

A UNITED CAUSE:
A LOOK AT THE SOLDIERS IN THE ARMY OF TENNESSEE AND NORTHERN
VIRGINIA

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Abstract

The American Civil War was the bloodiest war fought on American soil. In a single battle at Gettysburg, over fifty thousand men were wounded, killed, or missing in action. Even with the severity of war, fathers and brothers marched away from their homes to defend their country. In the South, states seceded from the Union due to states' rights; however, the soldiers that joined the Confederate armies fought for far more. Whether from Florida, Virginia, Texas, or Alabama, soldiers went to war with the same reasons in mind. This research paper will look at the writings from soldiers in the Army of Tennessee and of Northern Virginia and draw conclusions on whether the soldiers that fought for the Confederacy as a whole had the same reasons for joining and continuing to fight. While many writings put emphasis on the soldiers' bond to their state or the reasons behind fighting in both Union and Confederate armies, this paper will focus on just soldiers of the Confederacy in hopes to better understand the point of view of the soldiers in two different armies. Though both armies varied in generals and success, the men that fought for both of them would hold the same beliefs.

Introduction

*"I have been a Soldier all my life- I was an officer in the Army of the U.S., which service I left to fight for my own country, and for, and with, my own People- and because they were right, and oppressed."*¹ Lewis A. Armistead, 1861.

The day was December 31, 1862 in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. For days, the Confederate forces wreaked havoc on Federal supply lines, but now it was time to face the enemy in a large scale battle. Both sides drew up plans to attack the enemy's right expecting to cut them off from their base. While the generals looked at the battlefield from a distance, the soldiers stood silently awaiting orders. Two of these soldiers were the Sadler brothers. Lined up next to each other, they knew why they were there: to fight for the South's independence and honor their family in Tennessee. Yesterday music filled the air as Northern musicians played "Yankee Doodle" and "Hail Columbia" and the Federal troops marched into town; not to be outdone, the Southern musicians blasted their own tunes of "Dixie" and "The Bonnie Blue Flag".² Today was different, no music was playing, and soldiers told no stories or laughed at jokes. Today, people were going to die.

As the troops stood shoulder to shoulder awaiting the orders to march forward into battle, both of the brothers knew the danger that was ahead and the risk that one or both of them may fall in battle. Nervous, but trying to hold his composure in front of the other troops, the older brother told Lee, the youngest, something that he would remember for years after the war, "If you get hurt[,] . . . I can't stop to take care of you. If I get hurt or killed, you go on." Lee nodded, but wished the day would never come. A few days later, Lee rushed passed his brother lying on the ground. Disfigured and motionless, Lee knew that he had to push forward past his brother; it

¹ Lewis A. Armistead, CS Brigadier General's letter to Samuel Cooper on December 21, 1861. John D. Wright, editor, *The Oxford Dictionary of Civil War Quotations* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2006), 17.

² James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 579-580.

was what he wanted him to do.³ Situations like this happened all over the country as sons and brothers fought next to and, occasionally, against each other in the bloodiest war on American soil. On both sides, people lost friends and family members to a war that raged on for four long years.

Alongside death and suffering, the war brought the draft and taxation. However, the citizens of the Confederacy had to endure far more. The Union naval blockade crushed the economy of the South especially the embargo on cotton sales. The impressments of foodstuffs, rising inflation, and the scarcity of food and goods caused many families hardships and forced many soldiers to have to leave the front lines to help their families survive. On top of this, the devastation done to the land and people by the Northern invasions hurt the South for years after the conflict.⁴ With all this turmoil in the South, men still eagerly took arms to fight in the Confederacy. Whether you were a poor farmer from Jackson, Mississippi or a rich slave owner from Richmond, Virginia, men stood together as one fighting for the South.

Much has been written on the American Civil War. Battles have been explored and records have been researched to find out exact regiment movement. Soldiers' journals and letters have been examined to find out how their lives were during the civil war. Historians have even looked at the differences and similarities of the Union and Confederate soldiers and generals. On the other hand, a comparison of the soldiers that fought for different states in the Confederacy has not been studied as extensively as other areas. Historians write about the issue of slavery and state's rights within the Federal Government with reference to the causes of the war and why the South tried to secede from the United States. However, the eleven states that joined the

³ Fred Arthur Bailey, *Class and Tennessee's Confederate Generation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 87.

⁴ Michael Perman, *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction 2nd Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 216.

Confederacy (South Carolina, North Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, and Tennessee) were all unique. Geographically, socially, and economically, not all the Southern states were the same, so neither was their citizens. When it came down to joining the Confederacy, many volunteered to defend their family and state, but did they all believe in the same causes that stood for the Confederacy or was it just for their state? Citizens were proud of their state that they came from, but the cause was greater than any one state; it brought the efforts of eleven states together.

A brief overview will be written on the overall reasons why Southern soldiers took up arms for the Confederacy. This will be followed by the soldiers' accounts through their own personal letters and journals to make a comparison on how certain statesmen felt towards the war. The reasons will look at the citizens protecting their civil rights, defending their state and family, and upholding honor for themselves and their family. Religious aspects will be looked at briefly in understanding soldiers' attitudes about death and the events of war. Differences of locations, generals, and overall success of battles are also important to look at to see how they played a role in the soldiers will to fight. Though it may be difficult to draw connections from these last three items, it is important to understand their influence on soldiers and their thoughts. From the sources, an overall view will develop on the soldiers that fought for the Confederacy and whether or not they all felt the same about the war and the issues that they faced. This research will help historians see whether or not the Confederacy was a legitimate government where state officials and the common citizen had the same goal in mind.

Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death

*“...what a cruel thing war is. To separate & destroy families & friends & mar the purest joys and happiness God has granted us in this world. To fill our hearts with hatred instead of love for our neighbors & devastate the fair face of this beautiful world.”*⁵ Robert E. Lee, 1862.

After the evacuation of Fort Sumter, the Union and Confederate sides geared up for battle, many men rushed to volunteer. A colonel from Hickman County, Tennessee hurried to join the Confederate Army screaming, “To Arms! . . . Our Southern soil must be defended. We must not stop to ask who brought about war, who is at fault, but let us go and do battle . . . and then settle the question who is to blame.”⁶ While some men rushed to the front for adventure, others had more important reasons that drew them into the conflict. One reason was to protect the rights of individual citizens that many Southerners believed the United States government was taking away.

The people of the United States believed that they had the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These three items were just as important to the founding fathers during the Revolutionary War. Thomas Jefferson saw these three items that John Locke mentioned as vital components, and so he put them in the Declaration of Independence. During the era of John Locke and even on to the Civil War, many saw the pursuit of happiness as the right to own property. Throughout the nineteenth century and every century before, slaves were considered property in the South and in the North. The *Dred Scott* case furthered this concept of slaves as property and gave many Southerners the motivation to protect themselves against the Federal Government taking away their “property”. They had a right to own slaves and abolitionists had no right to take that away from them. One farmer that enlisted in the 26th Tennessee Infantry

⁵ Robert E. Lee’s letter to his wife, Mary, on December 25, 1862. Wright, *The Oxford Dictionary of Civil War Quotations*, 194

⁶ Bailey, *Class and Tennessee’s Confederate Generation*, 78.

shared these thoughts and believed Southerners' "life liberty and property [i.e., slaves] are at stake" from the national government and "any man in the south would rather die battling for civil and political liberty, than submit to the base usurpations of a northern tyrant." To the North, the blacks were slaves to the Southerners, while many Southerners saw themselves as slaves to the North and would rather fight than submit.⁷ Some believed that slavery was more than just owning property. Rather, they saw that it was needed in the United States. A lieutenant from the 28th Mississippi believed "this country without slave labor would be completely worthless . . . we can only live and exist by that species of labor: and hence I am going to fight to the last."⁸ The rights of the states caused a bond with many Southerners to join the Confederacy.

It did not matter where the soldiers came from; they went to the front to die for their country and even though scared at times, they were happy to defend what they felt were right. During the battle of Gettysburg, many Confederates fell. When one soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia was asked if he was scared of dying after he was shot, he replied to his friends, "Oh, no! I am perfectly happy. I have discharged my duty to my country- 'dulce est pro patria mori'" (Translated to a few things: "It is sweet to die for one's country", "It is noble and glorious to die for your fatherland", "It is beautiful and honorable to die for your fatherland.")⁹ Men were honored to fight and die for their states' rights against a government that was trying to talk away their liberty.

A soldier in the Army of Mississippi (was later renamed the Army of Tennessee on November 20, 1862) wanted it to be made clear that when he died, people should know that he

⁷ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 20-21. The data from McPherson's research came from a sample of 1,076 soldiers: 647 Union and 429 Confederates. Of the 429 soldiers, 20% stated their support for slavery. None of the 429 Confederates dissented from that view. Information found on page 110.

⁸ Ibid, 107.

⁹ LeGrand James Wilson, *The Confederate Soldier*, ed. Bell Irvin Wiley (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1973), 123.

was fighting for the rights of the states, not just Mississippi, but every state. The soldier was Robert Tallon, of Tishomingo County, and he told his family that he “died for States’ rights; see, now, they put that in the papers . . . Robert Tallon died for States’ rights.”¹⁰ In order for their rights to be granted, people stood up and fought for the Southern rights. A Confederate soldier wrote, “My whole heart is in the cause of the Confederacy, because I believe that the perpetuity of Republican principles on this continent depends upon our success.”¹¹ The cause of liberty and justice was worth fighting for to many citizens across the South because it was what the South held dear.¹²

For many of the Southerners, the fight over their rights made them patriots like those that sacrificed their lives to form the United States. Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, saw the similarities of the colonists back in 1776 to the Southerners in the 1860s. He “urged his people [Confederate citizens] to ‘renew such sacrifices as our fathers made to the holy cause of constitutional liberty.’”¹³

Many looked at the past and brought hope from the experiences of the patriots during the American Revolution. William Fleming, captain of the 50th Georgia in the Army of Northern Virginia, tried to think positively as he wrote to his wife after they lost the battle of Gettysburg and he found out about the surrender of Vicksburg. The events were “a calamity! . . . But let us not despair . . . our forefathers were whipped in nearly every battle and yet after seven years of trials & hardships achieved their independence.”¹⁴ Across to the west, Mississippians were encouraged to fill their patriotic duty and join the Army of Mississippi. The *Natchez Courier*

¹⁰ John K. Bettersworth and James W. Silver, eds., *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As They Saw It* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 360.

¹¹ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 106

¹² Ibid, 104-105

¹³ Ibid, 104.

¹⁴ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 105.

pleaded to its citizens that “Our country needs the service of all its patriotic sons... will the few hundreds of patriotic young men in Natchez, Adams, and the adjoining district... still cling to home and its luxuries when their services are needed in the tented field? Such is not the spirit of Mississippians.”¹⁵ In some cases, men even quoted famous individuals during the Revolutionary Era. During the first battle of Bull Run, Private Billy Woodward of the 5th Virginia, attached to the Army of Northern Virginia, screamed, “I will never retreat! Give me liberty or give me death!” as two New England regiments engaged him.¹⁶ These same words, “Give me liberty or give me death!” were said by Patrick Henry during the Virginia Convention in 1775.

Whether in the Army of Northern Virginia or the Army of Tennessee (or former Army of Mississippi) the right to life, liberty, and property held high importance in the eyes of many soldiers. Men from all over the Confederacy rushed to bear arms and defend their property, which they believed the Federal Government was trying to take away. These individuals saw this call to action as their patriotic duty, just as their relatives did generations ago in the Revolutionary War. Southerners saw great similarities between the two conflicts as the rightful patriots defending their civil rights against an invading tyrant. Mississippians, Virginians, Tennesseans, and other citizens joined together to defend their basic rights and form a new government just as their forefathers did.

¹⁵ John K. Bettersworth and James W. Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 71. The post was on November 2, 1861.

¹⁶ Ironically, right after Billy Woodward yelled those words, a bullet hit him in the heart instantly killing him. It is very interesting to note that Patrick Henry echoed these words less than a hundred years before in Richmond, Virginia which was less than one hundred miles from Manassas, Virginia. Jeffry D. Wert, *A Brotherhood of Valor: The Common Soldiers of the Stonewall Brigade, C.S.A., and the Iron Brigade, U.S.A.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 41.

My State is Counting on Me

*“I believe that soldiers generally do not fear death less because of their repeated escape from its jaws. For, in every battle they see so many new forms of death, see so many frightful and novel kinds of mutilation, see such varying fortunes in the tides of strife, and appreciate so highly their deliverance from destruction.”*¹⁷ John Dooley.

With the invading Union armies marching onto Southern soil, men of all ages gathered in county courthouses and marched towards the front to defend their state and families in hopes to save their culture and to fulfill their civil duties. Though they left home eagerly to defend what was dear to them, home was always on their minds. Unlike the Union soldiers who were fighting for reasons such as to stop the secession from the Union, abolishment of slavery, and honor and glory, the Southern states had a motivation that many Northerners could not match: these soldiers were defending their homes and hearths against an invading force that was not welcomed in any part of the Confederate South. A soldier in the 9th Mississippi, attached to the Army of Tennessee, took this duty of defending that which was dear to him and turned it into a desire “to be in the front rank of the first brigade that marches against the invading foe who now pollute the sacred soil of my native state with their unholy tread.”¹⁸ Toward the east in Virginia, soldiers rose up to defend their state and their families. A lieutenant in the 3rd Virginia Cavalry wrote about family and duty as he stated “The man who loves his family the best now . . . is he who is the most anxious and will risk the most and suffer the most to repel the invader.” The soldiers were fighting for their country, but also for their families.¹⁹ For the Southerners, this gave them reasoning because their homes were in direct danger of being affected.

Soldiers’ families had great influences on encouraging men to fight or flee. John L. Barnett from the Army of Northern Virginia wrote to his sister on how “natural that the spirit of

¹⁷ John Dooley, “Acknowledges the Persistence of Fear,” ed. Michael Perman, *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 127.

¹⁸ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 21-22.

¹⁹ Ibid, 135.

a man at times should be gloomy and cast down, but to receive a letter from home... stirs our sleeping patriotism, it makes us firm in our purpose to conquer or perish.”²⁰ Letters helped raise the spirits of individuals, but just the thought of family could turn an ordinary individual into a fierce soldier. Jerome B. Yates of the 16th Mississippi thought about his brother during skirmishes around Fredericksburg in June 1863. In his letter home he wrote, “I think of you every time I shot at them. I wish I had a three hundred-pound cannon so I could speak louder tones to them and remind them they are invading a country where they are not very much liked. I hope this unholy war may soon terminate to the defeat of the enemy.”²¹ While family inspired people to fight harder, it also made many miss home even more.

For many soldiers, the Civil War was the first time they were away from their families for long periods of time. This long distance brought sadness to many soldiers. Jesse Ruebel Kirkland was one of those men. With a wife and little children at home in Mississippi while he was fighting in Virginia, only the words from his letter could show his family how much he loved and missed them. Words like “a thousand loves to you and the babies” or “good bye, adieu, my dear and affectionate wife” with the last part always ending with “your affectionate husband” filled the letters.²²

Fear was present to those who risked their lives in the front while their family suffered back home. Both upper and lower class worried about their families and their crops. For the lower class, soldiers worried about their crops and whether there was enough to feed their families and the families of the other volunteers that left to fight. The upper class worried more about their wives and children being overrun by their slaves. One Mississippian wrote to the

²⁰ James Barnett, ed. “Some Civil War Letters and Diary of John Lympus Barnett,” *Indian Magazine of History* 37 (1941): 172.

²¹ Robert G. Evans, editor, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Civil War Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 168.

²² Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 23.

Governor of Mississippi, John Jones Pettus, about the fear of not having a “single white man on many plantations to restrain their [Black slaves] licenciousness by a little wholesome fear or visit with condign punishment any act of wrong or insubordination.”²³ Though the different classes had dissimilar reasons for their fear for their family, all soldiers throughout the Confederacy still worried about their family.

For individuals like William Harris Hardy from Mississippi, the fear was much different. William Harris Hardy was married to Sally Johnson. Early in the war he wrote to his wife about his fears that she would leave him for another man. These fears even turned to nightmares. William believed that these fears came from another man in his company that had his wife leave him for another man. Even though it was a dream, it seemed like reality to William and he wrote how his “heart sunk, and the tears gushed forth from . . . [his] eyes.”²⁴ Robbie had the same fears about his wife leaving him, but more so when he returned home with a wartime injury. During the battle of Sharpsburg, he was wounded in the right leg and needed it amputated. It took him a week after the operation to write to his wife and find the courage to tell her the truth. Though he talked about how he was the same person that she married, the war affected him mentally and physically.

“I trust and pray that my injury does not disgust you nor relinquish your love for me... I’m still all the man you married. When I get home if I get home, I will never stop loving you... you must never know what my eyes have seen gentile [sic] woman... War is too gruesome a sight to describe in words.”²⁵

Family members back home also worried. Sometimes the soldiers tried to calm their loved ones with letters of hope and tales that the war would end soon. In the Army of Northern Virginia, William Harris Hardy told his wife; “don’t be uneasy about me, look on the bright side

²³ Bettersworth and Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 77.

²⁴ Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 22.

²⁵ Wert, *A Brotherhood of Valor*, 186.

of things and remember that you suffer only in common with all who are subjects to the calamities of this unholy war.”²⁶ Other times they did not get the chance because the soldiers did not receive mail due to Confederate censorship. In the case of the Army of Northern Virginia, hundreds of letters were intercepted by army headquarters. The letters were to soldiers from family members pleading for them to return home. Many of the requests described the lack of food back home and illnesses that threatened the family. These issues would have surely caused some soldiers to leave the army and return home. However, they never knew about these hardships until after the war.²⁷

Not only did soldiers write about their love to their wives and to their family, they also wrote about the support that many of the women gave the soldiers. Throughout the war, women took care of the families, crops, and even helped soldiers get uniforms and food. John S. Lewis from the Army of Northern Virginia wrote about women in the South to his wife and how they “have proved themselves its [Confederacy] bravest defenders and the firmest enemies of our enemy.”²⁸ This letter was written days after the defeat at Gettysburg. Though the battle was a devastating loss to the soldiers, Lewis believed that the home front still gave the Confederacy a fighting chance.

With family on their mind, many men left their state to defend other people’s home soil. Though some complained about not being able to fight in their own state, most of them knew their duty was to the country, which would in turn save their state. The *Mississippi House Journal* shared many of these soldiers’ feelings, and in February 1865 wrote, “Our people are ready to meet the issue, and I recommend that you solemnly and firmly declare that Mississippi will be true to her plighted faith to her sister Confederates, and will conquer or perish with

²⁶ Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 62.

²⁷ Walter H. Taylor, *Four Years with General Lee* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 145-146.

²⁸ Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 183.

them.”²⁹ Though much of Mississippi fell with the surrender of Vicksburg, they continually pushed forward and fought and looked for others to do the same.

“When Vicksburg fell, it looked like the Yankees were going to try to take Charleston, Mobile and Savannah, but I hope that every man that is capable of bearing arms rush forward and fight for their country and home, but there is a good many young men about those cities and towns that had rather die than to face the Yankee bullets, which is not very pleasant work, but it has to be done.”³⁰

With great defeats, men from all over the South did not give up their fight for freedom; instead it made them want to avenge their fallen comrades and families. When soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia heard about the surrender of New Orleans in May of 1862, they were saddened by the loss. However, they did not dwell on the events and instead presumed that it “would not have been prevented without a greater loss to the Confederacy than has occurred by its surrender.” The men from the 16th Mississippi saw this as an awakening and it made them eager to meet the enemy and “concentrate our forces as to cut the invading armies to pieces.”³¹ Toward the west two months earlier, Tennesseans from the Army of Tennessee gained motivation from losses in their state. With Fort Donelson’s surrender in February of 1862 and a large part of the state captured, a man in the 16th Tennessee saw this as an opportunity to become “more fully determined than ever before to sacrifice their lives, if need be, for the invaded soil of their bleeding country . . . the Chivalrous Volunteer State will not be allowed to pass under Lincoln rule without... the fall of a far greater number of his hireling horde.”³²

Not every soldier was willing to leave their states to fight for the Confederacy. Some soldiers like a Virginian major in the 2nd Virginia Cavalry were fighting the conflict for their state, not because of their country. “If I am killed tomorrow . . . it will be for Virginia, the land of

²⁹ Betttersworth and Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 152.

³⁰ J.J. Wilson to James E. Wilson August 10, 1863. Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 190.

³¹ William Hardy May 3rd 1862. Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 68.

³² McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 96.

my father, and not for the damned secession movement.”³³ Though some soldiers felt the same way, many soldiers seemed to be content with fighting for both their state and the Confederacy. Many men knew that by fighting for the Confederacy, they were fighting for their state also. When a Mississippi soldier was in Virginia and some men were deserting, he stated that “never do I intend to desert the flag of my country, so long as the abominable flag of despotism hovers over a fort on Southern soil.”³⁴ Many men knew that defending their state meant winning the war, which meant that they needed to be thousands of miles from home. A soldier in the 21st Mississippi wrote about fighting in the Army of Northern Virginia and the hardship of being away, but he was “perfectly content to remain five years or until there is not a Yankee south of the Mason & Dixon’s line.”³⁵

With the start of the American Civil War, both Union and Confederate forces eagerly volunteered to fulfill their duty to their country; the Southern troops had added motivation to protect their state and family. These two intangibles helped keep the soldiers going, but sometimes made them miss home even more, which caused heartaches in many men. Families meant so much to these soldiers that they risked to save them. Though the state was vital to their lives, many Southerners understood that their states success depended on the success of the Confederacy; if the Confederacy lost, so did their state. With this understanding in mind, soldiers from all across the South marched to foreign states to defend the soil of another state that indirectly affected their own. Though they always had their state in mind, they fought alongside men from all over the South to defend the whole Confederacy.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Wert, *Brotherhood of Valor*, 79.

³⁵ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 98.

I Would Rather Die than be Known as a Coward

“I had no shoes. I tried to barefoot, but somehow my feet wouldn’t callous. They just kept bleeding. I found it so hard to keep up that though I had the heart of a patriot, I began to feel I didn’t have patriotic feet. Of course, I could have crawled on my hands and knees, but then my hands would have got so sore I couldn’t have fired my rifle.”³⁶ -Unknown Soldier after battle of Sharpsburg

As men joined armies all over the South, they knew they were defending their honor and their families once the fighting began. Though the battlefield was a fearful place as men died all around them, a soldier knew that if he left the battlefield before told, or if he did not show up at all, he would dishonor his family and be known as a coward forever. A Virginia cavalryman told his wife that he would rather “die honorably in the discharge of my duty than live a coward and thereby bring lasting disgrace on myself and my family.”³⁷ In letters all over the Confederacy, soldiers wrote home about the cowards, which would reach their families and hurt their image in society. With this on their mind, soldiers pushed themselves to the brink or made up extravagant stories to keep their honor intact. Many times, soldiers even fought while sick so no one would think that they were cowards or “sneaks” (someone who is in the army, but disappears when the battle begins). These same soldiers wrote about courage, bravery, and valor, which to them qualified as the marks of honor. These qualifications also encouraged men to risk their lives in battle all so that they were recognized by their peers.

For many men who volunteered, they went to battle in regiments with men from their county. In states like Tennessee, due to the 1840 Militia Law which required all able bodied men between the ages of 18 and 45 to serve in the militia, men fought next to their neighbors and even their family. Their loyalty was to their regiment and they knew that their actions on the

³⁶ Wright, *The Oxford Dictionary of Civil War Quotations*, 9. The soldier missed the battle of Sharpsburg and was explaining to his officer the reason why he could not make it.

³⁷ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 136.

battlefield would reach home sooner or later.³⁸ For many soldiers, the honor that they gained was not a publicity stunt; they were not fighting for name recognition or fame, but to defend their family and state honorably. For one Mississippian, honor and recognition were two different concepts:

“Let me die upon the field of battle in the front rank for an example to those whose duty it is to free the South from the iron hand of tyranny. What care I, though my name never be put in print or my country never know I shed my blood for her freedom. What a worthless man is he who only acts to be seen of men! God sees and understands the honest heart.”³⁹

Honor did not just stop at the common soldiers, because even officers had to worry about their honor. Soldiers looked at the bravery of an officer and followed those that outshined others. A lieutenant in the 28th Mississippi told his wife that “an officer has to be very careful of his reputation for courage . . . when once the troops lose confidence in the bravery of their commander, they necessarily have an utter contempt for him.”⁴⁰ When the battle was over and men were carried off the battlefield, it did not matter what state they hailed from, they were judged the same with respect to honor. A lieutenant from the 26th Tennessee wrote home on how he “did not disgrace our [family] name . . . the Boys all know it and can tell of it.”⁴¹ After the battle of Shiloh, a soldier from the 38th Tennessee told his wife that “some of our Company disgraced themselves by falling back, pretending to be very lame. I would have gone in if I had to have gone in on one leg.”⁴²

For some families, it was hard to see their brother or husband go off to fight. A wife of a soldier from the 45th Tennessee did not want him to enlist, but he told her that “no man now has

³⁸ Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 38.

³⁹ Bettersworth and Silver, *Mississippians in the Confederacy*, 361-362.

⁴⁰ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 59.

⁴¹ Ibid, 80.

⁴² Ibid, 79.

a right to stay at home . . . duty, patriotism and, age, honour calls him to the field.”⁴³ A Sergeant in the 24th Mississippi had the same feelings, which he conveyed to his sister by saying, “life is sweet but I would alwas [sic] prefer a honorable death to a disgraceful and shameful life . . . I much reather [sic] be numbered amongst the slain than those that stay at home for it will be a brand upon their name as long as the southern lives.”⁴⁴

For those that left the field before the firing stopped or ran away when word of a battle came up, their name was tarnished. A private in the 21st Mississippi commented about these soldiers and how in a regiment “there should be no sloth nor sluggard, no whimperer nor complainer.”⁴⁵ Soldiers that fell out of rank were “irretrievably disgraced”. In one situation, a private in the 18th Mississippi wrote a letter home about a man from his town that would always have excuses not to fight; when the war came to an end “he could never go home again because ‘the boys have written so much about him.’”⁴⁶ For men that hid during battles “skulking”, it was looked at worse than desertion in many situations. The price for many soldiers that skulked was thirty-nine lashes on the bare back. However, sometimes to curb people from straggling or hiding, soldiers were even shot.⁴⁷

Honor was not just about the individual, but honor for one’s regiment and state. “We feel like the kindest of brothers together,” wrote a soldier in the 10th Virginia Cavalry.⁴⁸ A regiment lived and died by the men that made it up. Everyone counted on each other to be loyal to the group and to be honorable. Whether in the Army of Tennessee or Northern Virginia, soldiers

⁴³ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 24.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 23.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 7-8. Edward Burrus wrote to his father complaining about how many of these men were in his regiment and how he was courageous and not like them. However he admitted later on that he was one of the men that left ranks before battle of Sharpsburg.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 80.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 51.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 86.

formed brotherly bonds with the people that they fought next to. When a soldier died next to one another, it hit home.

In defending their state and honor, whole regiments charged batteries or impenetrable defenses in the heat of the moment to try and gain prestige. Sometimes they would gain glory while other times regiments would pay the cost and be slaughtered. For many soldiers, they would write home bolstering about how their regiment won the victory at a certain battle.⁴⁹ These soldiers were proud of where they came from and proud of what they did for the Confederacy. With regimental pride, the development of regimental competition emerged. Though they tried to out-fight other regiments, the use of unit rivalry and honor seemed to motivate soldiers rather than hinder them.

In the Army of Northern Virginia, a North Carolina regiment set off to prove themselves against the Virginian regiments to make up for their harsh defeats earlier in the war. They hated how the Virginians made themselves out to be better than their regiment because they fought better. With this cut on their ego and honor, the North Carolinians motivated themselves to fight better next time by not being able to visit their family until they proved themselves. At the Battle of Fredericksburg and others, the North Carolina regiment fought courageously and sometimes even out-fighting the Virginians. For one major in the 46th North Carolina, “it was the proudest day of my life . . . [and] it was a proud day for the old state,” when their regiment out-fought a Virginian regiment in the Battle of Fredericksburg.⁵⁰

Though rivalries developed, this encouraged the soldiers from different regiments to give it their all and fight bravely to honor their state and most important, themselves. Honor was

⁴⁹ Alexander Cantrell, *Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires* (Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1985). Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires will be written as TVQ. This is one example about a soldier mentioning his regiment as the reason why the battle was won.

⁵⁰ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 83.

essential to all soldiers in the Army of Tennessee and Northern Virginia. Though many were scared of dying in the battles they fought in, the fact that their honor, state's honor, and family honor was on the line caused them to brave the conditions of the war and motivate each other to fight and die rather than run away and live.

In God We Trust

*"Lord preserve the soul while I destroy the body."*⁵¹ *Unknown Confederate soldier*

With war raging on all fronts in the South, many suffered the full characteristic of combat. A soldier from Tennessee said, "War is hell on earth . . . the Devil is at the head of it and I hope I will never see any more."⁵² In the midst of the carnage, many individuals turned to religion as a way to help them get through. For many, religion was already an important aspect of their life. They turned to God during battles and also for answers to their problems that they faced during their service. For the common soldiers throughout the Confederacy, God was on their side and helped them through the war for the South's independence while others believed that God was making people better human beings by causing a conflict:

"We profess to be a Christian people, and we should put our trust in God. He holds the destiny of our nation, as it were, in the palm of his hand . . . Let the South lose what it may at present, God's hand is certainly in this contest, and He is working for the accomplishment of some grand result . . . We were a wicked proud, ambitious nation, and God has brought upon us this war to crush and humble our pride and make us a better people generally."⁵³

Whether many believed that this statement was true, most soldiers believed that God played a part in the war and in their own individual lives. "Men fell on both sides of me," said a private in

⁵¹ Wright, *The Oxford Dictionary of Civil War Quotations*, 327.

⁵² William Duggan, *TVQ*.

⁵³ Tally Simpson, C.S.A., *Reports on the Aftermath of Gettysburg, July 1863*. Michael Perman editor, *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 132-133.

the Army of Northern Virginia, “and if it had not been that God was with me I believe I’d fell too.”⁵⁴ A color bearer in the 4th Virginia believed that “God has appointed our day and we are perfectly safe until that day comes.”⁵⁵ This helped many soldiers cope with the fear of death and gave them courage to last a whole battle even when bullets flew by them. “The God who protects me in the peaceful walks of every day life, can avert from my person the balls & bullets of the enemy,” wrote William L. Nugent to his wife back home in Mississippi.⁵⁶ When a friend of a private in the 33rd Mississippi was killed in battle, the soldier was first sad “but when I took the last look at him I felt very happy to think that he had gone to a better world.”⁵⁷

While some used religion as a way to deal with the fear of death, others used religion as a way to improve as a man or to forgive a soldier for his sins. A private in the 38th Tennessee during the Battle of Shiloh “continually raised my heart to him, in prayer, and in the thickest of the fight, I evoked His protection . . . I have struggled and prayed to God until I am altogether another person . . . Oh, I feel as I have not felt in years.”⁵⁸ While dying, J.R. Montgomery wrote to A.V. Montgomery about re-uniting in heaven and how “I pray my God to forgive my sins & I feel that his promises are true that he will forgive me and save me.”⁵⁹

“Surely the god of battles is on our side,” wrote a soldier from the 37th Mississippi, he “could not believe that our Father in Heaven intends that we shall be subjugated by such a race of people as the Yankees!”⁶⁰ Many had a hard time coinciding killing with religion, such as William L. Nugent when he wrote, “I feel that I would like to shoot a Yankee, and yet I know that this would not be in harmony with the Spirit of Christianity.” Despite this, he believed that

⁵⁴ Wert, *Brother of Valor*, 230.

⁵⁵ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 66.

⁵⁶ William L. Nugent to wife, August 19, 1861. Bettersworth and Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 63

⁵⁷ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 76.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 64.

⁵⁹ Bettersworth and Silver, *Mississippians in the Confederacy*, 361.

⁶⁰ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 73.

God was fighting with the South.⁶¹ In one instance, a regiment in the Army of Tennessee had their banner sprinkled with Holy water:

“Captain Wood... approached the Bishop’s seat and received from him the blessed flag, with the following words: ‘Receive this standard sanctified by the blessing of Heaven; may it prove terrible to the enemies of Christ, and may God give you grace to bear it safely and unharmed through the thickest ranks of the foe.’”⁶²

However, as the war raged on and many men lost their lives, some wondered if God was going to save the South. “I fear that God has ceased to work miracles. He certainly seems now to be on the side of our oppressors. We are in our last struggle, & without his almighty aid the Southern Confederacy will cease to exist in the next four months.”⁶³ Though some saw God as betraying them, others kept praying and believing in something bigger than the war. Religious meetings were held daily and “Morning, noon and night can be heard songs of praise ascending from the varied encampments. These meetings will no doubt do much to improve the morals and discipline of our army.”⁶⁴ Even after the heartfelt defeats at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, soldiers turned to religion as a safe haven.

A Unity of Differences

*“This climate [in Virginia] is making me terribly lazy. I lose all my strength here, and feel dumpish continually; I want to lie down constantly; there seems to be something in the atmosphere that absorbs all my vitality.”*⁶⁵ Robert G. Carter

The Confederacy was an agrarian economy that produced cotton, tobacco, and sugarcane for export (mostly cotton, for it was the leading export). Though slaves in the 1860 U.S. Census made up thirty-nine percent of the eleven states’ population, only six percent of the free

⁶¹ William L. Nugent to wife, August 19, 1861. Bettersworth and Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 63

⁶² Natchez Courier, December 28, 1861. Bettersworth and Silver, *Mississippians in the Confederacy*, 67.

⁶³ Edward Fontaine May 11, 1865. Bettersworth and Silver. *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 358.

⁶⁴ James J. Kirkpatrick Aug 27, 1863. Evans, *The 16th Mississippi*, 199.

⁶⁵ U.S. private Robert G. Carter to his parents in August 1862. Wright, *The Oxford Dictionary of Civil War Quotations*, 41.

population owned slaves. Mississippians were on the high side with nine percent of the free population owning slaves; while Tennesseans were on the low end with four percent of their population as slaver owners. This range also showed in the number of free colored citizens. Around four percent of the population in Virginia was free colored citizens while states like Arkansas, Texas, and Mississippi had less than one percent. Another characteristic of the South that differed across areas was the population of cities. Most of the big southern cities had small populations compared to the North. The biggest cities were closest to the ocean, especially near harbors: New Orleans had a population of 168, 675; Charleston, South Carolina 40,578; Richmond, Virginia 37,910; Mobile, Alabama 29,258 to name a few (all population statistics from 1860).⁶⁶ Only one of the major Confederate cities was in the top twenty of the U.S. cities in 1860, which shows how most of the Confederate States of America (CSA) consisted of rural land.

The geography of the Southern states also had an effect on the citizens. Much of the CSA land was coastline. These areas were often sandy or marshy. Most of the interior of the Southeast was made up of farmland, but it was also hilly and mountainous terrain. The farther west, the more desert there was. Much of the area had navigable rivers, which was a huge positive for transportation. The weather consisted mostly of humid subtropical climates where the winters were mild, which helped spread infectious diseases that killed more soldiers than the combat itself.⁶⁷ The geographically features of the southern states also caused differences in societies, which affected who joined the Confederacy.

⁶⁶ 1860 U.S. Census. Not all information was in the census. Some information can be easily found or calculated. For example, to find out the percentage of slave owners in the South, the number of free citizens that owned slaves from the eleven states was divided by the number of free citizens.

⁶⁷ Statistical Summary America's Major Wars.
<http://web.archive.org/web/20070711050249/http://www.cwc.lsu.edu/other/stats/warcost.htm>. (accessed on March 16, 2008).

With Virginia's change in geography, especially in the Shenandoah Valley⁶⁸, different societies formed. Two of these groups were the Quakers and Mennonites. Both of them were against slavery, secession, and the rebellion in general. The Southern Quakers were known as "Dunkers". The Mennonites numbered only a few hundred families in the Shenandoah Valley in western Virginia. They, like the Quakers, believed in peace and would not fight in the war unless forced into service.⁶⁹ These individuals were not a part of the sectional rivalry, the issue over states' rights, or the fear of Northern encroachment, nevertheless, the war was forced onto them.

Jefferson Davis, even commented on groups like the Dunkers and Mennonites. He stated that he regretted having them in the Confederacy because they do not fight for the defense of their country.⁷⁰ The citizens of Virginia threatened many of the Dunkers and Mennonites into joining the Confederate army. This put the Mennonites in an especially tough position. If they did not fight, they needed to hide out, but if they fought or volunteered, they were expelled from the church. Many of them took off to the mountains or became part of the "Underground Railroad" to protect themselves and other deserters.⁷¹ For those that stayed and joined the military, killing was not an option. In one situation, a man named Hartman told a story concerning Christian Good, a Mennonite:

"Good told me over and over he was forced into battle but he would not shoot anybody. At the first battle the captain came up and asked him if he shot. He said 'No, I did not shoot.' Sometime afterward he got into another battle. After it was over the captain came to him and asked him whether he shot. He said, 'No, I didn't see anything to shoot at.'

⁶⁸ The Shenandoah Valley is a geographic valley in the middle of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Ridge-and valley Appalachians to the west. Some of the Shenandoah Valley also became part of West Virginia, as the eastern and western communities in Virginia were different and argued over secession. For further information on the formation of West Virginia, go to "West Virginia Division of Culture and History" at <http://www.wvculture.org/hiSTory/statehoo.html>.

⁶⁹ Samuel Horst, *Mennonites in the Confederacy: A Study in Civil War Pacifism* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1967) 3.

⁷⁰ Horst, *Mennonites in the Confederacy*, 19.

⁷¹ Horst, *Mennonites in the Confederacy*, 42-43.

The captain asked, ‘Why, didn’t you see all those Yankees over there?’ ‘No, they’re people; we don’t shoot people.’”⁷²

Christian Good was not the only one who did not kill anyone in battle or go to war at all. Many of the Mennonites (the Dunkers did not seem to do this as much) secured substitutes. This meant that they paid someone else to go and fight in their place.⁷³ For the families that could afford this, it was a great way to follow the church and not join the conflict while at the same time meeting the muster. As the war dragged on, securing substitutes became difficult as the Confederacy wanted all able bodied men to join.

The state of Tennessee had similar issues. Though they formally joined the Confederacy, many of the citizens did not follow their statesmen and decided to join the Union. The geographical differences played a major role in the separation of views. In the eastern part of Tennessee ran mountainous terrain, which caused slavery to be less important in the region. In the region known as Northwest/South-central Tennessee, slavery was also unimportant (less than 30% of the population in both East and Northwest/South-central Tennessee). For this region, many settlers went farther west where the land was much more suitable for cotton growing. The northwestern region was just emerging past the frontier status where most of the citizens could not afford slaves or did not need them for their farms. Southwest Tennessee and Middle Tennessee held most of the slave owners. In thirteen Middle Tennessee counties, thirty to fifty-two percent of the population were slaves.⁷⁴ When war broke out, most of the white Tennesseans joined the Confederacy, yet, the majority of the East Tennesseans and some of those that lived in the western region sided with the Union.⁷⁵ With Union and Confederate forces in Tennessee, the state became one of the biggest battleground states of the war. However, without northern help in

⁷² Horst, *Mennonites in the Confederacy*, 32-33.

⁷³ Horst, *Mennonites in the Confederacy*, 40.

⁷⁴ Bailey, *Class and Tennessee’s Confederate Generation*, 6.

⁷⁵ Bailey, *Class and Tennessee’s Confederate Generation*, 77.

the early parts of the war, Tennessee Unionists suffered. Many of the men fled Tennessee to join the Union army. Even without occupation of east Tennessee, around 30,000 white Tennesseans fought for the North in the first half of the war.⁷⁶ No other Confederate state yielded that many Union troops.

Some states joined the war full-heartedly on the Confederate side. They joined their fellow statesmen and fought for their families and country, however, as the war progressed, some of these men changed their views and rebelled against their state. Such a case occurred in Jones County, Mississippi. As Pemberton's army was defeated by Grant at Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, many of the Mississippians moved east with bitter defeat on their minds. Some of these men did not return to the army, and instead, they headed for piney woods in Jones County. Dissatisfied with the Confederacy and the loss of their land, men joined together to form with Newt Knight, the founder of the "Newt Knight Company." These deserters hid out in swamps and refused to rejoin the ranks. Many tales have come up dealing with Newt Knight and his followers in Jones County, and thanks to the newspapers of the time, the tales still live on. Though it was never truly documented, newspapers like the *Natchez Courier* wrote about the Republic of Jones:

"It may be interesting to many of our citizens to know that the county of Jones, State of Mississippi, has seceded from the State and formed a Government of their own, both military and civil. The Confederacy, after claiming the right of secession ... has declared war against it and sent an army... to crush the rebellion... A desperate battle ensued, in which the armies of the new Republic were victorious, having killed wounded and captured many of the Confederates."⁷⁷

While no official secession has been documented in Jones County, the "Newt Knight Company" would become a major pain for Confederate supporters as they raided and even beat many

⁷⁶ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 305-306.

⁷⁷ John K. Bettersworth and James W. Silver, eds., *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 143.

Confederate attempts to subdue them. They lasted until the war ended and would cause much controversy for the Confederates that would return home after the war.⁷⁸

Despite the fact that every state in the South was not the same geographically, socially, and economically, they all faced challenges throughout the war that divided their states. Due to the Shenandoah Valley and the various religious groups, Virginia's allegiances were split. From this, a new state formed. Tennessee was not so evenly split as most of the middle and southern regions which joined the confederacy, while many of the eastern and western parts joined the Union. With the divisions and the prime location of the state, Tennessee was a hot spot for conflict and attention. Mississippians joined the war as one, but as the Union pushed more into their lands and the Confederacy began to back away, some of the citizens switched sides and even formed a mystical Republic of Jones. Even with these challenges, the Confederacy still pushed forward and many of the Southerners still fought until the bitter end.

My Life Is In Your Hands

*"General Lee, I am a Union woman, yet I ask for bread and your autograph."*⁷⁹
-unknown female from Pennsylvania

Soldiers from all over the South flocked into the army for many different reasons: honor, family, liberty, or others, soldiers put their lives on the line. Once in the army, their lives were in the hands of their leaders. Though soldiers had heartfelt reasons to fight which were similar across the South, the generals that led them varied. Soldiers wrote about their experiences with

⁷⁸ Many of the citizens petitioned to change the name of Jones County because of the occurrences of the "Newt Knight Company" and the issue over changing loyalties to the Union. After the petition, the county was changed to Davis in honor of the first Confederate President. The county name was changed back to Jones several years later. The information is found in many internet websites, but the petition and summary of the change can be read in *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 148.

⁷⁹ Wright, *The Oxford Dictionary of Civil War Quotations*, 11. The citizen was from Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. While at his headquarters, the woman approached Robert E. Lee and asked for bread because the town was hungry, but she also insisted on getting his autograph.

generals in their diaries and in letters to their family. A great general was one who brought the best out of soldiers and kept them motivated to fight no matter what the odds, while a lackluster general lost the confidence and morale of their troops. Nevertheless, soldiers marched into battle under all leaders and obeyed their orders even if they did not agree with them:

“No man but the commander can judge of what is important and what is not... Soldiers must therefore obey in all things. They may, and do, laugh at foolish orders, but they nevertheless obey, not because they are blindly obedient, but because they know that to disobey is to break the backbone of their profession.”⁸⁰

From the letters, soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia seemed to respect their commanders. General Lee, Jackson, Ashby, and Trimble were always looked at with high regard in all situations, even in defeat. However, the Confederacy’s code of loyalty caused many noble commanders to die. Officers lead their men into battle and dealt with the harshness of combat like everyone else. Though soldiers respected this from their officers, it also resulted in shortages of experienced officers during the war as single battles sometimes killed or wound more than half of the officers.⁸¹ Even with the fear of death, soldiers and officers marched together in glory and defeat.

Brigadier General Trimble was one of those officers that held the respect of his soldiers. Once the men of the 16th Mississippi Infantry had a chance to be around Trimble, they were sad to know that they were parting ways. They even stated, “There is not a man in this company or regiment who is not attached to him on account of his abilities and good qualities.”⁸² General Turner Ashby was also one of the soldiers’ favorite generals. In a early entry in his diary, James Johnson Kirkpatrick wrote, “General Turner Ashby, a most gallant officer, is covering our

⁸⁰ Col. G. F. R. Henderson, *The Civil War: A Soldier’s View*, ed. Jay Luvaas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 152.

⁸¹ Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson, *Attack and Die: Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1982), 188.

⁸² Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 95.

retreat.” Days later, Kirkpatrick was saddened when his regiment learned about the death of Ashby. For the men of the 16th Mississippi Infantry, he was more than just an ordinary officer. Kirkpatrick wrote, “The noble Ashby was killed this evening in a skirmish. His daring charges on his milk white stead [sic], his chivalrous and romantic disposition, his sublime courage had won to his admiration all who knew him. We hear of his death with melancholy regret. Brave hero!”⁸³

General Stonewall Jackson was also very highly respected, even when the soldiers did not know where they were marching to and Jackson was the only one that knew. For the soldiers, “it looked like madness to march away from our supplies and support, but we had learned to obey and to blindly follow.”⁸⁴ When the General was shot in a misunderstanding when he was riding back to the lines, soldiers and officers alike felt the loss. LeGrand James Wilson wrote about General Jackson and how “A great man had fallen, and every soldier in the army of Northern Virginia felt it, and no one felt it more keenly than the commanding General.”⁸⁵ Officers relied on the soldiers’ confidence in them, and, “No man in the Confederacy can ever gain the confidence of the people so entirely as Jackson does. Hence no one can fill his place,” stated a soldier in Stonewall Jackson’s regiment.⁸⁶

General Robert E. Lee was also held in high esteem by the soldiers and still is one of the most studied Generals of the Civil War. Soldiers believed in what General Lee did and followed because he “knows what he is doing.”⁸⁷ Even when Mississippi was being overrun by Union

⁸³ James Johnson Kirkpatrick diary June 2, 1862 then June 6, 1862. Evans, *the 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 77-78.

⁸⁴ Wert, *A Brotherhood of Valor*, 140.

⁸⁵ LeGrand James Wilson, *The Confederate Soldier*, 109.

⁸⁶ Wert, *A Brotherhood of Valor*, 79.

⁸⁷ Clinden Black to mother, June 28, 1863. Bettersworth and Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 163.

forces, many men fell back “to Virginia and claime [sic] protection under Lee and his army.”⁸⁸ Troops all over the South respected General Lee and were willing to die for him.⁸⁹ During the war the army under Robert E. Lee inflicted 134,602 casualties on Union forces. With his eagerness to be on the offensive, he caused 121,042 of his own men to be casualties of the Civil War. It is interesting to look at how people respected him so much even when he put so many of his own men to death. When looking at the percentages of men in his own army lost in battles and campaigns compared to those of his opponent, Robert E. Lee lost 4.8 percent more of his army than he inflicted on the enemy. This was one of the biggest differences on the Confederate side; only John Bell Hood and John C. Pemberton did worse (John Bell Hood lost a little fewer than 30,000 men, which is about 24% less than Robert E. Lee even though his difference was 13.7% about his men. John C. Pemberton was the worst only because of Vicksburg, where 29,396 troops did not die, but surrendered).⁹⁰ Even with the sacrifice of his soldiers, Robert E. Lee was respected by men on both sides.

The soldiers in the Army of Tennessee were not as lucky as those in the Army of Northern Virginia. Though commanders like Johnston and Forrest were loved by the troops, Bragg and Hood were thought of much differently. During the later years of the war when General Braxton Bragg and John B. Hood were in charge of the Army of Tennessee, soldiers and even newspapers would criticize them. Cooper and Kimball, editors of *Mississippians* wrote about their two leaders and wished they had a different commander. “Send us a man we all can

⁸⁸ Alfred Jones to wife, February 29, 1864. IBID, 168.

⁸⁹ In *Mississippi in the Confederacy* on page 198-199, there is a unique story that no one know is true about Robert E. Lee and a Mississippi Sergeant. While the Mississippi Sergeant was out looking for shoes, a bunch of Virginia cavalry man rode up and called the man a straggler and threaten him with severe punishments. The soldier in return yelled at the cavalry man telling him how he fought yesterday while they hid behind during the battle and only ventured out when the battle was done to call other people stragglers. The cavalry man would just laugh and ride away. As the infantry formed back together, one of the men asked the Sergeant if he knew who he was talking to. The Sergeant answered “Yes-to a cowardly Virginia cavalryman.” The soldier would reply, “No, sir- that’s General Lee.”

⁹⁰ McWhiney and Jamieson, *Attack and Die*, 22-23.

trust,” they wrote, “Beauregard, Hill, or Longstreet- and confidence will be restored and all will fight to the death for Mississippi.”⁹¹

Bragg was criticized throughout the war for falling back many times instead of fighting. In a campaign in Kentucky, many did not understand his actions and thought that he never knew what he was doing.⁹² In many battles, the Confederates had the upper hand, but lost the battle because of Bragg’s poor leadership. A Tennessee soldier reminiscence about how “we captured the battery . . . of course Bragg lost. Nothing more could be expected of Mr. know all.”⁹³ Other commanders, Van Dorn and Kirby Smith were also held in the same regarded as Bragg by most soldiers.⁹⁴ When the news about Van Dorn’s death hit the Army of Northern Virginia, a Mississippian happily responded “I was glad to hear Van Dorn was killed. The Confederacy would have been a great deal better off if he had been killed twelve months ago.”⁹⁵ Just like Bragg and the others, Hood was not liked by most soldiers:

“The army is very much dissatisfied with Genl. Hood and I fear will never be the efficient arm of defense under him... Still it is our duty to render obedience to the constituted authorities and to “hold up” Genl. Hood’s hands in the hope that something advantageous will eventually turn up.”⁹⁶

Though soldiers wrote about how Bragg and Hood thought they were better and higher than their men, they grew to love Joseph E. Johnston and Nathan Bedford Forrest.⁹⁷ As one

⁹¹ Cooper and Kimball editors “Mississippi”. Bettersworth and Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 121.

⁹² Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 267. Though some believe that Bragg’s retreat was unwise, the author of this book felt that it was not. The issue at Harrodsburg and his indecisions on future moves and whether to retreat or fight may have been false claims for he found orders of retreat from Bragg even before they reached the town.

⁹³ Theodore Harris, *TVQ*

⁹⁴ Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 193. Kirby Smith would sometimes picture himself as Cortez or even Moses while his men were Israelites from Egypt.

⁹⁵ Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 160. Van Dorn was shot and killed in Spring Hill, Tennessee on May 8, 1863. Before his death, he served in the Mexican War and Seminole War. He took over the Army of the West in the early part of the war, but after the loss of Corinth, was transferred to command the cavalry.

⁹⁶ William L. Nugent to wife Sept 10 1864 after Sherman cut Army of Tennessee in two. Bettersworth and Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 173.

⁹⁷ Bailey, *Class and Tennessee’s Confederate Generation*, 90.

Tennessean stated, “We . . . feared Gen Bragg and almost *Worshipped* Joseph E. Johnston.”⁹⁸ For men like Theodore Harris and others in company C of the 8th Tennessee Infantry, they “would have gone into hell if he [Gen. Johnston] had said the word go.”⁹⁹ When Johnston was replaced by Hood, soldiers were outraged by President Davis. A Tennessee soldier called his President a fool for his decision and said it would demoralize the Army because “all the men . . . Hood failed to see slaughtered at the battle of Atlanta on the 22nd of July 1864 he got rid of at the Battle of Franklin Tenn in his . . . attempt to immortalize himself.”¹⁰⁰ Not only were they outraged, they were sad to see their leader that they respected so much leave. This just depressed them more, and many men sent much respected notes of appreciation or even cried due to the news.¹⁰¹

One of the most honorable Generals in the Western Theater, in the eyes of the soldiers, was Nathan Bedford Forrest. As John Crofford stated, General Forrest was “One of the greatest [t] Generals of all . . . he was always at the front when the battle was on,” for “he knew no fear.”¹⁰² The men followed him throughout the whole war as he constantly harassed Union troops and supply lines. Just like General Lee and Jackson in the Army of Northern Virginia, Forrest motivated soldiers to fight rather than flee. Robert Street wrote about his commander, “jeneral N.B. Forrest one of the gratest men the sun ever shined upon [.] he never war the man to fall back and say go ahead men [.] it was follow me boys[.] he was a kind harted Christian jentleman.”¹⁰³

Generals played an important role in soldiers’ morale and motivation to fight. In both armies, Generals like Forrest, Lee, Jackson, and Johnston gained the respect of their troops,

⁹⁸ T.R. Ford, *TVQ*.

⁹⁹ Theodore Harris, *TVQ*.

¹⁰⁰ Bailey, *Class and Tennessee’s Confederate Generation*, 92-93.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 423.

¹⁰² John Crofford, *TVQ* and M.B. Dinwiddie, *TVQ*.

¹⁰³ Robert Street, *TVQ*

which gave the men reason to fight and trust their lives to a single man's orders. While the war had many great commanders, the armies in the West saw their fair share of inadequate leaders. These commanders lost the confidence in many of their troops, which in return hurt the cause. Though the Generals were different for both sides, their role in the Confederacy played an important part for soldiers all over the South.

Winning Changes Everything

*"Ain't we in a hell of a fix: a one-eyed President, a one-legged general, and a one-horse Confederacy!"*¹⁰⁴-Unknown Confederate Soldier

Soldiers in the Confederacy marched off to war to unite with their Southern brethren from all over the South. Though their families and lifestyles were back in their states, they willingly joined a cause that was much bigger than an allegiance to one's state; they joined the fight with those that had common interests throughout the land and believed in the Confederacy: States' rights and individual liberties; protection of family; and to defend the honor of themselves and their heritage. Many soldiers "saw the elephant" and came home changed men with nightmares from their experiences.¹⁰⁵ Even with the hardships, soldiers from all over the South carried on throughout the whole war fighting for the similar beliefs among them. Soldiers like Harry Lewis in the 16th Mississippi Infantry continued to stand for what they believed in, even when victory seemed like a lost cause. They vowed, "Never to lay down my rifle as long as a Yankee remains

¹⁰⁴ Wright, *The Oxford Dictionary of Civil War Quotations*, 13. The quote was uttered by a Confederate soldier after the defeat of Hood's army in the battle of Nashville in December 1864. The moment about the one-eyed President deals with the Confederate President Jefferson Davis because he was virtually blind in one eye. The one-legged general refers to General Hood who lost a leg in the battle of Chickamauga.

¹⁰⁵ Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry*, xvii. The phrase, "see the elephant" was used by many soldiers. The book mentions that it deals with participating in a battle. While Gerald Conti wrote in the *Civil War Times Illustrated* June 1984 that the phrase deals more with the overall experiences of the war and soldering.

on *Southern* soil,” and many of them did just that until the last few days of the war.¹⁰⁶ The suffering encountered through battles, campaigns, and disease bonded soldiers together to form a brotherhood with those from all over the country.¹⁰⁷ Though issues occurred throughout the South that provided different experiences with soldiers including leadership, religion, and sectionalism, the majority of the soldiers in the Confederacy held the same beliefs about the cause.¹⁰⁸ For many men, the cause was worth dying for because it was a fight “for our *national* rights,” a Tennessean soldier remarked, “we will fight them [Yankees] until Dooms Day or have our independence.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Harry Lewis to Mrs. Nancy Lewis on August 9th 1862. Evans, *the 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 97.

¹⁰⁷ William Hunter, *Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires* (Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1985). In his remarks about disease, he would state that it “ran riot among the soldiers taking more than were slain by bullets... Chronic Diarhea was the most dreaded disease in the Army.”

¹⁰⁸ Though desertion was present throughout the war, during the end of the war, more men than usually left when all seemed to be lost. Once the soldiers knew that they could not change the outcome “men lost heart... and were going home every night” for they “all knew that when the campaigns opened in the Spring, General Lee would be compelled to surrender... the men were very badly discouraged, low spirited; [and] they did not care to be killed for no purpose.” James Bradshaw, *TVQ*. For more information about Confederate morale, Bell I. Wiley developed a chart called “Curve of Confederate Morale,” which goes through the war and lists where their morale was high and low and what caused the changes. McWhiney and Jamieson in *Attack and Die* on page xiv mention it also.

¹⁰⁹ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 97.

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