When Slavery was Called Freedom*, 111-35; Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 53-109.

to “take the obedient daughter of a good mother.”³⁷ Similar to a master’s duty to slaves, this piece painted a picture of a good husband as kind, generous, frugal, and loving based on his matrimonial status.

Conversely, women had social duties to their husbands, again based on scriptural teaching. One of McTyeire’s biggest passions in life was education. In addition to a life-long advocacy of a theologically trained ministry, McTyeire also supported women’s colleges and supported a mix of practical and classical education for good Christian women that hint at his beliefs of women’s social duties. Women should certainly know how to sing, play piano and other musical instruments, have a thorough understanding of both the Old and New Testaments, and even be well-versed in classic literature. But the editorial reminded the audience that “no family ever enjoyed a breakfast-talk on poetry or philosophy over weak coffee and burnt bread, and a raw steak.”³⁸ Running a household was indeed a science and women who received an education must also receive domestic training because they had left their mothers to attend school and thus were never properly educated at home. In the end, a proper woman should be a “housekeeper as well as... [a] parlor lady.”³⁹

There are also glimpses of class ideals in the sacred-secular ideology, as when McTyeire asserted that women should avoid aristocratic dandies. In one piece entitled “Lawyers as Christians,” McTyeire revealed not only his love of debate but his preference for middle class church leaders. He started by writing that the scriptures

³⁷ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 7 February 1861.

³⁸ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 6 September 1860. McTyeire did not author this editorial. It was originally a speech delivered in June of 1860 at the commencement of the Clarksville Female Academy in Tennessee. However, McTyeire insisted, as editor, that “[t]hese are our sentiments so fully, that we give them as editorial.”

³⁹ *Ibid.*; see also Scott, *Southern Lady*, 3-21; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 111-24.

actually deprecate lawyers for their rigidity much like the Pharisees and contended that “[t]hey sheathe toward each other the weapons they use so skillfully upon others.”⁴⁰ But McTyeire rather liked the idea of having attorneys in a congregation because “[s]lipshod arguments will not do [from the pastor]...the pulpit sometimes needs this critical tonic.”⁴¹ Although McTyeire warned his readers that lawyers should not be go about “hunting up the rebutting argument, and [taking] sides against the preacher,” he found that professionals, based this time on their class standing, had a social duty to help provide the church with learned lay leadership.⁴²

Although McTyeire addressed many facets of race, class, and gender, he did not directly discuss the South’s inclination for hedonistic masculinity. W. J. Cash described southern masculinity when he wrote, “Great personal courage, unusual physical powers, the ability to drink a quart of whiskey or to lose the whole of one’s capital on the turn of a card without the quiver of a muscle.”⁴³ One could also add to that list violent sexual dominance, which frequently included raping black women.⁴⁴ This ideal was at odds with evangelical Christianity. As Christine Leigh Heyrman has shown, the historically feminized southern evangelicalism was replaced in the early nineteenth century with the more manly “muscular Christianity.” She explained that evangelical preachers hoped to bridge the gap between the planter elite and evangelicalism and thus asserted that “Christ...held no communion with sissies” and merged southern honor and southern

⁴⁰ Ibid., 9 December 1858.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Holifield, *Gentlemen Theologians*, 4, 8-12, 48-49.

⁴³ See also, Cash, *Mind of the South*, 38.

⁴⁴ Bynum, *Unruly Women*, 109, 118.

piety.⁴⁵ These new preachers cast religion in more militant and war-like terms, engaged in activities such as hunting and tried to de-feminize evangelicalism. While Heyrman is generally correct, she overstates how well preachers could assimilate into southern masculine culture. Although courage and physical strength could be easily reconciled with Christianity, drinking, gambling, blood sports, and unfettered promiscuity were utterly unacceptable for a staunch Methodist like McTyeire.⁴⁶ This did not mean one had to forego any masculine endeavors. McTyeire himself was an avid outdoorsman all his life who loved hunting and fishing and spoke fondly of his boyhood spent working outdoors on the family farm near Barnwell.⁴⁷ Although evangelicals had repeatedly reached out to them, the masculine ideal proved to be a barrier for true fraternal relations with the elite. And McTyeire was surely aware that emasculating planter elites could not only be dangerous, but harmful for himself and his church.⁴⁸

If one had to succinctly characterize McTyeire's idealized southern society it would be benevolently paternalist and even tender in regards to race and slavery; ordered by a rigid but harmonious class system; gendered and patriarchal but still fair and loving with no hint of brutality; and relentlessly Christian and focused on the Bible. McTyeire was unequivocally a man of good will in that he envisioned a society based duty and Christian love from every sector of society. Through his sermons and writings, McTyeire demonstrated these principles as practical things one could do to fulfill their duty, glorify God, and bring the South closer to perfection. For all of his religious fervor and growing

⁴⁵ Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 248, 228-52.

⁴⁶ James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 48-51; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 166, 278-79, 294-98, 339-50, 352-61.

⁴⁷ Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 32; Conkin, *Gone with the Ivy*, 14.

⁴⁸ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 42-43.

influence, however, McTyeire could not change the fact that he lived in a land that embraced both hedonism and religion with an unbridled passion, what Cash insisted was the South's "naïve capacity for unreality."⁴⁹ McTyeire was undoubtedly aware of this puzzling dichotomy of southern life, but his underestimation of the South's desire to change and the reality of its psychological unreality made this sacred-secular ideology utopian and unattainable.⁵⁰

Like the South itself, though, McTyeire did not live fixed in time and the contours of his sacred-secular ideology would transform based on turbulent contexts between 1860 and 1876. At the same time the South was undergoing difficult changes, McTyeire rose to power in the southern Methodist church and became a true force to be reckoned with inside of its ecclesiastical structure. In the murky shadow of Reconstruction and the dawn of the New South, McTyeire would take his place as the most progressive and powerful churchman in the entire region where his ideology adapted to the times and helped shape the future of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and his beloved southland. All the while, McTyeire never wavered in his commitment to the highest style of humanity, even if not always staring its sweetest style directly in the face.

⁴⁹ Cash, *Mind of the South*, 58.

⁵⁰ Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 180-81.

CHAPTER TWO: “BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW”
MCTYEIRE IN THE SECTIONAL CRISIS, CIVIL WAR, AND ITS AFTERMATH

Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up.

Job 6:2-3, KJV

Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will bring again captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed with thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

Jeremiah 30:18-19, KJV

Holland N. McTyeire once declared that slavery would exist in the South until God decreed “Behold, I make all things new.”¹ And for McTyeire, war and emancipation brought numerous and seemly rapturous changes. Not only would relative social duties have to be altered in the face of emancipation, but the church would be so devastated by war that traditional conservative leadership could not survive in southern Methodism after 1865. The war not only further embittered McTyeire against the North, but also made his progressivism more relevant because the church needed a new type of leader to march it out of the wilderness. McTyeire not only became the acknowledged standard-bearer of progressive southern Methodism, but he ascended to a position of real power. His sacred-secular ideology would be tempered in the crucible of war and, while still containing the original parts, arose anew to uplift the South, but not necessarily the sinner.

¹ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 2 August 1860.

McTyeire's journey toward an outwardly pro-southern viewpoint began with his birth in South Carolina in 1824, but passed a stormy adolescence during the sectional crisis when he was the influential editor of Nashville's *Christian Advocate*, a leading southern religious newspaper. He was a gifted editor and between 1858 and 1862 solidified his reputation as one of the most articulate, intelligent, and business-minded men in the church. McTyeire's work with the *Advocate* as a spokesman of sorts for southern Methodism made him one of the most preeminent political voices in the Southern Church. McTyeire freely asserted his opinion on any politicized issue he felt warranted comment and thus forged a sectional political outlook that lasted the rest of his career. Moreover, the end of the war found McTyeire a refugee, his editorial career over, his beloved church in what many feared was perpetual ruin, and his heart more embittered against the North than ever before. As the South began its rehabilitation, McTyeire entered the episcopacy and led the way for the entry of prominent middle class professionals into the ecclesiastical power structure of the church. These stalwarts of the emerging New South reconfigured southern Methodism from a primarily rural religion into a southern urban and small town phenomenon, elevating the denomination to heretofore unknown levels of political power and social respectability.² In addition to rebuilding the church, McTyeire and his middle class friends wanted to uplift the downtrodden South. While it might be tempting to analyze this as a decidedly postwar phenomenon, the sectional crisis refined McTyeire's ideology, shifting his focus away

² Richard Cardawine, "Methodists, Politics, and the Coming of the American Civil War," *Church History* 69 (September 2000): 598-608; Woodward, *Origins of the New South, passim*; idem., *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951), 35-37; Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 64-65, 167-68; Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 65-66; Archie Vernon Huff, Jr., "A History of South Carolina United Methodism," in *United Methodist Ministers in South Carolina*, eds., Morgan David Arant, Jr. and Nancy McCracken Arant (Columbia, S. C.: South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1984), 409-10.

from lifting up individuals towards advancing an entire region and gave him a framework from which to begin to his postwar undertaking.³

McTyeire's journey to prominence began in New Orleans in 1849 when the church sent the twenty-five year old to the Crescent City at his own request. Although he wanted Methodism to gain traction in this Catholic stronghold, McTyeire began his nine year tenure in Louisiana with minimal ecclesiastical infrastructure and economic support. Within several years, however, McTyeire had an extensive urban circuit consisting mostly of blacks, both slave and free. In 1851, McTyeire founded the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* where he honed skills that prepared him for his later editorship in Nashville. Although founding a paper was a risky financial proposition for investors, McTyeire traveled the region extensively visiting plantations and selling subscriptions. The publication, influenced by New Orleans' religious diversity, grew quickly and McTyeire used the paper to try to weaken the Catholicism in Louisiana.⁴

In the 1850s, the virulent rhetoric of the Know-Nothing Party ensured that McTyeire would enter the political arena because he would face harsh criticism for attacking Catholics, many of whom were loyal Democrats. After publishing a particularly scathing editorial in June 1855, McTyeire received angry letters from Protestants accusing him of making the journal too political by "waging war on Romanism." The editor bristled at the very idea of "a man honestly opposed to the Roman Catholic Church, and yet refusing to support the *Christian Advocate*, located in its stronghold, and, according to the verdict of others, doing better service against it than any single

³ For an excellent overview of the historiography of sectionalism, see Mary A. DeCredico "Sectional and the Secession Crisis" in *A Companion to the American South*, 235-248. The historiography of the sectional crisis is less important to the argument of this chapter than McTyeire's growing pro-southern sentiment that would shape the later portions of his career.

⁴ Martin, "McTyeire and the Negro," 7-9; Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 102-10.

instrument, influence or press in the South!” The crux of the issue was not doctrine or historical animosities, but whether or not McTyeire’s anti-Catholic tirade damaged the Democratic Party in New Orleans by “leaning to their opponents’ interest.”⁵

McTyeire complained bitterly about constraints imposed on him when “the ship of State and the ship of Church...[get] so close that sand bags and fenders must be thrown out to prevent collision.” McTyeire further declared,

The semi-religious character of politics is variously embarrassing to...the religious press...How to do their duty, and yet escape the imputation of meddling with politics, that is the difficulty. If they are silent, they are recreant to their post! If they say the same things they have heretofore said, without lot or hindrance, they are partizans[*sic*]!⁶

Although McTyeire refused to comment on party politics and elections, if an issue touched the established and traditional purview of the religious press, he had no problem entering the political fray. Temperance provided Methodist editors this type of opportunity. Methodists had always been teetotalers, but as the growing middle class turned this into a political crusade, the issue remained, in McTyeire’s eyes, a key issue for the Methodist press. They were not about to relinquish the morality of alcohol consumption or any other issue as an appropriate editorial topic once it entered the political arena. Thus, the debate over Catholicism in New Orleans outraged McTyeire because he and his critics long ago agreed that they were at war with Romanism “as an organization inimical to the best interests of humanity and religion” and further insisted that “we [at the *Advocate*] are where we *were* before the present party issues arose, and

⁵ *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, 11 August 1855. On Know-Nothingism and Methodism, see Cardawine, “Methodists, Politics, and the Coming of the American Civil War,” 593-94.

⁶ *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, 11 August 1855.

where we *shall be* when they close.”⁷ In fact, as long as he did not stoop to candidate or party endorsements, McTyeire claimed to be innocent of violating the moré against blending religion and politics in the press, even if using an overtly partisan tone.

McTyeire also had no qualms about discussing slavery. Southern clerics had long claimed they only responded to northern attacks on slavery in order to justify discussing such a political topic. However, by the time McTyeire founded the New Orleans *Advocate*, the slavery debate was already a common theme in the religious press and plantation missions further ingrained slavery into repertoire of Methodist editors. Once founding the journal, McTyeire wasted no time extolling the virtue of this mission work. “In this field are glorious trophies to be won by the Church,” he argued and, “much has been accomplished, and we rejoice that the Methodist Church has not been behind but before in the good cause.”⁸ The casting of slavery in religious terms further emboldened McTyeire when he became an editor in Nashville.⁹

By 1858, McTyeire stood on the verge of great notoriety in the South. Just before moving to Nashville, he received an honorary doctorate from Emory College, further cementing his growing reputation throughout the South as a leading Methodist writer.¹⁰ Although McTyeire’s experience in New Orleans proved very important in securing his appointment as editor of the *Christian Advocate*, he had also made many friends in

⁷ All quotations from *ibid.* For the middle class temperance movement see Bruce E. Stewart, “Select Men of Sober and Industrious Habits: Alcohol Reform and Social Conflict in Antebellum Appalachia,” *The Journal of Southern History* 73 (May 2007): 290.

⁸ *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, 17 May 1851

⁹ Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 10, 41-42, 74-75, 88-97, 129-31; Tise, *Proslavery*, 168-70, 295-99; Thomas Leonard Williams, “The Methodist Mission to the Slaves,” (Ph. D. diss., Yale University, 1943), *passim*; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 160-61, 170-71, 188-93; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 138-44, 160-84; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 246-282.

¹⁰ Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 114-15.

Nashville because of his advocacy for the Southern Methodist Publishing House, which also printed the *Advocate*. They fondly remembered McTyeire's dynamism,

Being a youthful printer at the case, we were attracted by the tall, erect form, and genial face, and earnest eye of the new-comer, as he passed through our department into the editorial rooms....The wisdom of his selection to this editorship he very soon demonstrated. In an experience of eight years with the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* he had acquired gracefulness and cogency of style – a Saxon vividness – that placed him in front rank of Church writers.¹¹

It was further remembered of McTyeire's editorship that "[n]o [other] Methodist editor in this country, with the possible exception of Dr. Thos. E. Bond, Jr., has ever equaled him in brilliancy."¹² By 1860, the *Christian Advocate* was the leading religious journal in the South and McTyeire grew more powerful within the church's ecclesiastical framework.

As the chief denominational spokesman, McTyeire wasted no opportunity to answer criticism the Northern Church leveled against southern Methodism's views on slavery. After the editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal* of New York harshly criticized the Southern Church, McTyeire retorted that "[w]e do not claim to be better than all the world beside, but we do claim to be honest and consistent."¹³ When the national mood grew more combative after John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry, the criticism between northern and southern Methodist editors became quite personal. For example, after McTyeire wrote that "Abolition[ists] and Black Republican[s]" caused the radicalism that fueled John Brown, the editor of Cincinnati's *Western Christian Advocate*, insinuated that McTyeire was "to be pitied for something worse than ignorance" if he thought that Republicans condoned Brown's raid any more than

¹¹ Ibid., 118.

¹² Ibid. Thomas Emerson Bond, Jr. edited the *Christian Advocate and Journal* of New York in the mid-nineteenth century. Methodists remember him as a great scholar and writer. Many of his personal papers are currently housed at Dickenson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

¹³ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 3 March 1859.

Democrats.¹⁴ McTyeire sharply responded that “[t]he Western speaks as by authority for ‘the Republican Party’ and its sympathies. We do not speak for ‘the Democratic Party’ or any other. Perhaps we are to be pitied in having no great political party to sympathize with or speak for.”¹⁵ McTyeire was at least as partisan as the editor of the *Western Advocate* in tone, and as the debate continued he grew more outwardly devoted to the southern cause.

Throughout early 1860, McTyeire’s never backed away from his argument that it was acceptable for religion and politics to merge if the issue fell into both purviews. McTyeire could claim he did not get involved in politics because he never endorsed political candidates nor discussed party politics in any substantive way. He would criticize a party if he believed their actions sinful, but he never endorsed one either. As the spring of 1860 began, McTyeire quietly went about his job and did not discuss the coming election. He missed no opportunity to criticize the Northern Church for what he saw as its pro-Republican leanings and always proclaimed that his journal was above such lowly political wrangling. McTyeire also smugly reported on lingering conflict at the 1860 northern General Conference over slavery in border regions remaining loyal after the schism of 1844.¹⁶

By summer, however, McTyeire became worried about the tense national situation. In a very heart-felt piece, he praised the integrity of the American political system, begged ministers not to preach on the election, encouraged his entire readership to focus on religion, and to hold autumn revivals in spite of the election. “Moderation, which becomes a Christian man at all times, is needful now,” he pleaded. “It is a defence

¹⁴ Ibid., 10 November 1859.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3 May 1860, 7 June 1860.

[sic] against passion, and retrieves many an error before it is done. ‘Be sober:’ there are other kinds of drunkenness besides that which follows strong drink.”¹⁷ Calling for moderation likely meant that only a fool would vote for a radical like Lincoln, and throughout the editorial there is a vague sense of impending danger. Recall that McTyeire believed God showered favor upon righteous nations while sinful countries suffered. This dread peeks through in the editorial, but McTyeire was not ready to say that the United States was in urgent danger of facing God’s wrath.

After Lincoln’s election on November 6, 1860, McTyeire’s editorials took on a funereal but still resistant tone. On November 29, McTyeire accused “fanatical children” of trying to destroy the “great Union tree” by “digging away at its roots: digging not to cultivate, but to cut them....On the 6th Nov. the top root was struck and jarred, if not sundered.”¹⁸ In addition to blaming Lincolmites for any impending disaster, McTyeire closed the editorial on an ambiguous note that bespoke his support for secession, even though he earnestly hoped for peace and insisted the country was still virtuous. “Now that the matter is up, and the country thoroughly roused, we hope there will be a satisfactory and final settlement *one way or the other.*”¹⁹ While claiming to be neutral but still leveling attacks against the North, McTyeire was, in a less overt way, giving aid to the Democratic Party, which is where his political sympathies lied his entire life.

After his native South Carolina seceded in December, McTyeire conveyed the general sense of uncertainty that remained endemic throughout much of the South. While away from Nashville on business, McTyeire wrote to his staff on New Year’s Day of 1861 from the Gulf Coast with news from the region, including the growing radicalism

¹⁷ Ibid., 12 July 1860.

¹⁸ Ibid., 29 November 1860.

¹⁹ Ibid. Emphasis added.

gripping the area. He deprecated fire-breathing secessionists and wrote sympathetically of those who grieved over, but ultimately accepted, the destruction of the Union. McTyeire's ideology insisted that corrupting influences must be pruned immediately no matter how painful, and so it was with Union. But, McTyeire still displayed a sense of hope that things could be resolved without bloodshed in a way that pleased all parties. He called for fervent prayer for the nation, but conspicuously not the Union.²⁰ Although McTyeire harangued northern editors for their belligerence towards disunion, he urged religious moderation, advising his readers to go to "the Bible before you look into the morning papers. The soul can't live on sensational dispatches."²¹ As events quickened, McTyeire insisted that he "still has faith in the destiny of the American people," and claimed he would not take a public stand on the issue of secession.²² After all, the *Advocate* was the only source of news for some people, who needed their current events free from partisan bickering.

This was lip service to his readers from the border states of Missouri, Kentucky, and those from the Holston Conference, which encompassed the bitterly divided areas of eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina. Many readers from these regions sent angry letters to McTyeire that used terms like "slave oligarchy," "treason," and "traitors" to describe the new Southern Confederacy. On February 14, McTyeire unloaded a full volley on these angry subscribers. "These wares are sent to the wrong market," he told his readers. "We do not want them. We have no sympathy with such expression, or the spirit they breathe. We were born in the South, live in the South, expect to die in the South – are Southern thoroughly and entirely." McTyeire accused his readers of

²⁰ Ibid., 10 January 1861.

²¹ Ibid., 24 January 1861.

²² Ibid., 7 February 1861.

everything from siding with abolitionists to outright ignorance. In fact, he claimed that the actions of the Deep South awakened the North “to the belief that the South is in earnest,” and will set in motion a compromise to rebuild the Union to the satisfaction of the South.²³ Instead of criticizing secessionists, the border states should thank them for forcing negotiation.

Letters from all sides of the debate continued to pour into McTyeire’s office. Early on, McTyeire printed and responded to specific complaints, sometimes resorting to petty and vindictive language. For instance, after an Eagleville, Tennessee resident wrote to cancel his subscription because the newspaper “contains too much ‘disunion,’” McTyeire claimed he let readers make up their own minds on all political issues and flippantly asked what exactly bothered him, the editorials, the letters, or the general news. McTyeire then pondered if the general tone of the paper was the problem. Maybe so, but “[w]e shall not abate our tone one jot or tittle.” McTyeire cared not if it hurt his business and proclaimed that “[w]e won’t lick dust or eat dirt even to avoid the charge of disunion at Eagleville, or to escape having a thousand papers ‘stopped.’” For his *coup de grâce*, McTyeire noted that the Eagleville resident will no longer have a religious journal, a necessity for any Christian, and he sarcastically advised him to take Unionist papers like “Zion’s Herald, published in Boston, or Mr. Hosmer’s paper, Auburn, N. Y., or the Western Christian Advocate, of Cincinnati.”²⁴

On April 25, just after Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s call for volunteers, McTyeire dropped his thin veil of neutrality and unequivocally stated that the *Advocate* supported the Confederacy.

²³ Ibid., 14 February 1861.

²⁴ Ibid., 7 March 1861.

Their trained hands and fanatic legions are moving down upon our borders and coasts. And what have we done? We have simply determined, as equal and original partners, to withdraw formerly from a governmental compact, the spirit and letter of which they themselves have broken. We have only asked to be let alone and to manage our affairs in our own way. Tyrants could not pursue their slaves more promptly and fiercely.²⁵

Those who did not stand with the South were aligned against her. McTyeire urged southerners from all political persuasions, be it cooperationist, secessionist, or unionist, to be united in war. “Voting is a matter of opinion; but now is the day when patriotism *proves* itself.” It will take sacrifice to get ready. In addition to making sure all firearms were in good working order, southerners must not waste ammunition on hunting. If one did not own a gun, he should do anything it took to get one. As far as the North went, they had “a large portion of worthless population to spare – food for powder.” Although it would not be an easy fight, eventually their fervor would wane. They were being an aggressor and “[o]n such an issue, defending our own soil and institutions, one true Southern man can chase a dozen Yankees.” After begging his audience to do their duty in war, McTyeire reminded all southerners that Christianity should not be forgotten and beseeched his readers to pray earnestly before the impending storm.²⁶

Two weeks later, McTyeire revealed that this hot-blooded editorial alone cost him seven subscriptions and earned him three forceful rebukes. It was not that they disagreed with the content of the piece *per se*, but the very idea of a religious journal throwing the tea overboard offended many readers. McTyeire was indignant. “Politics, forsooth!” he declared. “Why, brethren, if ever this century sees a question that rises above all politics,

²⁵ Ibid., 25 April 1861.

²⁶ Ibid. For an overview of the sectional crisis in the Upper South, see Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), xvi-xix, for Nashville in particular see 323-333.

it is now here.”²⁷ The sweetest style of humanity, even as McTyeire defined it, became more of a mere suggestion than a fixed principle of daily life. By 1861, gentility and meekness, for McTyeire, were contrary to the South’s needs and only promoted war. But “the man with a rifled musket in hand is the promoter of peace.”²⁸

In addition to speaking loudly and carrying a big stick, McTyeire insisted the new nation must have a strong moral character. The stakes could not be higher because if the South turned towards sin, God would destroy it as surely as he did Sodom and Gomorrah. The Confederacy should start by strictly adhering to the Sabbath. This is one of the great faults of the North, who allowed their mail trains to run and their army to work on Sundays. McTyeire never wrote editorials concerning post office and army policy before secession. Even if it was a matter of religious prerogative, such speech would not have been considered appropriate in most southern religious newspapers because of it was already established as an overwhelmingly political issue in the early days of American Wesleyanism, a time when most Methodists were decidedly apolitical. But the dawning of the Confederacy, with all its newness, gave McTyeire and other religious editors a great opportunity to try to influence national policy and political culture because lines demarcating political and religious boundaries in the new country were still fluid. Anything was fair game because men like McTyeire could claim that God would damn wicked nations and they needed to build their nation on a firm foundation of righteousness.²⁹

²⁷*Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 9 May 1861.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 30 May 1861

²⁹*Ibid.*, 27 June 1861, 4 July 1861, respectively; Cardawine, “Methodists, Politics, and the Coming of the American Civil War,” 580.

Such editorials only stirred his readers even more. For several weeks, McTyeire regularly featured “Letters from Friends and Others” on the editorial page. One preacher from Tennessee wrote to cancel his subscription out of “fear [that] the *foul sheet* might corrupt the morals of my son.” This comment later brought rebuke from the man’s own protégé, now a minister himself, who sadly noted that “I felt sorry when I read it.”³⁰ Others could not get enough of McTyeire’s paper, proclaiming that the editorials were “like a gleam of sunshine on a rainy day.”³¹ Reports flooded in from Kentucky that subscriptions there would dramatically fall off. Others claimed that Kentucky readers loved McTyeire. Instead of entering the fray, McTyeire, perhaps embarrassed over his harsh language to the Eagleville resident, let those in Kentucky and east Tennessee fight amongst themselves in the pages of the *Advocate*. While this might have given him a way to claim the middle ground, he gave more space to letters with clear pro-southern sentiment.

Throughout the rest of 1861, McTyeire’s editorials took on a banal quality. While he gleefully thanked God for the Confederate victory at Manassas, McTyeire was also very level-headed as the first year of the war dragged on. He correctly warned readers that Bull Run might only be a prelude to unthinkable death and destruction.³² McTyeire further pled with southerners to avoid hero worship not only as a form of idolatry, but also because “[w]e wrong the many by heaping all the honors upon the few.”³³ Of course, McTyeire saw positive changes stemming from the war. In his view, boys were becoming hearty men on the battlefield who would later make great leaders. Likewise, McTyeire

³⁰ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 11 July 1861, 8 August 1861.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11 July 1861.

³² *Ibid.*, 1 August 1861.

³³ *Ibid.*, 22 August 1861.

noted that women were learning how to use spinning wheels again, working hard, and praying even harder. The blockade made the South more self-sufficient and even made it harder to get materials needed to distill liquor. Slaves became more docile than ever when the South threw off the evil of abolitionism.³⁴ By Christmas, however, it was abundantly clear that Lincoln had no intention of letting the South go quietly. In one of the final editorials of his career, McTyeire grimly described the hard times.

[The times] seem sadly out of joint. The nations of the earth are shaking; we are in the midst of revolutions. What the end will be, no mortal can tell. Every Christian should pray that good may come out of what seems to be evil. These are trying seasons upon the Church of God. God's people are passing a fiery ordeal; their faith is being tested; their trust and confidence in the promises of the Gospel are being tried.... We need more prayer, more faith, more zeal, more devotion.³⁵

The self-righteous exuberance that flowed from his pen throughout 1861 had finally faded into depressed brooding.

In 1862, the war came to Tennessee. In the western theatre, Albert Sidney Johnston, who commanded of all Confederate troops between the Mississippi and the Appalachians, concentrated on fortifying the Mississippi River, but neglected smaller forts on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. Ulysses S. Grant recognized this weakness and on February 6 captured Fort Henry on the Tennessee near the Kentucky line. Ten days later, Grant gained control of the Cumberland when he captured Fort Donelson, a victory that propelled him into the national spotlight. With Johnston's force divided by the two rivers under Federal control, Union troops under Don Carlos Buell pressed south from Kentucky to capture Nashville.³⁶ With the Federal Army breathing down their necks, many residents fled. McTyeire, who had young children, made arrangements to

³⁴ Ibid., 18 September 1861.

³⁵ Ibid., 19 December 1861.

³⁶ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 396-403.

leave Nashville in advance of Buell's army. At the time, McTyeire had a personal estate worth around \$4,000, a significant amount of money. Unable to find a way to transport his household goods, however, McTyeire desperately sold them for \$300. A week before Nashville fell, McTyeire and his family escaped to rebuild their lives anew in rural Butler County, Alabama, thus ending his editorial career.³⁷

Fortunately for McTyeire, he owned land on his late parent's estate in Butler County. Although he had no house, his favorite slave Uncle Cy, who still lived on the old homestead, helped McTyeire build a log cabin where he remained with his family for around sixteen months. Although he grew up in the countryside, McTyeire spent the overwhelming majority of his professional life in Williamsburg, Mobile, New Orleans, and Nashville, growing accustomed to the luxuries of city dwellers with above average means. Life in Butler County afforded no such benefits, and McTyeire had to return to his boyhood roots. After settling into a rustic life of farming and local preaching, McTyeire wrote a series of letters to the *Southern Christian Advocate* in the fall of 1862, then printing out of Augusta, Georgia, entitled "Letters from the Country." Writing under pseudonym M. P. (which likely stood for Methodist Preacher), McTyeire discussed country living, usually focusing on religion but often describing the daily hardships of the rural populace and the sense of community pervading the countryside. People shared newspapers and letters from soldiers on the front to stay informed of the army's actions and Confederate politics. Moreover, the sense of solidarity and frugality in hard times greatly pleased McTyeire. He noticed that "[t]o the country you must come to find out the

³⁷ Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 124-25; 1860 United States Federal Census, Davidson County, Tennessee, Roll M653, Series 1246, Page 496; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 402-3; *Southern Christian Advocate*, 6 March 1862. In addition to \$4,000 in personal estate (which probably included three slaves), McTyeire had \$6,000 in real estate, some of which was probably located in South Carolina.

sacrifices *the people* are making for independence, and to feel the throb of the great heart that sustains this war.”³⁸ Not only did they send their sons, fathers, and brothers away to war, they also lacked enough salt for curing meat for the winter. Shoes, hats, and bonnets were scarce. While country congregations typically worshiped in rude log cabins, religion suffered in unexpected ways. For example, McTyeire wanted to lead his church in the Lord’s Supper, but nobody had the flour to make enough bread for the whole congregation. An exasperated McTyeire proclaimed that “if nothing better could be done, we would use *corn bread!*” Above all else, he praised the people for their positive evangelical spirit in the face of adversity. “The heart of the people is not wearied,” he announced. “[I]t is not despondent – there is resolution, buoyancy and hope.”³⁹

While McTyeire happily extolled the virtues of Methodism, farmers, and even country funerals, some parts of his long letters were more somber. While acknowledging his support for the Confederate conscription law, McTyeire insisted that it should not be imposed upon males between the ages of 36 and 45. While McTyeire, then thirty-eight, might have been anxious to avoid service, he noted that it would simply ruin too many families that were already suffering inordinately in the struggle for independence. He related the sad plight of men looking after widowed sisters-in-law, disabled parents, helpless children, and invalid family members and urged Congress not to extend the draft.⁴⁰ For all his flowery words about country folk, McTyeire soon received a full-time pastorate in Montgomery at Clay Street Methodist Church in 1863 where he remained for the duration of the war.⁴¹

³⁸ *Southern Christian Advocate*, 21 August 1862.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 October 1862. See also Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 124-28.

⁴⁰ *Southern Christian Advocate*, 2 October 1862.

⁴¹ Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 133.

McTyeire's time in the country proved to be a great departure from the life he had been living. As with so many people, hard times refocused McTyeire's eyes on the important things in his life. First, the war forced him to move from a comfortable house just outside Nashville into a rustic cabin with his wife and five children. Although he later advocated for reconciliation, he never completely got over his bitterness toward the North because of the hardships imposed on him, his family, and the whole South by the Yankee army. On another level, although he grew up on a farm, McTyeire was an intellectual, not a farmer and he had never experienced the hardships of a rural itinerant preacher. He had become thoroughly urbane over the years. McTyeire's familiarity with the city allowed him to more clearly see the virtues of frugal country living, which he no longer took for granted, but his early exit from Butler County shows that he was not anxious to plant roots in the countryside. He required comforts that only the city could bring and McTyeire would never again live in a rural area. But the intimacy, frugality, and honesty of the country were great attributes, and there is no doubt that he missed these in his urban home. Thus, while McTyeire favored middle class leadership in his church, he wanted them to have certain country ethos like thrift, strong work ethics, and unimpeachable honesty.⁴²

Although McTyeire did not suffer inordinately once he reached Montgomery, his heart broke over the state of the Southern Church. By war's end, the church "faced a struggle for its very existence."⁴³ On a logistical level, the destruction of communication and travel networks toppled ecclesiastical hierarchy as bishops and elders could not communicate with one another or their preachers. Some ministers remained on their

⁴² Conkin, *Gone with the Ivy*, 12-13.

⁴³ Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 22.

charges the duration of the war, but others had no direction after their appointments ended. Thanks to poor travel, annual conferences were either poorly attended or ceased meeting all together. Methodist colleges, like many other southern institutions, closed for the duration of the war and some never reopened. Many of the colleges faced financial ruin because their endowments, funded in southern script, evaporated with the Confederacy. During the occupation of Nashville, Federal officials used the Southern Methodist Publishing House as a hospital, arsenal, and printing office. By 1865, most of the equipment had either been destroyed or confiscated. Many churches that had been in the path of the Union Army were badly damaged or destroyed. Church membership plummeted. By some estimates as many as 113,000 white parishioners fell off membership roles.⁴⁴ The destruction of the economy coupled with financial losses caused by emancipation ruined many of the wealthiest patrons of the Southern Church and made for very light collection plates. Finally, the human toll of war proved particularly difficult. Aside from families displaced by both armies, war deaths depleted both ministers and male congregants.⁴⁵

Lastly, there remained a threat to the Southern Church that southerners like McTyeire perceived as a hideous example of northern sacrilege. As the Union Army advanced into the South, northern bishops set their sights upon the “large and inviting fields of Christian enterprise and labor” of the “territories of the Southern Church already

⁴⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁵ James W. May, “The War Years,” in *The History of American Methodism*, vol. 2, ed. Emory Stevens Bucke (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), 244-51; Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 27-33; Charles T. Thrift, Jr., “Rebuilding the Southern Church,” in *History of American Methodism*, 259-61; Dan R. Frost, *Thinking Confederates: Academia and the Idea of Progress in the New South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 39; Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 15-27.

behind the Federal lines.”⁴⁶ The reasoning went that the Methodist Episcopal Church should never have agreed to ecclesiastical separation in 1844 and now the Northern Church had a Christian duty to convince southerners to repent for bringing the scourge of disunion and war upon the nation. Northern Bishop Edward R. Ames consulted with close friend and Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, and in an extremely controversial decision, Stanton issued the following order in 1864,

All houses of worship belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church South in which a loyal minister...does not now officiate, are placed at the disposal of the Right Rev. Bishop Ames....[Commanding officers] will furnish Bishop Ames every facility and assistance compatible with the interest of the service in placing loyal ministers in possession of these houses...⁴⁷

In effect, the order placed the army at Ames’ disposal. Although Lincoln did instruct Stanton to modify the order to only include churches in Confederate states, Ames wasted no time sending missionaries south. The bishop’s men quickly gained a foothold in the Tennessee and southern Mississippi Valleys.⁴⁸

Stanton’s order emboldened the Northern Church. As the South crumbled and the reality of their plight sunk in, some southern Methodists favored reunion with the Northern Church because they did not think it was feasible for the Southern Church to carry on its evangelical work in its condition. Northern Methodists did not favor reunion, but instead wanted to impose reconstruction on the Southern Church and pondered how they should best “approach...the great mass of disorganized Methodists in the South, so as to bring them back to the communion of their fathers with the least possible

⁴⁶ May in *History of American Methodism*, 248.

⁴⁷ U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Ser. I, vol. 34, pt. 2 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1891), 311.

⁴⁸ May in *History of American Methodism*, 247-51; Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 22-27; William Warren Sweet, *Methodism in American History* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), 304-7; Ralph E. Morrow, *Northern Methodism and Reconstruction* (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1956), 33, 37; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 130-32, 162-65, 169.

unnecessary shock to their local prejudices.” Now that the issue of slavery was resolved, the only thing that stood in the Northern Church’s way was the South’s lingering resentment. Three principles guided Methodist reconstruction: southern Methodists must pledge loyalty to the United States and the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Northern Church would “insist on the unity of Methodism, its ecclesiastical as well as moral unity,” and they must avoid any future controversy that might tear the church asunder.⁴⁹ Northern politicians were reluctant to stand up against northern Methodists, despite their questionable actions. Even Lincoln gave the Northern Church unqualified praise when he insisted that they “sent more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospitals, and more prayers to heaven than any.”⁵⁰

Many white southerners found these northern missionaries condescending and detestable. One northerner even remembered that “our ministers stood in the attitude of conquerors.”⁵¹ Church leaders met in Palmyra, Missouri to make a statement to the Northern Church and issued the “Palmyra Manifesto,” which emphatically stated that “the questions raised in the division of 1844 were not settled by the war,” and that the Southern Church would not capitulate.⁵² The leaders chose McTyeire to write and circulate the manifesto which one southern clergyman later remembered “was like the blast of a trumpet: the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, yet lived.”⁵³ Fortunes improved for the Southern Church when Andrew Johnson ordered northern missionaries out of the South, in effect ending Methodist reconstruction.⁵⁴ At Palmyra, McTyeire and

⁴⁹ *Christian Advocate and Journal* (New York), 16 March 1865.

⁵⁰ Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 129.

⁵¹ Thrift in *History of American Methodism*, 265.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 269.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 268, 259-70; Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 33-61.

⁵⁴ Morrow, *Northern Methodism and Reconstruction*, 33-44.

his comrades made a powerful statement, but words were not enough. If the Southern Church really wanted to go it alone in tatters, they would need to set a new tone at the upcoming General Conference away from cautious conservatism towards new and dynamic leadership. McTyeire did not disappoint.

The month-long 1866 General Conference met in New Orleans and has been described as “one of the most important... Church councils in America[n history].”⁵⁵ The changes instituted in New Orleans significantly shaped the character of American Methodism down to the present day and McTyeire, who served as a delegate from the Montgomery Conference, “emerged as the most influential person in its deliberations.”⁵⁶ McTyeire introduced a new church law mandating the adoption of laymen as delegates to the General Conference in equal proportion with the clergy. While this had been an issue decades earlier, it emerged anew in the postwar South, championed by McTyeire and other progressives. Proponents wanted the new rule for two reasons. First, as the church expanded programs that increased lay leadership at the local church level such as temperance, foreign and domestic missions, and Sunday schools, many felt that lay leadership was appropriate to reflect their rapidly growing influence in the church. Others found the clergy’s power monopoly, a custom since the days of Asbury, objectionable because laymen had no say in determining any ecclesiastical policies. Instituting such a change was seen as nothing short of radical by the conservative wing of the church, led by Bishop George F. Pierce, who would confront McTyeire in the future. For a denomination given to practically worship former luminaries like Wesley, Whitefield,

⁵⁵ Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 63.

⁵⁶ Thrift in *History of American Methodism*, 271

and Asbury, turning their backs on tradition caused no small amount of anxiety and controversy.⁵⁷

McTyeire was fearless on the floor of the Conference and very effective. The momentous measure eventually passed giving laymen equal representation with preachers in the General Conference and included checks and balances. Laymen would have no say in examining the character of preachers, and ministers had no vote in elections of lay delegates to any local or national conference. Within a few years the northern General Conference also adopted a similar statute. McTyeire helped push through other progressive and previously unimaginable changes in New Orleans. First of all, the six month probationary period for new congregants that included mandatory class meeting attendance was completely dropped because it discouraged new membership. In addition, the conference doubled the maximum pastoral term of service per charge from two to four years, which allowed ministers a longer time to thoroughly learn the family and social dynamics of each church on their circuits while becoming beloved local figures. Pierce, fast losing influence to McTyeire, was so angry over this particular change he nearly left the church in disgust. Finally, the church decreed that black congregations remaining loyal to the General Conference were to form their own annual conferences under the auspices of the Southern Church. If successful, the church would consider establishing a black general conference at their next meeting four years later.⁵⁸

Throughout the Conference, McTyeire's talent at debate and forceful personality annoyed some, impressed many, and made his opponents fear him. It was later remembered that "[h]e had enough combativeness and driving power to have made him a

⁵⁷ Ibid., 270-79; Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 62-66.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

revolutionist, had not the grace of God made him a Christian man.”⁵⁹ Others took a darker view of McTyeire, with one staunch conservative describing him as “the most dangerous man in the Church.”⁶⁰ While some probably feared he might make his annual conference too strong, the former editor’s obvious leadership abilities helped him create quite a following and, as such, the 1866 General Conference elected McTyeire to the episcopacy along with three other ministers. Within a few years, Bishop McTyeire would become the most important and powerful man in his church.⁶¹

The General Conference of 1866 destroyed many remaining vestiges of the church of Asbury. In some ways, progressive Methodism made religion easier for laymen and clergy alike. For some preachers, posh appointments in big cities or state capitals like Richmond and Nashville allowed them to further ensconce themselves in southern high society, thereby elevating the social and political position of the Southern Church. The loosening of expectations made Methodism easier for laymen, especially people looking for a new church. Joining the Methodists could now be as much a social decision as a religious choice. But the adoption of lay leadership was unquestionably the most important ecclesiastical change in Methodism bearing McTyeire’s fingerprints. Pressure for the change came from several sectors. Some laypersons were indeed frustrated by what many felt was an outmoded form of church governance that allowed the clergy to have a power monopoly. Much of the pressure, however, came from within the clergy itself. With all the difficult challenges the church faced following the war, including a shortage of qualified preachers, there was a sense that among many elders and bishops

⁵⁹ Fitzgerald and Galloway, *Eminent Methodists*, 95.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁶¹ Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 64; Thrift in *History of American Methodism*, 279; Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 143-44.

that all hands needed to be on deck in order to steer the ship of church to calmer and more prosperous seas. Ignoring the talents of its adherents seemed to be a foolish way of running an ecclesiastical body that was already pitifully undermanned. Whatever their motives, the result was one of bishops and elders voluntarily sharing their ecclesiastical power, prestige, and social influence with laymen. While the clergy still held more power than the laity because they had the ultimate power to hire and fire preachers, it signified a major shift in ecclesiastical governance within American Methodism. Middle class men were a perfect fit, and many doctors, jurists, educators, statesmen, merchants, bankers, and other professionals became General Conference delegates and thereby shared their own power, prestige, and influence with the leaders of the Southern Church. As it grew in urban areas, the Southern Church became a middle class bastion and soared in social respectability and was in better position to shape society.⁶²

McTyeire's sacred-secular ideology remained but the context in which it operated had become dramatically different. McTyeire now focused on lifting up the region, not sinners. In the antebellum period, McTyeire saw no need to uplift the South because he did not see it as a place of politically and socially downtrodden people. Thus, he focused on individual behavior to improve the system. The sectional crisis, war, and its tumultuous ending gave McTyeire a mission at home and embittered him against the North so that personal salvation took a backseat to the condition of the region. For McTyeire, the North destroyed the South's divinely ordained social infrastructure with emancipation and the sharp decline of the aristocratic ruling class. The South needed new leaders. Although social dysfunction and violence characterized the years after the war

⁶² Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 137-39; Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 65-66; see also Samuel S. Hill, Jr., Edgar T. Thompson, Anne Firor Scott, Charles Hudson, and Edwin Gaustad, *Religion in the Solid South* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 36-37.

and were difficult for all southerners, the southern middle class, located in both large and small towns, expanded rapidly in the 1870s. These pro-business social conservatives built ornate worship houses, espoused Victorian ideals, and held race, class, and gender norms similar to ones McTyeire advocated in the antebellum period. These southerners soon fashioned themselves as leaders of a New South that was not based on the plantation economy, but a mixture of industry and scientific agriculture undergirded by Christianity. They would rebuild social hierarchy in the South, the lynchpin of McTyeire's sacred-secular ideology. Furthermore, women could take their place in auxiliary programs and make the church the center of the urban female world, which empowered them personally, if not politically, but still allowed them to properly conform to their social duties. It would still be a man's duty to protect women and a woman's duty to sanctify the firesides. Throughout the modified postwar ideology a sense of ubiquitous benevolent paternalism remained entrenched, even if legally jarred throughout the South.⁶³

The sacred-secular ideology also had to adapt to the new postwar racial situation. Recall that before the war, McTyeire wanted blacks and whites to worship together if it all possible. Now that blacks were theoretically equal to whites under the law and freed from paternalism, the refusal of white church leaders to share power with them could potentially cause a very tense situation for those blacks remaining loyal to the church of their conversion. Fortunately for McTyeire, blacks left the Southern Church in droves to join all-black churches. Nevertheless enough remained loyal to the General Conference to

⁶³ Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 27-29, 170-71; idem., *Reunion and Reaction*, 35-37; Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 64-65, 167-68; Dan T. Carter, *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 6-23; James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 16-20; Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 67; Huff, "A History of South Carolina United Methodism," 409-14; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 6-7.

cause worry throughout the church that something would have to be done to control race relations and thereby protect white hegemony.⁶⁴

The sectional crisis, Civil War, and its aftermath made McTyeire more overtly pro-southern and altered the path of his career. McTyeire would propagate his sacred-secular ideology to help give the region new political and religious leadership. While McTyeire's postwar ideology suffered similar flaws as its antebellum incarnation, the evangelical masculine ideals in the prewar version translated very nicely into the Victorian southern middle class of the postwar period. In terms of its new regional focus, however, the ideology proved to be more elitist and hoped to uplift the region through the middle class. McTyeire believed the church could advance the South through educating and empowering the growing white middle class and also by producing ministers trained at the graduate level. This would become the greatest and most controversial crusade in McTyeire's life, dramatically alter his career, allow him to make a strong connection with a very unlikely personage, and push him toward an even more elitist frame of mind. Even though he was warm and loving in personal relations, McTyeire focused more on the highest style of humanity and never succeeded in living up to the expectations he set in his sacred-secular ideology because he never truly exhibited the sweetest style of humanity toward all people the South.

⁶⁴ Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 34; Thrift in *History of American Methodism*, 279.

CHAPTER THREE: “A TRUE CHILD OF THE TRIBE OF ISSACHAR”
MCTYEIRE, THE NEW SOUTH CREED, AND THE CONTROVERSY OVER
MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

And of the children of Isachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.

1 Chronicles 12:32, KJV

Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

2 Chronicles 1:12, KJV

According to Jewish tradition, the Tribe of Issachar “consisted mostly of scholars” who “united wealth and learning,” possessed an “understanding of the times,” and held considerable influence over the rest of Israel.¹ Southern Methodist Bishop Oscar Fitzgerald once described fellow churchman Holland N. McTyeire as “a true child of the Tribe of Issachar” because of his inspired leadership and advocacy for a seminary to train aspiring preachers.² While the South was still reeling from the Civil War and Reconstruction, many like McTyeire “managed to persuade themselves...that the new era held unprecedented promise for the region.”³ In this optimistic age, the New South creed emerged “to inspire a program of action, [and] expressed faith in the South’s ability to bring about its own regeneration.”⁴ This credo sought to transform southern society from a single-crop plantation economy into a sophisticated land leading the restored union in business, industry, agriculture, and education, while still honoring its mythic past. These feelings permeated religious institutions and McTyeire believed that God planned not

¹ Max Seligsohn, “The Tribe of Issachar in Rabbinical Literature,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1904), 676.

² Fitzgerald and Galloway, *Eminent Methodists*, 95.

³ Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, viii.

⁴ Gaston, *New South Creed*, 7.

only to grant the South wisdom and knowledge, but also prosperity and prestige. He would spend his postwar career working to uplift the Southern Church financially, educationally, and religiously. This desire to “link wealth and learning” with religion required someone like McTyeire filled with the spirit of the Issacharites who “understood the times” and “knew what Israel ought to do.”⁵

New South enthusiasts generally considered themselves progressives and wanted the South to industrialize and adopt scientific agriculture as a way to awaken the South from its slumber. Any improvements to the region would come with funding from the North as a form of sectional reconciliation, but southerners insisted on controlling politics and race relations themselves. Although historians have variously seen this as a political, social, and economic phenomenon, it had a religious dimension as well. McTyeire, imbued with his sacred-secular ideology placed in the New South context, would establish a progressive agenda of growth to transform the Southern Church from what many felt was a backwoods country religion into a denomination to surpass all others in social prestige, evangelistic efforts, and intellectual culture. Understanding the times as he did, he put this scheme into action and found financing from an extremely wealthy northern benefactor. McTyeire’s goals, however, went far beyond growing his church. It also meant ensuring that the New South would be pleasing to God. After the fall of the southern gentry, the South lacked a stable social hierarchy with a powerful ruling elite, a necessity in any society because, as McTyeire believed, God ordained all good and just social orders. When prosperity returned to the South, it would be proof of God’s favor. McTyeire wanted New South professionals and other middle class men to lead the South and the church into a glorious new era. But two problems emerged. How could

⁵ 1 Chronicles 12:32, KJV.

Methodism claim their loyalty with their unsophisticated legion of ministers and how could the South keep its brightest young minds at home to sustain this professional class when the state of southern higher education was abysmal?⁶

McTyeire's solution was simple. The church needed to establish a theological seminary and university to be the bedrock of Methodists of the southern middle class. But founding a university was no simple proposition and McTyeire confronted class tension at every turn. For example, in the pulpit, McTyeire was measured, logical, and tried to produce thoughtful and prayerful Christians, not excited zealots. Indeed, he wanted his church to be dignified, high-minded, and rich in learning and religious conviction, what he no doubt felt were his best personal attributes. Other Methodists aggressively clung to traditional rural evangelicalism and wanted their church to remain an outwardly spiritual faith for the masses, not the few. Traditionally, the Southern Church only loosely enforced standards regarding a preacher's education and intellectual competency. Anybody who believed themselves called by God could potentially be ordained by an annual conference and start preaching, even if they could barely read. McTyeire and other likeminded reformers wanted to make sure that low professional standards did not impede the church from reaching the growing middle class population of the urban South and planned their progressive agenda in favor of educational reform.⁷

⁶ McTyeire contradicts Wilson's argument that southern religious leaders disparaged the New South and desperately clung to old ways, *Baptized in the Blood*, 79-99; see also Gaston, *New South Creed*, 25-42; Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 167; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 172-73; Frost, *Thinking Confederates*, 39.

⁷ Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1976), 287-334; James W. Fraser, "'The Bishops, I presume, are divided': Methodist Opposition to the Establishment of Vanderbilt University," *Southern Studies* 24 (Summer 1985): 168-72; Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 69-80.

While the Southern Church was among the most powerful and prestigious religious institutions in the South, it is easy to overstate the heterogeneity of regional religion. Groups as varied as episcopal Methodists, Regular Baptists, Hardshell Baptists, Foot Washing Baptists, Primitive Wesleyans, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, Jews, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Disciples of Christ, and richly diverse black churches all called the South home. Despite this diversity, the South was under-churched as compared to the nation as a whole and the rural South was particularly lacking stable religious institutions. While some southerners attended many different denominations, others debated small points of doctrine and caused church schisms for the pettiest of reasons. Overall, religion in the South was very personal and provided vast numbers of southerners with a frame of reference to live their lives. Edward Ayers aptly described the importance of religion to southern culture during this period, “Religious faith and language...permeated public speech as well as private emotion. For many people, religion provided the measure of politics, the power behind law and reform, the reason to reach out to the poor and exploited...Even those filled with doubt or disdain could not escape the images, assumptions, the power of faith.”⁸

Long before McTyeire, Methodists traditionally believed that the chief qualification for a preacher was a call from God, after which the Holy Spirit would fill him with divine truth. Aside from doctrinal differences, Methodists proudly held that their clergy’s divine call made them distinct from educated and pretentious Episcopalians and Presbyterians. Many faithfully believed that all one had to do was, as in the words of Jesus, drop their nets and become fishers of men. This did not mean that all Methodists believed that preachers required no special instruction. Proponents of education

⁸ Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 160.

remembered that John Wesley graduated from Oxford and openly supported ministerial training. Their opponents looked to the American tradition of Francis Asbury and the scarcely educated but effective circuit riders of the early national period to insist that education counted for little in the fields of evangelism. After the schism of 1844, the Southern Church consistently resisted efforts to establish a seminary, although most annual conferences supported a small liberal arts college to educate those few preachers interested in formal learning.⁹

As early as 1854, McTyeire and other progressives formed a so-called educational institute to promote and establish a southern Methodist university. While this committee was able to found a short-lived school that conferred a few medical degrees, nothing substantive came from this work. It did, however, form a loose coalition of prominent clergy who later looked to McTyeire for leadership.¹⁰ At the 1866 General Conference, the College of Bishops urged the body to consider establishing a seminary, but delegates insisted that this work should be done through biblical chairs at the colleges. In addition to the reality of the South's economic malaise, these debt-ridden institutions faced uncertain futures and delegates believed they should be restored to full health before the General Conference undertook a new seminary or university.¹¹

After his election to episcopacy in 1866, McTyeire took initiative to push educational reform. Other powerful proponents emerged for educational reform, including Thomas D. Summers, who replaced McTyeire at the helm of the *Christian Advocate* and made the journal a bastion of progressive church politics. In 1869, McTyeire and Summers urged Landon C. Garland, the former president of the University

⁹ Fraser, "The Bishops, I presume, are divided," 179-83.

¹⁰ Conkin, *Gone with the Ivy*, 3-6.

¹¹ Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 262-63; Thrift., "Rebuilding the Southern Church," 305.

of Alabama and one of the most highly-regarded educators in the South, to contribute six guest editorials on education. While Garland was careful not to minimize the call of the Holy Spirit, he proposed a professionalized ministry and maintained that teaching the scriptures required more than a pedestrian knowledge of the Bible. In fact, ministers needed to be unassailable experts on all things religious. He asks his readers if their opinion of a lawyer would be compromised if he “had never mastered the principles of private rights and wrongs” or of a physician ignorant of “the nature and remedies of disease.”¹² He lamented the fact that in many cases “the laity [are] intellectually in advance of the clergy.”¹³

Garland’s comparison between doctors and lawyers with preachers was crucial because of the growing national trend of professionalization. Burton Bledstein observes that the growth of professionalism in the nineteenth century “encourag[ed] the ego to explore the world and discover knowledge.”¹⁴ The social status that these middle class professionals held rested on authority because their education “required amateurs to ‘trust’ in the integrity of trained persons.”¹⁵ In this context, the presence of religious scholars in Methodist pulpits would greatly advance the position of southern Methodism. After Garland explained that preachers need specialized knowledge of ancient languages to fully understand the meaning of the Bible and its historical contexts, he betrayed the underlying social ambition of many ministers.

There are a great many *collateral* advantages which a minister would derive from high intellectual culture and from an extensive and varied store of knowledge. Nothing gives more respectability of character, or more weight to opinion; and

¹²*Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 9 October 1869.

¹³*Ibid.* See also Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 149-51, 173-77; Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 263-66.

¹⁴Bledstein, *Culture of Professionalism*, x-xi.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 90.

these are the principal grounds of influence. The social position of such a minister would be greatly elevated. He would find ready access into every circle of society instructing and entertaining all with whom he might come into contact. His company would be sought universally and his influence would be felt throughout the community, affecting and promoting every true interest of mankind...¹⁶

The church thus had a duty to raise the professional standards of its ministers not only to propagate the gospel to the higher classes, but also to claim its rightful place in the upper echelons of the pantheon of southern religion. While praising the colleges, Garland asserted “they are inadequate to the purpose” and proposed to found “a theological institution of the first class, established by the General Conference...where our young men may be trained in all that appertains to an efficient discharge of the full work of a minister.”¹⁷ With a theological seminary in place, the authority to conduct the “full work of a minister” could potentially be based both on the call from God and the respect their knowledge of theology commanded from their congregations. Theological education would elevate Methodist preachers from country parsons into trained professionals, thus simultaneously raising the reputation of the Southern Church.¹⁸

While Garland and McTyeire championed the idea of a theological seminary, others like David C. Kelley, a colorful preacher open-minded toward Darwinism, dreamed of a grand southern university on par with Harvard or Yale. Just after Garland’s articles, an anonymous essayist the *Advocate* writing under the name “Progress” praised Methodist colleges but claimed that these schools were simply too broad in focus to have enough qualified professors to provide expert training in all scholastic fields. For example, a college like Wofford might have one or two chairs in natural science, but a

¹⁶ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 30 October 1869.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 November 1869.

¹⁸ For more on professionalization, see Holifield, *Gentlemen Theologians*, 34. See also Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 69-80.

top university would have as many as sixteen professors devoted to its various branches. Progress warned that southerners desirous of the highest caliber education will eventually end up in New Haven, Princeton, or Boston.

This presented a problem for evangelical southerners because of major scientific and theological disputes that emerged in the nineteenth century. First and foremost, the works of Charles Darwin had radical implications for evangelical Christians. As scholar Ferenc Morton Szasz observes, “Most Americans believed the planet on which they lived to be only a few thousand years old. This world, moreover, was fundamentally static. It was bound by two specific events – Creation and the Last Judgment – and it was one in which each species brought forth its own kind.”¹⁹ Aside from contradicting the way that southern Methodists understood the Earth’s history, evolution also seemed to deny the fall of man because Darwin’s theory saw human being on a gradual march of biological improvement. If this was the case, then man little need in a redeemer. Furthermore, Darwin’s *Descent of Man* (1871) suggested that all human life was directly related to each other and greatly distressed southerners like McTyeire who had argued for decades that God ordained the social structure.²⁰

A trend imported from Germany known as Higher Criticism popular at northeastern universities likewise outraged Americans, including southern Methodist leaders. Higher Criticism emerged as “a literary and historical study of the Bible with the object of determining the composition, the dates, and the authors of its various books.”²¹ Willis Glover recalled the centrality of the Bible in the evangelical experience, “Bound

¹⁹ Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1982), 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

²¹ Willis B. Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Independent Press Limited, 1954), 18.

up inextricably with every phase of the religious experience of evangelicals, an experience that touched their lives at every significant point, was the Bible – a Bible that was not merely a source book for the early history of their religion, but a Bible that was the authoritative and infallible Word of God.” He went on, “The inerrancy of the Bible was so intimate a part of religious thought and life that a denial of it seemed to threaten the destruction of faith itself.”²² The very idea that the Bible emerged out of historical contexts and indeed evolved over time and had numerous authors was seen as nothing less than satanic blasphemy by conservative churchmen in America.

Southern clergymen feared what might happen to young men who wanted a world class education because the South did not have a large-scale university of its own that could propagate proper evangelical theological and scientific views. Commentators like Progress had grown frustrated over the state of higher education in the South. In the antebellum period, much of the education in the South focused on the classics and did not offer any kind of pragmatic or vocational training. As such, many farmers and merchants became openly hostile towards colleges because they had very little to offer them. After the war and the almost utter destruction of its state colleges and private denominational institutions, the South had no educational opportunities. Most colleges throughout the region that were lucky enough to survive the Civil War were glorified academies to provide fairly rudimentary education to those who could afford it. In addition to wanting professional schools, many educators wanted southern schools to teach scientific agriculture, business, and engineering to southern men in an effort to advance the fortunes of the South.²³ However, leaders feared atheistic skepticism of the northern

²² Ibid., 16.

²³ Frost, *Thinking Confederates*, 1-18, 39-64.

academy would seduce southerners who traveled to attend northern universities onto the path to eternal damnation, and so founding a university in the South was not only a practical but a moral imperative.²⁴

Progress promised that “[m]oney is the guarantee of success.” Northern schools boasted large endowments to build expensive laboratories and Princeton even planned to construct a \$250,000 observatory. Conference colleges might be able to raise a \$100,000 endowment, but this will never be enough to stem “the tide of rationalistic atheism” flowing in from outside the region. For its part, southern Methodism “must have an intellectual temple that shall rise as high, and stand as firm, and shine as far, as those of Oxford or Heidelberg.”²⁵ To accomplish this, the church must launch a massive fundraising effort to find several wealthy patrons to donate \$50,000 to such a glorious cause. As far as the unlikelihood of financing such a project, Progress would hear no negative talk and declared that defeatism would get the church nowhere.²⁶

Those in favor of a seminary and those sponsoring a grander university did not join forces, but all educational advocates felt optimistic about the prospects of reform at the 1870 General Conference in Memphis. And it should come as no surprise that Garland, then a professor at the University of Mississippi, served as a lay delegate in the body and brought his weight to bear at the conference, a realization of McTyeire’s vision of lay leadership. Making good use of his talents, Garland chaired the Committee on Education which issued a majority report urging the establishment of “a Theological Institute under the control of the College of Bishops.” While attendance would not be compulsory for any aspiring minister, the conference rejected the suggestion and instead

²⁴ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 16 April 1870.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 23 April 1870.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 30 April 1870.

adopted the far more conservative minority report that “endorse[d] the action of the last General Conference in reference to Biblical Chairs...with our existing colleges, as the best available means of training young preachers.”²⁷

After the General Conference, disappointed proponents for a seminary like McTyeire, Garland, and Bishop Robert Paine briefly moved to the shadows and men who supported a university like Kelley took center stage. Kelley later claimed to have personally met with McTyeire with plans for a university in hopes of gaining the support of the College of Bishops, but McTyeire quickly dismissed the idea as imprudent. The two never got along personally, and it is possible that McTyeire had his own scheme for a comprehensive university. Whatever the veracity of Kelley’s claims, he took the first official step in organizing a Methodist university. Although Kelley wanted a university formally connected to the General Conference, he and his allies decided that bringing numerous annual conferences together to establish the school could be viable alternative. This action would enable them to sidestep the General Conference’s rebuke and still appear to have substantial support from a large number of Methodists. Kelley proposed a successful resolution at the 1871 Tennessee Annual Conference “which appointed commissioners to visit surrounding conferences...[to] get them to send delegates to a convention to plan a great university for the whole South.”²⁸ At this point, the movements in favor a seminary and a university merged.²⁹

Delegates from nine annual conferences convened in Memphis in January 1872 to begin this work. Advocates including Garland and Kelly were present, while McTyeire and Paine represented the church and took turns presiding over the convention. The

²⁷ Fraser, “The Bishops, I presume, are divided,” 172-174. Quotation on 173.

²⁸ Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 8.

²⁹ Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 270-71; Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 8-9.

committee, whose goal was to establish a university “where the youth of the Church and Country may prosecute theological, literary, scientific, and professional studies,” established the Board of Trust, determined the role of the bishops, and named the school the “Central University of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.”³⁰ The university would have normal, law, medical, liberal arts, and theological schools, with free tuition for any seminarian duly recommended by a quarterly or annual conference. They acknowledged that Central University would need one million dollars to be viable in the long-run, but, most importantly, that they would require \$500,000 in funds before even opening.³¹ Because they had no money and, quite frankly, no support from the General Conference, the Board of Trust had little reason to be confident that their dream would ever become a reality. Later in the year, several annual conferences withdrew their support and financial resources, making prospect appear gloomier.³²

The well-known Bishop George F. Pierce detested the idea of a theologically trained ministry and tenaciously clung to the traditional itinerant system of preaching. He was not opposed to ministerial education *per se*, but felt that seminaries would not produce good preachers. Although Pierce was college educated and served as president of Emory from 1848 until 1854, he questioned whether or not Methodism would cease to be a religion of the people and become an denomination of the few. According to Methodist tradition, preachers were to “proclaim their own experience of conversion, and that they could share it in language understandable to their fellows.”³³ While Pierce did not want ignorant ministers in the pulpit and thought some aspiring preachers should indeed attend

³⁰ Minutes of the Board of Trust and of the Executive Committee of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, JAHV-VU, 1.

³¹ Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 9-11.

³² *Ibid.*, 9-12; Farish, *Circuit Rider Dismounts*, 270-71.

³³ Fraser, “The Bishops, I presume, are divided,” 169.

college, relating one's conversion experience did not necessarily require specialized training. In fact, the call was the most important qualification for the preacher, and professional standards would reduce the ministry's status because nothing could be greater than the touch of the divine.³⁴

After receiving an open-ended invitation from Summers to write a guest editorial in the *Advocate*, a fuming Pierce submitted an essay that took the founders of Central University to task and claimed that their convention was illicit under church law. His main argument, however, was that a theological school would create classes of preachers, with the educated and well heeled in the cities and those with limited financial resources banished to rugged country circuits that might test the faith of the most pious parson. Eventually this would destroy the itinerancy by encouraging preachers to become socially mobile, leaving the dusty circuit in favor of a carpeted downtown sanctuary. Aside from his belief that the new plan would damage struggling Methodist colleges, Pierce maintained that sentiment throughout the church was overwhelmingly against McTyeire and his allies. Pierce was furious with those who “magnify the ignorance of our clergy, make light of our Colleges, and bewail our rear position in the march of improvement.”³⁵ Indeed, southern Methodists have outstripped all others in evangelistic efforts and Pierce was “not ashamed of ... [his] brethren.”³⁶

Pierce's fear that wealthy preachers would gravitate towards cities while the poor remained in the country already represented reality within Methodism to a noticeable degree. In her excellent study of nineteenth century Baptist and Methodist ministers in

³⁴ Ibid., 176-79.

³⁵ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 2 March 1872.

³⁶ Ibid. For tension between urban and rural Protestants in the South, see Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 166-67.

Virginia, Beth Barton Schweiger found that this trend began in the 1840s and most denominational leaders, such as Methodist elders and bishops, lived in large towns. As southern urban centers grew throughout the nineteenth century, churches in these areas became more affluent and demanded more educated preachers to better reflect their educated congregations. They also paid very generous salaries that created resentment throughout the ranks of Methodist preachers.³⁷ While this was by no means a monolithic trend, in the postwar era, city congregations grew at a rapid clip which exacerbated the tension between rural and urban southern Methodists. Schweiger observed that “[t]he weight of professionalization had always bent pastors toward the city, but in the postwar church this pressure increased.”³⁸ By the time of Pierce’s letter, he had very good reason to be concerned about the future of his church. Whether or not his rhetoric reflected reality is less important than the class tension that gripped Methodism in the postwar period.

McTyeire wasted no time responding to Pierce’s letter. While sincerely maintaining admiration for Pierce on a personal level, he attacked his friend’s views with unrelenting vigor. Eventually, their exchange on in the paper became a public controversy that lasted throughout the spring of 1872. McTyeire’s first response said little about professionalization, but instead shifted focus of the debate away from theological training toward the uneven geographical arrangement of colleges that made an institution of higher learning necessary for Methodists in parts of Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama. McTyeire also claimed that most bishops favored a seminary, and he made a legal argument by examining actions of church deliberative bodies that had previously

³⁷ Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 40-54.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

authorized the establishment of a new university, including a conference Pierce himself presided over that elected delegates to the now infamous Memphis Convention.³⁹

Bishop Pierce's second letter remained courteous, and he indicated that a "controversy between Bishop McTyeire and myself, in the Church paper, would not be comely or profitable." While still claiming that the Memphis Convention had no legal foundation, he declared, "The mission of Methodism is to the masses of society – not the select few – a favored class." He also tried to lay waste McTyeire's social ambitions.

Exalted, varied scholarship is rare in any country – always has been, always will be. It is Utopian to dream of its commonness. No scheme, unless it could abolish the tax on bread, enrich the multitude, reverse the laws of common life, and re-endow the human race, will ever make science and literature a common heritage.... We common people hope... by some schooling and studying, reading, thinking, and observation, to be respectable, and to serve a generation, after all, not wiser than ourselves.⁴⁰

Pierce believed professionalization created conceited, authoritative, and disciplinarian ministers who lacked the Holy Spirit's guidance. As such, a seminary would no doubt crush the itinerancy which as any circuit rider could attest to, was itself an education. Conformity fostered through dry lectures at the seminary will destroy the aspiring minister's personality, while an itinerant should individually learn his vocation in a "field of labor and service."⁴¹ This gritty and humbling experience, along with God's call, gave all the power and authority over a congregation one needed without any of the pretension fostered by professional education.

Pierce got more than he bargained for when he started a debate with McTyeire. While still focused on the need for conference colleges, words grew more impassioned when discussing southern Methodism's constituency. McTyeire wrote,

³⁹ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 9 March 1872.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 23 March 1872.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The Bishop's candor is as admirable as his consistency, and both are unimpeachable. Give up a scheme for broader and higher literary and ministerial training in our Church, and what then? We must be content with the lower and restricted sphere of usefulness. "The mission of Methodism," he lets us know, "is to the masses of society – not the select few – a favored class." What our enemies and patronizing friends have said of us is even so – that Methodism will do very well for rude settlements and common people, but when they have become cultivated and refined, we are to turn them over to other Churches prepared to take charge of them! I hope to be pardoned for declaring that I am not resigned to that condition, either for myself or my brethren. I claim Methodism a mission to all classes. "All souls are mine," saith the Lord. A Church of Jesus Christ has no right to confine itself to, or exclude itself from, any class; and if any necessity appears for doing so, it is a demonstration that its ministerial training demands enlargement.⁴²

While McTyeire insisted that Methodism should be universal, he did not believe in temporal equality of all men. The bishop believed that wealth and status were gifts from God, and he saw no reason why the Southern Church should close itself off from the higher elements of society. The high status of the scholarly minister McTyeire envisioned would have authority over the rich and poor alike, and so the seminary would elevate the preachers to a more respectable level and reinforce a southern social hierarchy in need of fresh leadership. Although Pierce took several weeks to respond, his third letter suggested that McTyeire favored a caste system "like the Hindoos among our preachers and people." Pierce claimed that he wanted Methodism to be for all classes, but "[t]he preaching that is fixed up, for the 'cultivated and refined' is very poor preaching," and he closed by stridently proclaiming that, "[h]ad I a million, I would not give a dime for such an object... I am against it – head and heart, tongue and pen – 'now and forever, one and indivisible.'"⁴³

In the next round, McTyeire used the historical example of the Baptists to make his point. The decidedly rural, financially modest, and undereducated denomination

⁴² Ibid., 6 April 1872.

⁴³ Ibid., 27 April 1872

endowed a theological seminary and routinely discussed ministerial education, but Methodists could not do the same thing without “hear[ing] of *castes* among preachers.” McTyeire then reminded his audience that their sister denomination split over this very issue into Missionary Baptists and the Hardshells, a pejorative term for Primitive Baptists whose ministers Pierce praised as effective despite the fact that they “have hardly ever been to college to at all.” The Missionary Baptists have multiplied, grown fruitful, and earned social respectability specifically because of the authority and power that came with the education of their clergymen at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. On the other hand, “It is a cardinal tenet with the Hardshells that the Lord will ‘call all the educated ministers he wants’ and that [biblical] critics are a great evil....The Hardshells have gone on fighting missions and an educated ministry, and organs, and choirs, until they have fought well-nigh out of every city and town and enlightened neighborhood, and have consigned themselves where Bishop Pierce wishes this theological scheme – ‘to the shades of oblivion.’”⁴⁴

Finally, McTyeire laid a devastating blow to the elder bishop, who had claimed that riding a circuit was all the education one needed. The idea was that a preacher would undertake a course of study while riding a circuit under the direction of an elder preacher who served as a kind of mentor. After several years of hands-on education, the young circuit rider would be a qualified minister. McTyeire reminded Pierce that during his apprenticeship many decades before, he trained under luminaries like James O. Andrew. He recalled that “[d]ull indeed was the pupil who could pass through that training-school without being fitted for the pastor’s care.” The situation was now quite different because

⁴⁴ Ibid., 4 May 1872; for the establishment of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, see Robert A. Baker, *The Southern Baptist Convention and Its People* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974), 199-201.

there were fewer elder preachers to give instruction. McTyeire urged Pierce to follow the minutes of recent annual conferences the conservative recently presided over because he “admitted 44 [preachers]; and I think if he will look over his lists he will find that he put nearly forty of them in charge of Churches at the beginning” with no formal training whatsoever.⁴⁵ McTyeire proclaimed that it was cruel to send inexperienced preachers to the field and the church must abolish this practice. While Pierce might have the support of most Methodists, nothing could convince McTyeire that he was wrong. In closing, he expressed the “unspeakable reluctance that I have appearing in the Church-press controverting the position of Bishop Pierce; but I could not do otherwise. The issue involved is vital to the welfare of Methodism, and I venture to lift my own [opinion], even against his more powerful voice...*And I am not alone.*”⁴⁶

Pierce did, however, get the last word, but was more stubborn than anything else. Even after McTyeire affronted Primitive Baptists, Pierce defiantly proclaimed “I am a *Hardshell Methodist*, just foolish enough to believe that our economy is the wisest, best, and most effective the world ever saw, and exceedingly jealous of all tinkering with it. The old preacher ‘who hath understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do,’ I reckon, makes mistakes sometimes.” After deprecating the Tribe of Issachar and further defending the old-fashioned itinerancy, Pierce insisted that he taught himself most of what he had learned because individual circumstances made his itinerancy no different than what young preachers experience now. He was angry that progressives like McTyeire argued that the times required new ideas. He observed, “We are beginning, I fear, to deify talent, and talk too much about the ‘age,’ and ‘progress,’ and the demands

⁴⁵*Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 4 May 1872.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

of the times, for the simplicity of our faith, or the safety of the Church.”⁴⁷ Such a faith of simplicity did not require the progress pushed on the church by learned ministers, but rather needed humility to God and respect of tried and true Methodist evangelism.

Southern Methodists remembered the controversy for decades. Bishop Fitzgerald later wrote, “It was a collision of giants – the clear-headed, keen-sighted, far-seeing patron of learning and prophet of progress on the one side, and the able and devout conservative and leader of those who were walking in the old paths on the other.”⁴⁸ While Fitzgerald’s hindsight clearly favored McTyeire, at the time the money needed just to start the university made the debate seemed futile for progressives. While McTyeire got the better of Pierce on the rhetorical front and the school did receive a few nominal donations, Pierce made fund-raising well-nigh impossible for Central University by creating such a heated public controversy.⁴⁹

Still, planning for Central University plodded along. Just days before Pierce’s final letter appeared in the *Advocate*, the College of Bishops declined to endorse the proposed university. Eventually, McTyeire persuaded the bishops to agree to locate the university on a site of their choosing – one of their delegated duties – whenever \$500,000 became available, which seemed to be a safe gamble for the bishops because this was an almost unimaginable sum. The bishops strenuously asserted that Central University could do no damage whatsoever to other Methodist colleges and the school would have no official ties with the General Conference. The theological school would conform to the dictates of the 1870 General Conference, which created chairs in the biblical department geared for undergraduate, not professional, students. Making this major concession to the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 18 May 1872.

⁴⁸ Fitzgerald and Galloway, *Eminent Methodists*, 283.

⁴⁹ Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 12

Bishops greatly disappointed the Board of Trust, but it still gave them something of a sanction and the Board felt confident enough to assign agents to solicit donations. For the rest of the year, the body periodically held poorly attended meetings. Without strong approval of the General Conference, they would never come close to earning the half million dollars they needed to merely open the doors. From the looks of things, Pierce had won a decisive victory over progressive Methodism.⁵⁰

Winter found McTyeire distressed over the viability of Central University, but he had also developed a physical malady that caused him a great deal of pain. Although he never divulged his condition, historian Paul Conkin suggests that prostate problems prevented McTyeire from passing urine because letters to his wife suggest his ailment was very personal in nature.⁵¹ He contacted a doctor in New York City to inquire about treatment and this proved to be a stroke of good fortune because he needed somewhere in the city to recuperate and ended up reaching out to a distant cousin by marriage.

When he was a young, unmarried preacher in 1846, the church sent McTyeire to St. Francis Street Methodist Church in Mobile, one of the few antebellum southern cities where Methodists claimed a substantial elite population. Among these families were the wealthy Crawfords and Townsends. McTyeire met, fell in love with, and married Amelia Townsend, whose second cousin was Frank Armstrong Crawford – imprudently named for her father’s business partner. The two were like sisters. Frank, a voice and music teacher, endured a difficult and unsuccessful marriage, the death of her beloved father, and a war that left her penniless and emotionally attached to her aged mother, Martha. After the war, Frank and Martha moved to New York City as refugees and hoped to

⁵⁰ Minutes of the Board of Trust of Vanderbilt University, 4-10; Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 12; Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 182.

⁵¹ Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 14-15.

acquaint themselves with shipping and railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt, a distant cousin. After making contact with the Commodore, he took in the destitute women, who in turn looked after him when his invalid wife died. Eventually Frank became Vanderbilt's emotional rock and they married in 1869 at a "rushed wedding performed in Canada."⁵² The news scandalized the seventy-five year old and his thirty-two year old bride, but the couple appeared to have been genuinely in love.⁵³

Like many other uprooted southerners living in New York City, Frank and Martha regularly attended the non-denominational Church of Strangers. The pastor, Charles F. Deems, himself a southerner, frequently visited the Vanderbilts and reputedly enjoyed a warm relationship with the Commodore. Although Deems seems to have been a self-aggrandizing fame-seeker, he did bring an undeniable religious presence to the Vanderbilt mansion. Furthermore, Frank's great personal piety and Vanderbilt's idolization of his Moravian mother softened his heart toward religious institutions in his old age.⁵⁴ Frank later recalled that on an afternoon carriage ride through the city, Vanderbilt mulled the possibility of financing a monument so he would be remembered for his generosity. His first idea was to erect a massive statue of George Washington in Central Park, but as they drove past the Astor Library, Frank, who had a great deal of influence over the old commodore, suggested that something be done for young southern men, who study at debt-ridden colleges with pitiful libraries.⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid., 15.

⁵³ Ibid., 15-16; Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 79-89; Edward J. Renehan, Jr., *Commodore: The Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 277-281.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 15-16.

⁵⁵ Renehan, *Commodore*, 281; Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 15-16; Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 189-94. for the influence of Vanderbilt over her husband, see, for example, Letter to Holland Nimmons McTyeire [HNM] from Frank Armstrong Vanderbilt [FAV], dated 2 December, McTyeire-Baskerville Papers, Box 1, Folder 4, JAHV-VU.

When McTyeire arrived in New York in February 1873, he probably already considered asking Vanderbilt for the endowment. Before any gift materialized, McTyeire wrote back to Amelia in couched terms that strongly suggest he previously discussed the possibility at great length with his wife and many suggest that he directly conspired with Frank to convince Vanderbilt to endow the university.⁵⁶ Moreover, as Frank's former pastor, cousin by marriage, and the most powerful clergymen in her "preferred church," McTyeire found a very warm hearth in New York City.⁵⁷ The bishop was in awe of his host's wealth and, even though Vanderbilt would not have been considered a born-again Christian, McTyeire admired the Commodore's legendary business acumen. Vanderbilt liked McTyeire immediately. Letters home hinted at the growing closeness of the relationship when he wrote that "[t]he Commodore gives me a most friendly call...Seems to *like me*."⁵⁸ Vanderbilt visited the pain-afflicted bishop in his sickbed, sometimes bringing cigars to share and enjoying long discussions about "horses, preachers, railroads, the Church of Strangers, and many other things."⁵⁹

Eventually, McTyeire told Vanderbilt about the Central University. While Vanderbilt was looking for a beneficiary, he wanted to give his money to an organization with a plan in place and a person he trusted in charge to administer any gift. Vanderbilt greatly admired the bishop's administrative skills and even jokingly complained that the day McTyeire entered the ministry, the world lost a great railroad attorney. Once McTyeire showed enthusiasm and a well-crafted plan, the two simply hammered out the

⁵⁶*New York Times*, 21 November 1878; Letter to Amelia Townsend McTyeire [ATM] from HNM, dated 1873, Tigert Collection, Box 1, Folder 3.

⁵⁷ Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 16.

⁵⁸ Letter to ATM from HNM, dated 12 March 1873, Tigert Collection, Box 1, Folder 3.

⁵⁹*New York Times*, 20 November 1878; Letter to ATM from HNM, dated February 1873, Tigert Collection, Box 1, Folder 3.

details of a \$500,000 gift. Vanderbilt specified how much should go to buildings, how much to place in endowment, and even what kind of railroad bonds to purchase. In addition, Vanderbilt insisted that the campus be located in Nashville. Finally, the most important condition was that McTyeire had to be installed as President of the Board of Trust with veto authority which could only be overturned by a three-fourths majority so as to prevent any “hasty or injudicious appropriations or measures.” The Commodore wanted McTyeire to resign from the episcopacy in order to run the university full-time and offered a generous \$10,000 annual salary. McTyeire would not resign or even take a salary, but persisted that he could be the president of the Board of Trust and still maintain his bishopric. Vanderbilt backed off on his request that McTyeire drop his ecclesiastical position because of the prestige of his office, but flatly refused to allow the bishop, who would live on campus rent-free, to work without financial compensation. “Oh no,” he said, “I won’t let any man work for me for nothing.” Eventually, McTyeire agreed to take a \$3,000 yearly salary, doubling his annual income from the church.⁶⁰ Once fully recovered, McTyeire left New York and visited Syracuse University, Cornell, and the University of Virginia to inspect their buildings.⁶¹

Upon his return home, McTyeire presented Vanderbilt’s proposal to the Board, who readily accepted all of the provisions, elected McTyeire to its presidency, and changed the name of the school to Vanderbilt University.⁶² Over the next few months, McTyeire worked acquiring land, meeting with architects, and seeing to his regular ecclesiastical duties. In a way, McTyeire’s near absolute authority over the Board of

⁶⁰ Copy of letter to HNM from Cornelius Vanderbilt [CV], dated 17 March 1873, Tigert Collection, Box 2, Folder 23; *New York Times*, 20 November 1878. Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire*, 188-202; Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 17.

⁶¹ Letter to ATM from HNM, dated 17 March 1873, Tigert Collection, Box 1, Folder 3.

⁶² Minutes of the Board of Trust of Vanderbilt University, 16-18.

Trust allowed the bishop to act decisively, whereas if the Board and the College of Bishops had to coordinate their efforts, it would have taken years for the school to get off the ground. McTyeire did not even consult with the trustees when buying land, but he did keep Vanderbilt well informed.⁶³ By May, he single-handedly purchased seventy-five acres just west of Nashville and disposed of \$90,000 of the gift. Within a year, construction on buildings began and the school started ironing out its academic model.⁶⁴

In March 1874, McTyeire returned to New York to personally show Vanderbilt plans for several faculty houses and the Commodore made it especially clear that the bishop was to have the nicest home on campus. The longer McTyeire stayed in the Vanderbilt Mansion, the worldlier he became. For example, he wrote Amelia about an extravagant outfit that Frank wore to a benefit concert. “We talked over her dress – from Paris – trimmed with garnet velvet & Duchess lace &c. She wore her diamonds – pin & earrings which cost \$15,000 in Paris – a Christmas present from Commodore. Altogether we summed her up an outfit of over \$19,000!!”⁶⁵ While Frank lived in one of the richest households in the country, the bishop complimented her because he believed that she was not spoiled by wealth. Over time, McTyeire became very comfortable in the richest household in the country and seemed approving of such an opulent way of life.⁶⁶

No one scene illustrates McTyeire’s growing elitist sensibility and the closeness of his relationship with Vanderbilt as his vacation with the Commodore in Saratoga Springs in the summer of 1874. McTyeire stayed in the famed United States Hotel in the

⁶³ Copy of letter to CV from HNM, dated 21 May 1873, 31 July 1873, Tigert Collection, Box 1, Folder 4; see also copy of letter to HNM from CV, dated 26 May 1873, Tigert Collection, Box 2, Folder 23.

⁶⁴ Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 17-20.

⁶⁵ Letter to ATM from HNM, dated 17 March 1874, Tigert Collection, Box 1, Folder 5.

⁶⁶ Letter to ATM from HNM, dated 5 May 1874, Tigert Collection, Box 1, Folder 7; Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 17.

upstate New York town and dined with Vanderbilt at his private table which held food McTyeire described as something that only “this 19th century...produces.” Railroad magnates constantly streamed into the block of rooms Vanderbilt rented for his entourage and the two men even enjoyed a visit by future presidential candidate Samuel J. Tilden. Vanderbilt, however, found the quiet southern bishop more to his liking than businessmen and politicians, and the two enjoyed cigars on the balcony. McTyeire correctly “perceive[d that] *quietness* is most to his taste...I am good for *quiet* companionship.” While McTyeire did not want to wear out of his welcome, Vanderbilt took him on a carriage ride around town to see the sights and talk business. Spending time with one of the most famous men in the world thrilled McTyeire and fed his elitism. This vacation also shows McTyeire’s envy toward northern religious sophistication. After attending church with Frank and Martha where they heard an erudite but energetic sermon from a Brooklyn preacher, McTyeire jealously pondered when “shall...our University...turn out such plain, finished, durable preachers!”⁶⁷

McTyeire returned to Nashville and continued his tireless work. In the fall of 1875, Vanderbilt University opened, but the early years were not indicative of the prestige the institution would acquire in the twentieth century because of curricular deficiencies and internal strife, often surrounding McTyeire. But Vanderbilt never cared. In fact, he made several more large gifts to the institution until he gave the entire one million dollars the school needed for its complete endowment. The two continued to be close even as the Commodore’s health failed. In late spring of 1876, McTyeire returned to New York to visit with his gravely ill friend, and poignantly described their final encounter.

⁶⁷ Letter to ATM from HNM, dated 26 July 1874, Tigert Collection, Box 1, Folder 7.

He sent for me. How changed! Held out his hand & grasped me very affectionately & said – “I thought maybe we might not have a chance to see one another anymore & I wanted to see you,” ... [He] gave every evidence of suffering agonizing pains... And afterwards, in reply to my words of cheer – “I am willing for it to end – satisfied, Doctor, (he usually calls me that) – satisfied – but I cant talk on it with you now.”⁶⁸

When McTyeire returned to Nashville, he received weekly telegrams updating him on his friend’s condition until William H. Vanderbilt, the Commodore’s son, sent the sad news when his father passed away in February, 1877.⁶⁹

While McTyeire never overtly discussed his grief, he was no doubt deeply saddened by the loss of what had become a close friend. On a deeper level, Vanderbilt symbolized something much greater than personal friendship to McTyeire: the rebuilding of the South with northern money. Being as Vanderbilt married a southerner who epitomized the virtue of the crumbling southern gentry, the Commodore felt a duty to his wife to do all that he could to improve the condition of the South. Moreover, one of Vanderbilt key motivations, besides being a monument to his own glory, was “to strengthen...the ties which should exist between all geographic sections of our common country.”⁷⁰ And indeed, many in the South were delighted by the gift, with one politician remarking that “Commodore Vanderbilt has done more for reconstruction than the Forty-second Congress.”⁷¹ Nashville was especially grateful and passed a resolution thanking Vanderbilt and declaring that it “will go toward accomplishing that union of heart on the part of the citizens of this great country so deeply needful for our common good.”⁷²

⁶⁸ Letter to ATM from HNM, dated 9 June 1876, Tigert Collection, Box 1, Folder 7.

⁶⁹ Western Union Telegram to HNM from William H. Vanderbilt, dated 4 January 1877, Tigert Collection, Box 2, Folder 24; see also, Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 17-18; Renehan, *Commodore*, 306-7.

⁷⁰ Letter to HNM from CV, dated 2 December 1875, Tigert Collection, Box 2, Folder 24.

⁷¹ Quoted in Thrift, “Rebuilding the Southern Church,” 309.

⁷² *New York Times*, 24 June 1876; see also Renehan, *Commodore*, 278 and Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 18.

McTyeire was especially happy with Vanderbilt's generosity because his agenda for advancing the Southern Church appeared to be working. While McTyeire's motivations for elevating the South and his church were clearly rooted in class, religion informed his class view. Wealth and prosperity would come to good and righteous nations, which needed this firm social foundation. When destruction followed the Civil War and Reconstruction leaving the South without this lynchpin, new economic and political elites would need to be entrenched. This necessity, placed within the New South context gave McTyeire a vague sense of optimism that his goals were well within his grasp. Obviously, the middle class would be a logical fit to be the new elite because of the authority of professionalism, their often orthodox religious values, and even their idealized frugality learned in hard times. It was also quite natural that McTyeire would want to reach out to these southerners not only to provide them with the gospel but to broaden the general appeal of southern Methodism beyond its traditional – but by no means monolithic – rural and plain folk constituency. This meant advocating the development of Methodist education and intellectual rigor to appeal to a more sophisticated audience who expected preachers to be professional theologians trained in rhetoric. As the church rose in stature and the bishop grew more elitist thanks in part to his opulent northern connections, McTyeire not only satisfied his high-brow personal social ambition while simultaneously uplifting the South but also viewed such prosperity as a sign of divine favor. For McTyeire, God would never allow Methodism to become the radiant beam of Christian success if it was not pleasing in his eyes.

Indeed, with the founding of Vanderbilt, McTyeire's optimistic New South creed seemed to place the church on a path to sure success. But like other New South men, the

bishop could not run from the South's messy past. While McTyeire might have been one of the New South's most notable sons of Issachar, he was no more successful in leading his homeland out of the desert and into a glorious new Canaan than any of his New South contemporaries. Whether leading Vanderbilt, presiding over conferences, or toiling away at his magnum opus on the history of Methodism, he spent an important part of his career attempting to craft the past, present, and future, singularly devoted to the South and the highest style of humanity. All the while the sweetest style of humanity receded further into the shadows of his career.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE BISHOP'S NEW CLOTHES
MCTYEIRE, SELF-DECEPTION, AND THE NEW SOUTH CREED

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Revelation 3:17-18, KJV

In the 1830s, Hans Anderson wrote of an emperor vainly obsessed with the finest clothing money could buy. The haughty and elegant ruler neglected his leadership duties for the sake of posturing and showing off the latest fashions. When two crooks arrived in town and claimed that they could make the finest suit of clothes on earth from cloth that only the wisest and most intelligent people could see, the emperor was enthralled by the thought that the beautiful clothes would bestow such superiority on him. Indeed, everybody in town fell for the story and the emperor sent his smartest ministers to check on the progress of the rascally tailors, busy doing nothing but looking like they were creating a masterpiece. When his advisors were unable to see the invisible cloth, the proud men were too ashamed to admit their apparent lack of intelligence and told their master what a beautiful suit of clothes awaited him. Eventually, the clothes were ready and the thieves, who earned a very healthy commission, fitted the self-absorbed emperor with clothes that did not exist. The emperor, himself too conceited to admit his stupidity, wondered in amazement at the fine craftsmanship of non-existent clothes and stood unaware of his nakedness. It took a child's honesty, who exclaimed that the emperor was naked, before the narcissistic man felt embarrassed.¹

¹ Hans Christian Anderson, *Ardizzone's Hans Anderson: Fourteen Classic Tales*, selected and illustrated by Edward Ardizzone, trans., Stephen Corrin (New York: Atheneum, 1979), 15-22.

Just like the emperor, many southerners in the late nineteenth century were too proud to honestly examine their surroundings. Rather, New South champions vainly ignored reality and instead clothed themselves with the New South creed, which romanticized the South, past, present, and future. They claimed that the Confederacy never fought the Civil War to defend slavery, but went to war over constitutional principles. Slavery might have been wrong, but the Old South should be remembered for its generous masters, humorous slaves, and unbridled elegance matched only by honor and virtue. They overlooked the brutality of slavery and the nastiness of the Proto-Dorian Convention that encouraged poor whites to be happily subordinate to the gentry in return for always being vastly superior to even the best of the black race. Similarly, New South backers, typically conservatives casting themselves as progressive Democrats, claimed that the South was industrializing at a rapid clip, racism was a thing of the past, and the region was surpassing the North in every conceivable category. While the region did make impressive strides, these men chose to take little notice of the soul-crushing reality of share-cropping, intolerable conditions in new factories, and the grinding poverty experienced by scores of poor whites.² Such shallow misrepresentations, represented by the emperor's invisible clothing, comforted southerners and gave them confidence with a dose of smugness thrown in for good measure. As C. Vann Woodward observed, this delusion had a particular purpose because the "bitter mixture of recantation and heresy could never have been swallowed so readily had it not been dissolved in the syrup of romanticism."³

² Gaston, *New South Creed*, 187-214.

³ Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 158.

The New South creed had a religious dimension as well. In fact, when placed in the context of the New South creed, the paternalism of his sacred-secular ideology shaped Bishop Holland N. McTyeire's course of action in regards to race. The racial circumstances in the South were simple for McTyeire before the war because the paternalism of slavery reinforced everyone's position within the social hierarchy. In addition to the decline of the gentry, emancipation now put the South's social order in danger because millions of blacks now had the right to vote. Paul Gaston observes that because the "abolition of slavery removed the one unmistakable institutional expression of white supremacy," southerners struggled to enforce new constitutional amendments while simultaneously refusing to relinquish institutional racism.⁴ Action would have to be taken, based on some kind of intelligent racial policy, that showed blacks compassion and some level of respect but did not disrupt the social order. New South spokesmen sincerely believed that their history with race was regretful, but told the rest of the nation that southerners could handle the race relations on their own and would guarantee blacks all the rights they deserved.⁵ As far as religion went, McTyeire and his colleagues simply removed African Americans from the church because they were not about to accept blacks as equals. Despite the fact that the church used property deeds to underhandedly manipulate black behavior, the overall accord of the formation of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America (CME) allowed the Southern Church to claim to be doing their paternal duty and thus cast themselves as a model of perfect race relations, thereby giving their white supremacy a benign façade. Of course, the very idea that southern

⁴ Gaston, *New South Creed*, 119.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 119-50.

racism had ended was little more than invisible clothing that New South advocates used to further entrench their fantasy.

Because southern Methodists pursued slave missions so vigorously and successfully, the Southern Church had a very substantial African American population in 1866. While before the war McTyeire believed that blacks and whites should worship together if at all practicable, the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments meant that most blacks would no longer psychologically accept a subordinate position in the church. Whites like McTyeire were not about to promote blacks to the itinerancy, but many southern Methodists still believed they needed to promote religion among African Americans because of their implicit racial inferiority. But after the war, southern religious institutions fell into disarray and black churches were especially chaotic. The Methodist Episcopal Church sent missionaries south to organize black southern Methodists into congregations aligned with the northern General Conference. The northern-based African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) churches similarly inundated the South with ministers. These two denominations were especially popular because its preachers, elders, and bishops were all African American. Religion was one area where blacks could assert their newfound rights quite freely and as many as 60% of the Southern Church's black congregants left for these greener pastures.⁶

Many entire congregations affiliated with the Southern Church shifted their loyalties to the AME or AMEZ churches. Because slaves could not legally own property under slavery, white trustees from the Southern Church held the deeds for black Methodist churches and after the war remained church property owners, adding to the

⁶ Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The History of the CME Church* (Memphis: CME Publishing House, 1985), 106-14.

confusion. Because the AME, AMEZ, and Methodist Episcopal Church all had ties with the Republican Party and Radical Reconstruction, McTyeire and his associates felt that these missionaries were little more than carpetbaggers. Southern Methodists held that it was patently evil for northerners to radicalize blacks inside the house of the Lord and the church emphatically refused to consider conferring deeds on congregations not aligned with their General Conference. Nevertheless, southern Methodists frequently granted the AME and AMEZ churches use of the buildings because of genuine evangelical considerations, but also used their ownership of the buildings as leverage “to ensure the good behavior of the A. M. E. congregation.”⁷

Despite evangelical concerns of the welfare of black souls, white supremacist southern Methodists preferred to simply remove blacks remaining loyal to the General Conference. However, church leaders did not want freedmen to run into arms of AME and AMEZ ministers because of their politics. In this context, the CME Church emerged and removed blacks who remained members of the Southern Church with minimal controversy. Plans took shape at the 1866 General Conference to set off black southern Methodists into a separate wing of the church so that whites could still retain modest control over their former slaves. Whites would organize black congregations into quarterly conferences under black clergymen, and from there into annual conferences. If ministers established at least two annual conferences, the Southern Church would decide at their next quadrennial conference if it was feasible to proceed with further ecclesiastical organization. If approved, they would then institute a general conference organically tied with the Southern Church. All of this would be contingent on the

⁷ Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 104.

approval both of the bishops and black Methodists themselves. The work to establish such conferences went along at a brisk pace, met with success, and McTyeire himself organized the Alabama Colored Conference.⁸ Meanwhile, these so-called “Colored Methodists” billed themselves as apolitical, which created biting resentment toward them in the black community. AME and AMEZ members ridiculed Colored Methodism as the “Rebel Church,” “the old slavery church,” and the “Democratic Church.”⁹

Nevertheless, southern Methodism provided something that no other black denomination could offer, a direct ecclesiastical connection to John Wesley. Just after the American Revolution, Wesley himself ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vesey and gave both the power to consecrate new clergymen in North America. These two in turn laid hands on Francis Asbury at the Christmas Conference that founded the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. When the church split in 1844, it passed a plan of separation that allowed the Southern Church to remain legally tied with their founder. The AME and AMEZ church could not claim this pedigree because they seceded from the Northern Church with no formal sanction.¹⁰

By the height of Radical Reconstruction around 1870, Methodists had founded eight colored conferences throughout the South. At the 1870 General Conference in Memphis, delegates approved separation of the Colored Methodists, conferral of deeds to the new religious group, and agreed to send a delegation to aid an organizing conference. After some discussion, delegates decided that the new church would not merely be a

⁸ Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 131-63.

⁹ C. H. Phillips, *The History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, Comprising its Organization, Subsequent Development and Present Status*, 3d ed. (Jackson, Tenn.: Publishing House CME Church, 1925), 71-72; see also Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner*, 103-7; Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 138-43, 167-74.

¹⁰ Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 124-27.

wing of southern Methodism, but a completely independent organization. That December, delegates convened in Jackson, Tennessee to begin this work. McTyeire and Bishop Robert Paine presided over the conference. In addition, several other representatives of the Southern Church came as a delegation to further recognize the new church's legitimacy. The first order of business was naming the church and the body agreed on calling itself the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. The conference also needed some form of ecclesiastical government and the Southern Church prepared a modified version of the *Discipline*. The conference debated various aspects of this ecclesiastical legal code and, for instance, approved a modest literacy requirement for their clergy. Most importantly, the conference laid out rules concerning the use of church facilities for political purposes. While many black delegates wanted to avoid any entanglement with party politics anyway, property deeds loomed extremely large and the Southern Church required a proviso that would prohibit the use of church property for political purposes before any assets changed hands.¹¹ At Jackson, the CME church overwhelmingly resolved that their buildings "shall in no wise be used for political purposes or assemblages."¹²

With these matters taken care of, the church elected two bishops, William Henry Miles and Richard Vanderhorst. On the last day of the conference, McTyeire and Paine laid hands on and consecrated Miles and Vanderhorst and thus "bishops of a white church...transferred their authority to the bishops of a Black church..."¹³ The conference ended and Colored Methodism was on its own. For their loyalty to the South and to the

¹¹ Ibid., 195-210.

¹² Ibid., 207.

¹³ Ibid., 222. See also, Consecration Papers of Richard Vanderhorst, Tigert Collection, Box 4, Folder 16.

church, the CME church received a legal link to John Wesley, occasional financial support, and a very harmonious relationship with their mother church. For their part, Colored Methodists remained quietly apolitical in very turbulent times.¹⁴

The Southern Church believed it had done their paternalist duty to an inferior race. McTyeire believed that blacks needed the oversight of whites to function properly in society and, if whites did their obligation toward them, African Americans would have no reason to be politically assertive. Acknowledging the soul-crushing reality of white supremacy embedded in the founding of the CME Church would have forced the Southern Church to seriously confront the malignancy of the southern social structure and thus forsake its growing influence and power among southerners interested in maintaining the status quo. Their self-constructed narrow-minded reality was certainly appealing to white Methodists, but in hindsight their self-deception was appalling. Creating such a reality where blacks were happily subservient with whites as their noble protectors obviously would inspire the church to craft memory in the same delusional and prejudiced way. And McTyeire was more than willing to oblige.

In the early 1880s, the Centenary Committee of the College of Bishops felt it needed to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the American Methodism with a fitting tribute, such as a historical volume on the history of episcopal Wesleyanism from its origins to the present. As one of the most elegant and well-known writers in the church, the committee urged McTyeire to shoulder this undertaking. While his purpose was unique, McTyeire did not live in a vacuum. Gaines Foster observed that in the late

¹⁴ Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, 219-22; for another brief overview of the CME Church's establishment see also Harry V. Richardson, *Dark Salvation: The Story of Methodism as It Developed Among Blacks in America* (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Press, 1976), chapter 13; Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion*, 88-89.

nineteenth century, southerners increasingly “rejected... the notion that defeat constituted the judgment of God” and instead believed that they “had acted legally and honorably in seceding from the Union.”¹⁵ While Foster argues that this trend was decidedly secular, a close examination of McTyeire’s *History of Methodism* reveals that he used this platform to defend southern Methodism and proclaim its moral and ecclesiastical superiority to its northern counterpart. Recall that McTyeire’s sacred-secular ideology insisted that God showered blessings upon righteous nations and damned the wicked. So, to not only defend the honor of the South, the bishop had to present the history of the church and its current state in way that would unequivocally show that the denomination and the region still carried God’s favor.

Most New South advocates admitted that slavery was a mistake in order to lure northern investors. McTyeire, however, could not argue that slavery was immoral because the southern Methodist Church rested on a cornerstone of slavery and God would never shower favor upon an institution with such a weak moral foundation. As such, the book, which legitimately became McTyeire’s *pièce de résistance*, showed a much more reactionary bent than his previous career would indicate. This very unfashionable backward-looking undercurrent that subtly contradicts his genuine progressivism suggests that McTyeire’s southern partisanship obscured his perceptions of reality. The bishop would have done well to consult with the Book of Revelation while taking a truly honest look at his personal arrogance and muddled view of history. Since he viewed himself and his church as affluent because of God’s favor, McTyeire never asked for or received divine anointment that, according to the words of St. John, would cover his nudity.

¹⁵ Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 117.

Of course, McTyeire's *History of Methodism* meant more to him than simply vindicating southern Methodism. He stood to make a healthy profit from his scholarship because the Southern Methodist Publishing House was the leading publisher in the South and he could thus be assured of a wide readership. In 1884, McTyeire and John B. McFerrin, the head of the publishing house, began negotiating a contract. The two came to terms in February and agreed that the book would be around six hundred pages, and with similar binding and appearance of Luke Tyerman's biography of John Wesley.¹⁶ The book would sell for \$2.00 and McTyeire would receive a royalty of 25¢ per copy for the first five thousand sold, with 35¢ for every copy thereafter. While the Southern Methodist Publishing House would be responsible for the all printing and advertising costs, McTyeire would be accountable for all proofreading and revisions. The bishop probably expected his total profits from the book to roughly equal an entire year's salary.¹⁷

Still, the preface made it clear that McTyeire wanted to exonerate the South and the church because of what he believed to be unfair historical assessments at their expense. After a few brief words that acknowledged that northern and southern Methodists generally agreed on most of their common past, McTyeire complained bitterly that "Methodism in the South has suffered injustice from the manner in which it has been presented by learned, honest, and able writers in the North."¹⁸ Being a

¹⁶ Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M. A., Founder of the Methodists* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1872).

¹⁷ Contract between H. N. McTyeire and J. B. McFerrin, agent of the Southern Methodist Publishing House, dated 19 February 1884, McTyeire-Baskerville Papers, Box 2, Folder 5.

¹⁸ Holland N. McTyeire, *A History of Methodism, Comprising a View of the Rise of this Revival of Spiritual Religion in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century, and of the Principle Agents by Whom it was Promoted in Europe and America; with Some Accounts of the Doctrine and Polity of Episcopal Methodism in the United States, and Means and Manner of its Extension Down to A. D. 1884* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1884), 3.

southerner perhaps made McTyeire more sensitive to prickly beast of historical perspective and he strenuously asserted that “[m]oral or abstract truth knows no point of compass, but historical truth does; and the truth of history proves this.”¹⁹ While this allowed that northerners had their own legitimate version of the sectional crisis and Civil War, McTyeire was not anxious to give credence to the Yankee point of view and claimed that he was going “to tell the truth as he sees it” and advised readers that this was not “a history of Southern Methodism, but of Methodism from a Southern point of view.” In fact, he believed that such a perspective was quite important because American Methodism “was first successfully planted [in the South], and from thence spread North, and East, and West.”²⁰

Vast sections of the book offer very little in the way of originality, but on slavery McTyeire did offer a pro-southern examination largely missing from the literature of his day. For example, early Methodist preachers met in Baltimore in 1780 and issued a blunt statement insisting that they should not hold any slaves. While the declaration was not completely definitive, McTyeire slyly commented that “[t]he language is emphatic, but advisory...”²¹ McTyeire’s insistence that the statement was a bland recommendation understated the moral intentions of many fervent Methodists who felt that “slavery was one of the greatest evils a Christian should fight.”²² McTyeire claimed that there was nothing early Methodists in the South could do about slavery as it was simply a reality of life. If slaveholders sent all the slaves back to Africa, it would have caused another middle passage and the idea of colonizing blacks was ill-advised because of their

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 375.

²² Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 5.

intellectual deficiencies. McTyeire had no patience for northerners who claimed that Methodists from the South only defended slavery out of economic self-interest. In a discourse reminiscent of the battle over slavery in the religious press decades earlier, McTyeire vigorously defended the morality of slaveholding. “If slave-holding be a sin, condemned by the Bible,” McTyeire observed, “then might emancipation be not only *advised* but *required* by the church, of all preachers and private members as well. But many Christians never could be convinced of this, with the Bible before them; hence the endless troubles and disputes that worried and divided the Church in America.”²³

McTyeire also passed uncompromising judgment on the Christmas Conference of 1784 for its actions regarding the question of slaveholding. Bishop Thomas Coke emphatically declared that masters could not be Methodists under the threat of expulsion. McTyeire examined the sections of the *Discipline* on slavery and sharply disparaged his forebears for their departure from the teachings of Christ. He declared, “How different are these rules from those which the Apostles of our Lord were sent fourth to convert the world!”²⁴ Instead, the Christmas Conference should have supported slavery because “God meant the relations of master and servant for good.”²⁵ Although the powerful Francis Asbury did not support slavery, McTyeire praised his pragmatic leadership style. Asbury knew that if he alienated slave owners, then blacks would not find their way into Methodist chapels to hear the word of God. As might be expected, McTyeire used flowery words to discuss plantation missions, which he described as a “labor of love.”²⁶ While giving a very positive general overview of the missions, McTyeire called out

²³ McTyeire, *History of Methodism*, 377.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 378. On religion and slavery in antebellum America see Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 53-113.

²⁵ McTyeire, *History of Methodism*, 387.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 589.

northern Methodists whose intemperate speeches against slavery damaged the reception Methodists received from plantation owners worried of insurrection. These men should be ashamed for damaging the spiritual welfare of those in spiritual bondage, which was far worse than earthly slavery. McTyeire never for a second, even in 1884, considered that the institution of slavery could be morally wrong. It was important to plant this seed because if slavery was wrong, then the whole founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was wrong and, by extension, the destruction of the Civil War would have to be interpreted as a sign of heavenly wrath.

McTyeire used bitter language to describe “modern abolitionism,” which he insisted was “an irrepressible and irritating humor in the body of this Methodism” and, in his learned opinion, ultimately caused the schism of 1844.²⁷ McTyeire’s analysis of that conference was informative – if not impassioned – and used extensive quotations from both sides of the debate, a very common practice in non-fiction of the day. Abolitionists, he believed, lost the ecclesiastical fight within American Methodism but ultimately won a great political victory that ushered in the age of Lincoln. In the end, abolitionists were guilty of spitting upon the Bible and the United States Constitution for their own self-aggrandizing agenda. When discussing the actual conference, however, McTyeire described the mood as downcast and painful for men of both sides and praised southern delegates for their efforts to broker a compromise. In the end, McTyeire presented the schism vis-à-vis the plan of separation as generally cordial and entirely unavoidable. As such, the South should feel no guilt for causing the disunion of the church. As to the specifics of the split, McTyeire defended Bishop James Andrew and claimed that “his last

²⁷ Ibid., 618.

connection [to slavery]...was the mildest of all.”²⁸ McTyeire described the northern delegates as unwitting pawns in the hands of a few abolitionists within the delegation, who largely remained quiet during the deliberations. He wrote, “They had put the laboring oar into the hands of the so-called conservatives, who were succumbing to the so-called spirit of the age.”²⁹ In ending his section of the 1844 General Conference, McTyeire insists that the plan of separation was a peaceful and friendly affair, a fitting tribute that was “honorable to both parties.”³⁰

After a rosy coverage of the Louisville Convention, McTyeire turned his attention to the lawsuit over church property between the northern and southern churches and described the 1848 northern General Conference as “a reactionary body, elected in a revolutionary period.”³¹ While many northern bishops and delegates welcomed disunion in 1844, by the time the next general conference rolled around, many were unsure of its legitimacy based on popular, moral, and constitutional considerations and eventually the 1848 General Conference repealed the plan of separation. McTyeire portrayed those who wanted to revoke the plan as well-meaning, but bitter and illogical who ended up persecuting southern Methodism. At best, McTyeire’s interpretation lacked nuance because the plan of separation left much to be desired. Given his expertise on church law, McTyeire should have seen the dispute as more than northerners with sour grapes trying to repudiate their own promises. The actual plan offered little in the way of specificity. For example, while the plan allowed “societies, stations, and Conferences” – bodies not

²⁸ Ibid., 639. Church law stipulated that no bishop could own slaves. Bishop Andrew, however, inherited his slaves through his wife. When the church debated whether or not to expel Andrew in 1844, controversy erupted. In essence, it became a controversy over slavery and whether or not the General Conference could discipline a bishop that led to the division of the church.

²⁹ McTyeire, *History of Methodism*, 640.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 646.

altogether defined – to vote on their allegiance to either of the General Conferences by a simple majority, but there were no other stipulations.³² Circuits were never mentioned, and the question of which bodies had legal authority to withdraw from an annual conference was murky at best. As such, confusion and even violence reigned in the border regions.

While the plan of separation made provisions to divide proceeds and property of the book concern, gridlock eventually ensued. Finally, the Southern Church filed suit and the United States Supreme Court ultimately ruled in their favor. McTyeire's discussion of the legal matters conveyed a satisfied smugness over a victory that was evitable from the start. He presented the North in fairly monolithic terms and ignored a real controversy that absorbed the Methodist Episcopal Church and confused many learned authorities on church law. To describe the South's frustration in biblical terms, McTyeire quoted St. Paul who proclaimed, "I appeal unto Caesar" and the bishop further argued that "[n]othing else was left Southern Methodists."³³ He used provocative language to further characterize the Northern Church, claiming that "[i]nstead of seeking an enabling act to promote an equitable settlement with their Southern brethren, they sought to disfranchise and dishonor them."³⁴ Bishop McTyeire made a good point when he asserted that the Southern Church concerned itself more with legal vindication than monetary gains, but with no small amount of arrogance, he characterized the lawsuit as not only baseless but humiliating for the North. While it was certainly a blow to the Northern Church and did vindicate the southern position, McTyeire's self-righteous conceit characterized the North

³² Quoted in Norman W. Spellman, "The Church Divides," in *History of American Methodism*, 62.

³³ McTyeire, *History of Methodism*, 647.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 650.

as morally bankrupt rather than a more accurate interpretation of a church in a constitutional crisis, praying earnestly for guidance from above.

McTyeire's understanding of the causes of the Civil War was typical and he blamed the war entirely on the scourge of "modern abolitionism."³⁵ In an interesting spin, however, he claimed that the Civil War saved the Northern Church because slavery in border areas remaining loyal to its General Conference constituted "an impending disaster" that would have dogged the church until it finally disintegrated into oblivion.³⁶ The solidarity of Southern Church under the Bible, then, allowed them to claim supremacy over its northern counterpart, which bastardized the scriptures and bowed to political pressure. Perhaps McTyeire forgot the indignation that he drew in his own pro-southern editorials in the Nashville *Christian Advocate* in the days leading up to the war from faithful supporters of the Southern Church.

McTyeire leveled very typical criticism against Reconstruction and noted that "[t]he most discouraging feature of all was the methods employed in reorganizing the civil governments under cormorant exactors and demagogues, and in the presence of four millions of emancipated slaves with the ballot in their hands."³⁷ With typical New South optimism, however, Bishop McTyeire underscored the depths of despondency in the days after the war and indulged himself in romanticizing the resiliency of the church. He wrote, "Southern Methodism began its rehabilitation; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed." He went on, "Whatever banner had fallen or been folded up, that of Southern Methodism was still unfurled; whatever case has been lost, that of

³⁵ Ibid., 663.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 666.

Southern Methodism survived.”³⁸ McTyeire further praised the efforts of the 1866 General Conference and even argued that the adoption of lay leadership passed “without heat or partisanship,” apparently ignoring or forgetting the impassioned opposition to McTyeire led by Bishop Pierce.³⁹ He also offered a rather bland one paragraph overview of the founding of Vanderbilt University, never once mentioning himself or the debate he waged with Pierce in the *Advocate*.

McTyeire spent only a few sentences discussing the formation of the CME church, but did claim, erroneously, that the transition from slavery to freedom was very smooth for black southerners. “When left to themselves,” the bishop recalled, “the ex-slaves settled down in kind relations with their late master and their families, and often continued in their employment under the new relation.”⁴⁰ While the South did not descend into Haitian-style violence, historian Dan T. Carter observed that “violence there was, and it affected every aspect of the lives and thinking of southerners – rich or poor, black and white.”⁴¹ In 1865, the South experienced lawlessness with bands of outlaws posing serious threats to any vague semblance of social order existing in the region. With little food and no noticeable law enforcement, violence and crime became commonplace and nobody was safe. All violence aside, however, slavery was about human relationships and emancipation was a confusing time for many freedmen. One former slave recalled the uncertainty and frustration of many blacks, indicating torn emotions that McTyeire glossed over, writing,

The nigger during slavery was like the sheep. He couldn’t take care of hisself, but his master looked out for him, and he didn’t have to use his brains. The master’s

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 669.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 670.

⁴¹ Carter, *When the War Was Over*, 11.

protection was like the woolly coat. But the 'mancipation come and take off the woolly coat and leave the nigger with no protection and he can't take care of hisself either.⁴²

Some slaves were more assertive and theft and violence between master and slave was certainly not unheard-of. The period just after the war McTyeire incorrectly described not only ignored Black Codes and civil unrest, but also gave the church credit for preventing a race war when he claimed “[t]hat such a suddenly enforced and universal emancipation did not end in bloody calamity to both races is due mainly to Christian work persistently pursued by Methodists.”⁴³ Ignoring the violent reality of the postwar South with bizarre self-congratulation, McTyeire concluded that historians, politicians, and journalists had been too slow to heap praise on southern churches for their mission efforts to the slaves that converted blacks and made them docile.

In closing, McTyeire also indulged in rhetoric very similar to boosters like Henry Grady who proclaimed victory for the New South program of action by citing rapid industrialization and the eradication of racial strife. McTyeire described the resurrection of the Southern Church,

The *débris* of cities and farms was cleared away, and the new structures gradually rose; the earth was fruitful and responded to labor; the energies of a people, whose spirit was not broken but rather invigorated by adversity, grappled with the strange situation; the rapacious adventures who had settled down like a nightmare upon State and country and municipal governments were thrown off; the new instauration disclosed its advantages and compensations; things mended and times grew better. The itinerant went forth again on his gracious errands; old circuit lines were restored and enlarged; new and larger churches were built, and better parsonages; and by the blessings of the Lord the Church survived and grew.⁴⁴

After spending pages releasing partisan venom against the Northern Church, McTyeire closed his magnum opus by offering words of reconciliation, another hallmark of the

⁴² Quoted in Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 141.

⁴³ McTyeire, *History of Methodism*, 670.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

New South creed. He reminded his readers that both churches hold the same Wesleyan philosophy. While there might tension at times, “they are nearer to each other than they can be to other people.”⁴⁵ Although he appears to be genuine, he also made backhanded barbs in the same breath, noting the “personal offenses” and “improper acts and utterances” of many northern churchmen.⁴⁶ The closing of the book represented the completion the implementation of McTyeire’s sacred-secular ideology. The church was now dominated by the white middle class, blacks had been removed, and the South supposedly shined with a glorious heavenly light. Bishop McTyeire no doubt felt self-satisfied and assured of the eternal reward awaiting him, but did not notice his tone of arrogance.

The book sold well, became one of the most popular religious volumes of its day, and was a standard on its subject for decades. Going through several editions, prominent scholars time and again cited the book, including Hunter D. Farish, whose *The Circuit Rider Dismounts* on postwar southern Methodism is still unsurpassed more than seventy years after its publication. As might be expected, the book did some receive some mixed reviews. A reviewer for *The Nation*, one of the leading magazines on American politics and culture, found McTyeire’s description of early English Methodism bland and unoriginal. He suggested that the bishop should have condensed this material previously covered by so many other historians to spend the bulk of the book on nineteenth century American Methodism, which would have interested more readers than a general survey

⁴⁵ Ibid., 679.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

of the denomination. Without comment, the reviewer notes McTyeire's southern bias and summarized some of his key points.⁴⁷

Others saw McTyeire's book in a more dubious light. In *The Nation*, one southerner called out McTyeire's distortions and claimed that the bishop "like most of my fellow-Southerners, has allowed his admiration for his subject to crowd out or obscure many unpleasant truths." The unnamed author claimed that the Southern Church, with McTyeire as "the virtual head," is a "well-organized system of church government" that is a potential "instrument for good or evil, and as such it affects every household in the South." He further criticized southern colleges under the thumb of the Methodist church that do not allow free prosecution of scientific and literary inquiries. Such a powerful apparatus as the Southern Church should be more proactive, but instead it "is the bulwark which opposes all liberalizing tendencies of our Southern denominations."⁴⁸ While the author appears to be far more liberal than most southerners, including McTyeire, one southern Methodist wrote back to the magazine and argued that the previous author was, at best, delusional because the church was unequivocally an agent of positive social change. The southern Methodist respondent was content to ignore certain realities, but he made the observation that the Southern Church "is at least being dragged at the wheels of the car of progress. That it can be so easily dragged must be our consolation."⁴⁹ McTyeire himself, in spite of the reactionary implications of his book, could not have better articulated the forward-thinking direction that progressives saw the church moving.

⁴⁷ Review of *History of Methodism*, by Holland N. McTyeire, *The Nation*, 16 July 1885, 57-58.

⁴⁸ A Southerner, "Methodism in the South," *The Nation*, 6 August 1885, 1049.

⁴⁹ A Southern Methodist, "Methodism in the South," *The Nation*, 20 August 1885, 153.

The brief debate spurred some conversation about the role of religion in the South. One unnamed staff writer for *The Nation* insisted that “in the South it is clear that the Methodists and the Baptists dominate ecclesiastical opinion,” and were the most powerful religious organizations in the nation outside of the Roman Catholic Church. They have patently neglected blacks, cutting them off from Christian fellowship and “[b]y encouraging or even suffering such a division, the vast ecclesiastical machinery of the South...fashioned public sentiment more strongly against the negro than would otherwise have been the case.”⁵⁰ Although the author believed this apparatus could be used for good, both the Baptists and the Methodists could do much more. The author’s assessment of southern Baptists and Methodists churches and their comparison with Rome is quite telling because the writer clearly insinuates that these southern Protestants were backward looking, superstitious, and the very antithesis of progressive, as many people viewed the Catholic Church. In this paradigm, McTyeire looks less like a patron of education and progress as presented by his church and more, and perhaps more accurately, like a Roman pontiff responsible for interpreting the past with unmitigated authority and quashing any threat to his hegemony.

Through it all, the haughty, paternalist, prejudiced, but in many ways progressive bishop led his church with unfailing vigor and enthusiasm into the New South. Like so many other New South leaders, McTyeire, because of his pride, convinced himself of a reality that did not exist anywhere but his mind. Similar to the mythical emperor of Anderson’s fairy tale, McTyeire did not honestly examine the history or present condition of his church, choosing instead to cloak himself in the invisible mantle of self-deception. Unfortunately, most in the South who cared also demonstrated a remarkable aptitude for

⁵⁰ Ibid.

ignoring reality. As such, far too few readers called out McTyeire for his distortions of Methodist history and his legacy remains intact and largely positive. Blind allegiances to earthly institutions, regardless of their perceived virtue or immorality, will inevitably create pride and eventually smugness. Such loyalty and narrow-mindedness unequivocally demonstrate that he cared more about the highest style of humanity than any of Christ's teachings in favor of love or against high-brow religious establishments. Had McTyeire heeded his own advice and focused on the sweetest style of humanity, he would have found that proclaiming victory for his sacred-secular ideology would be well-nigh impossible because of the levels of self-deceit necessary to accomplish such an astonishing feat. The Book of Revelation would have reminded McTyeire that to gain anything, one had to forsake everything for the sake of the Lord. But he never tried.

EPILOGUE: NASHVILLE, 1889
THE HIGHEST STYLE OF HUMANITY

If any man among us belonged to the Church in the fullest and best sense it was he. For it he prayed and planned and toiled and journeyed. For it he wrote and spoke. For it he spent and was spent. For it he lived and died.

Oscar Penn Fitzgerald, on the career of Holland N. McTyeire¹

On Thursday, February 14, 1889, the news that Bishop McTyeire was gravely ill moved quickly from Vanderbilt University to the rest of Nashville. Bishop Robert K. Hargrove and Rev. Walker Lewis, the university chaplain, rushed to the McTyeire home on the Vanderbilt campus and it was clear that the bishop was dying. Hargrove and Lewis administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to him on his deathbed. McTyeire comprehended the gravity of the moment and "partook the elements not as a dying man, but as a means of grace." In his last few hours, he longed "*to feel that he was on the rock.*" When Hargrove and Lewis finished with communion, McTyeire himself recited the Lord's Prayer and offered up a benediction. He prayed, "May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be among you, and remain with you always. *Amen.*" A few minutes later, McTyeire spoke his last words, "*Peace, peace.*" He died the next morning at 8:52 at the age of sixty-four. Witnesses at the deathbed noticed his peaceful countenance, the look of a man satisfied with his life and work.² On the street, all that needed to be said was "the Bishop is dead." And indeed, "the gloom of the speaker's face

¹ *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), 23 February 1889.

² *Ibid.*

fell upon the heart of the hearer, and the thoughts of both were in the house of mourning at the head of Vanderbilt *campus*.”³

The following Sunday, family, friends, and colleagues laid McTyeire to rest on the campus of Vanderbilt. It was a perfect day for a funeral, cloudy, cold, and rainy. Despite the wet ground and raw weather, a large crowd turned out and, in respect for the bishop, removed their hats. At the graveside “stood six Bishops, with Bishop Hargrove at the head. At the foot stood the venerable Chancellor of the University [Landon C. Garland] with bent form.” Others crowded the cemetery in mourning, including “[m]embers of the renowned faculty, men of note from the city, the University’s students, the weeping family, and women who with eyes tearful with sympathetic and affectionate reverence braved the cold, damp ground, and watched the ceremony.”⁴ Hargrove led the graveside ceremony with a sermon and prayer. In accordance with McTyeire’s wishes, students from Vanderbilt lowered the casket into the ground and gave a fitting burial for a man of his stature.

The church felt profound grief over the loss of their great leader. A week later, Oscar Penn Fitzgerald, the editor of the *Christian Advocate*, tried to put into words what McTyeire meant to the church, but as he noted, “We are not yet prepared to measure the value of his life, nor the greatness of the loss we have sustained.” Nevertheless, the editor did attempt to modestly assess the bishop’s legacy. Fitzgerald praised McTyeire’s intellect and leadership ability, but most importantly exalted his single-minded devotion to the church as an institution. No bishop, elder, editor, or preacher, worked as hard as McTyeire in discharging his duties to the church in an organizational sense. In addition to

³ Ibid., 9 May 1889.

⁴ Ibid., 23 February 1889.

the crippling weight of a bishopric, McTyeire led the university full-time, but these duties “were borne with a manly courage and cheerfulness that prevented both his friends and himself from knowing how heavy was the strain.” The bishop was a strong man in other ways. For example, his personal conviction was tenacious and sometimes caused tension, but everybody respected the McTyeire all the same. Fitzgerald remembered McTyeire as a great preacher. Although he could be monotone at times, his sermons had power because of his training in logic and rhetoric. His discourses were not suited for the masses, but “[t]he more intelligent and cultured his audience, the more he was esteemed.” His arguments were unassailable and “[t]here was nothing slipshod about him. He knew what he wished to say, and he had the happy art of saying it in the fewest and best words.”⁵

While he indulged himself with a touch of hagiography, Fitzgerald gave a quite accurate eulogy for the bishop. No other editor matched McTyeire’s talent, as demonstrated in both the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* and the denomination-wide *Christian Advocate*. Similarly, McTyeire’s episcopacy was unparalleled because of his intense loyalty noting, “He was a Methodist in every fiber; he belonged body and soul, time and strength, family and fortune, head, heart, and hands, to the Church in which he was reared, and to which he devoted his life.” As far as his official duty, it was clear even then the importance that the bishop had had to the Southern Church. In fact, after “his election [to the episcopacy] in 1866 his life is interwoven with the history of the Church.” Fitzgerald went on, “He has done as much as any other man to shape its policy and to direct its administration.” Not only did McTyeire lead the church’s course of action, but he was deeply involved in every aspect of church governance and even knew minute

⁵ Ibid.

details that affected local churches. The editorial recalled that McTyeire “knew the work and the workers from Baltimore to San Francisco, at home and abroad.” So keen was the bishop’s interest in the church that when Fitzgerald visited him on his deathbed, McTyeire implored the editor, “Tell me all the news of the Church.”⁶

In addition to his duties with the church and, later, Vanderbilt, McTyeire also had a “beautiful home-life.” He was known for his hospitality, his love of children and animals, and close friendships. McTyeire’s home life, reflected in his sacred-secular ideology, and was thoroughly Victorian and Fitzgerald noted his “heartly enjoyment of simple domestic pleasures.” The church offered the bishop’s widow Amelia McTyeire the most sincere condolences and promised that nobody would intrude on her grief because “prayer can go where speech cannot enter.” Amelia continued to live in the family home at Vanderbilt where she survived on a small stipend. In true Victorian style, she wore black the rest of her life. Fitzgerald then turned his attention to the heavenly stage of McTyeire’s life, what the bishop would have called his spiritual life.

A great man has been taken from us. A great light has been transferred to another sphere. A great worker has finished his task. A great thinker is withdrawn from the arena of human thought. A great loss has fallen upon us, and a great grief rests like a pall upon our hearts. But it is a grief not unmingled with gratitude for a great life and a gracious ending.⁷

There were other tributes, but Fitzgerald’s seems the most appropriate because, as the editor of the *Advocate*, it was the official church statement on the life of McTyeire. Fitzgerald presented a honest and accurate account of the life and work of the bishop. His analysis of McTyeire’s importance in the College of Bishops is somewhat understated because Fitzgerald had to remember not to offend the easily bruised egos of the other

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

bishops. Most importantly, the editor struck the perfect tone. Throughout the fairly long piece, Fitzgerald time and again exclaimed McTyeire's importance to the church, not meant as a body of believers, but as an episcopal institution. This is not to suggest that McTyeire was not religious, because he was a man of immense faith. But what comes across clearly is that the bishop was devoted to religion or, as McTyeire once put it, the highest style of humanity.

Perhaps Fitzgerald's friendship with McTyeire made him more aware of the bishop's importance than historians have heretofore argued. Scholars have often been reluctant to seriously examine denominational history when probing the New South and meanwhile denominational historians are too hagiographical to be of much historiographic importance. Among serious denominational historians, including the likes of Hunter D. Farish, Charles Thrift, and others, there is a firm consensus that McTyeire is the most important person in the postwar southern Methodist church. Meanwhile, southern historians from the Academy certainly recognize the social importance of the Southern Church. While postwar southern religious history remains somewhat underdeveloped, it is curious that scholars have not attempted to make a broader assessment of denominational leaders from the Methodists, or the Baptists and Presbyterians for that matter. The fact that McTyeire led Methodism at a time when it was a significant social force should alone point historians to study McTyeire in depth. And indeed, one of the goals of this thesis was to demonstrate the importance of McTyeire's career beyond the specter of provincial denominational history.

McTyeire's career also has larger historiographic implications beyond the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It is the story of one man's journey with

regional identity, dreams, and religion during turbulent decades in nineteenth century America. The narrative here finds a distinctive arch between the Old South and the New in terms of religious doctrine while still noticing significant changes in its application after the war. Instead of using a political, economic, or even social model, McTyeire's ideology in the antebellum period and its subsequent changes during the trauma of the Civil War and Reconstruction gives scholars a way to understand nineteenth southern religion as a fluid and evangelical faith that was not an force of cultural captivity or a civil religion meant to sooth the wounds of war. The study of Methodism within the paradigm of the New South creed not only lends credence to Schweiger's contention that southern religion was in fact progressive, but pushes the argument one step further. The southern church, with McTyeire as its most important leader, not only gave New South leaders such as journalists, bankers, and lawyers a religious home that sanctioned their progressive outlook on the region, but also proved to be a causative agent to construct a culture of progress in the South. These changes are exemplified in the founding of Vanderbilt University, the ecclesiastical reforms discussed in chapter two, and enabling the self-deception endemic throughout the New South. While this thesis contends that the New South creed had a critical religious dimension unrecognized by historians who have tended to view southern religion as reactionary rather than progressive, one of the larger points of this essay to show the heart-wrenching drama of the failure of forward-looking southern Christianity to unite the good qualities of the South with the message of the Gospel to transform the southland into a place of true virtue and charity. But the highest style of humanity remained too important to leaders like McTyeire to change the course of southern history for the better.

While he meant the phrase to make a specific point about religion in a literary way, the highest style of humanity has a much deeper meaning when considering the career of Holland McTyeire. Whether leading from the pulpit, the editor's chair, the floor of the conference, the Board of Trust, or in conclaves of the College of Bishops, McTyeire never stopped trying to move the church toward a leading position in southern society. Whether advocating better treatment of slaves, urging the Confederacy to have a strong moral character, opening the door for lay leadership into the General Conference, founding a university, or creating an intelligent racial policy that he believed others would be wise to follow, McTyeire thought of himself, and others saw him, as a progressive. Of course, as reflected in McTyeire's career, the highest style of humanity smacked of a high-minded and elitist religious institution that became a pompous bastion of the southern middle class that ignored the suffering of the world around them, even if sending fortunes overseas to convert the Chinese, and would soon institutionalize white supremacy through a despicable system of racial segregation. And what of the sweet style of humanity, McTyeire's phrase meaning Christian love? Even though McTyeire defined this in a way that is somewhat foreign to modern believers, it was not an insidious concept. And in his personal relationships McTyeire treated others with this in mind, even if, like the rest of us, he sometimes failed.

It is here, however, that the contradictions and failures of McTyeire's life and career become apparent. Certainly the bishop was always narrow-minded, but in spite of this he did not do something very important for any religious leader. McTyeire did not merge his administrative abilities and his capacity to demonstrate love. Instead, the highest style of humanity and the sweetest style of humanity remained separate concepts,

instead of two sides of the same coin. Because of this and because his natural personal aptitudes made him a sterling administrator, the highest style of humanity took precedence and the love that supposedly undergirded Methodism moved to recesses of his agenda. When considered in the context of the New South creed, these flaws are only too apparent and all too familiar to southern historians. While progressive, enthusiastic, and energetic, McTyeire was simply too narrow-minded and conservative to start the South towards the kind of change it really needed. Instead, McTyeire and his New South colleagues believed their work to be a stirring success. Taken as signs of God's divine favor, factories grew, the middle class blossomed, and the Southern Church became rich and powerful. But they left behind countless southerners, black and white, struggling to catch up with the white middle class progress that did them little good. Even into the twenty first century, they have not caught up.

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