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The Chorus of Disapproval: The Battle of St. Paul's and Women's Protest in Occupied New Orleans

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The Chorus of Disapproval:
The Battle of St. Paul's and Women's
Protest in Occupied New Orleans

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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in
History

by

Denice Jo Richard

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Abstract

Although scholars have explored women's public resistance in occupied cities during the Civil War, few have explored women in occupied New Orleans. Studies have been limited to the rambunctious activities of women in the city streets, armed with sharp tongues. The use of private spaces, specifically religious spaces, as a platform for protest, has not been explored. By analyzing the events surrounding the closure of an uptown church on October of 1862, known as "The Battle of Saint Paul's," this thesis will address Confederate female activism and protest to Union occupation in New Orleans. It will do so by examining competing press accounts as well as a song inspired by the event. For its female members, the church was the last community-held space in the city. The women of St. Paul's fought Union control of the only public space that afforded them a degree of autonomy within occupied New Orleans.

Union occupation, female activism, The Battle of St. Paul's, religious protest, Confederacy

Introduction

He has called our wives “She-adders,”
And he shall feel their sting,
For the voice of outraged woman
Through every land shall ring.¹
-“*The Battle of St. Paul’s*” 1862

Written to be sung by Confederate soldiers, “The Battle of St. Paul’s” was a tribute to the outspoken female congregants of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in New Orleans. It tells the story of how the women of that congregation protested the efforts of U.S. Army General Benjamin Butler and his officers to tamp out persistent Confederate sympathies in occupied New Orleans. On Sunday morning, October 12, 1862, in an uptown church, as the Reverend Charles Goodrich prayed in front of his parishioners, the service was abruptly halted by Union Major George Strong. Strong accused Goodrich of omitting a prayer for the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, and encouraging his flock to silently pray for the Confederate President, Jefferson Davis. As Strong ordered the church closed, the women in the pews spoke out in a chorus of protest as they took to their feet. The New Orleans *Daily Delta* (which was, by then, under the control of federal authorities) described the scene as follows, with special attention given to the women present:

Of course there was some stir. Of course Southern gentlemen were indignant. Of course they pulled up their shirt collars, exchanged glances with the indignant Southern ladies, but the men were as mute as fish, and stationary as the statue of JACKSON in the square yonder. The ladies however, flocked around the Major, who was attired in citizen’s clothes, and shaking their very large fists at him, characterized him in such terms as, ‘Oh, you monster of cruelty!’ and then, turning to the livid minister, cried out ‘Good-bye,’ ‘Good-bye,’ and some of them ejaculated wildly.²

¹*The Battle of St. Paul’s* 1862.

<http://louisdl.louislibraries.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/AAW/id/344/rec/1>

² “Embalming A Fly,” *The Daily Delta*, October 19, 1862.

The *Delta's* account of St. Paul's closing and removal of Rev. Goodrich was reprinted in newspapers across the United States, from Philadelphia to San Francisco. The retelling gave the women a masculine brash quality, while the men appeared anesthetized, "mute as fish." The account also questioned whether the responsibility of a church leader lay with his country or his parish. Newspapers from the East to the West Coast dramatized and circulated the incident and the reactions of the female congregation for two months. The *San Francisco Bulletin*, for instance, ran an article on the episode on November 29, 1862 titled "Queer Scenes in New Orleans."³

The Battle of St. Paul's has remained a footnote in the history of Union occupation of the city, understood largely as a reflection of the local citizenry's opposition to federal control and surveillance. Existing scholarship on the topic of Union occupation and the female citizens of New Orleans exists but is limited mainly to General Butler's famous "Woman Order" (Order No. 28).⁴ The effectiveness of the order on quelling the female population is addressed in Alecia P. Long's essay, (Mis)Remembering General Order No.28. Long states that it was Butler's manipulation of his recollections of the Order's effectiveness that perpetually downplayed the role women held in occupied New Orleans. Butler "self-consciously sought to shape the historical memory" of the Order's effectiveness.⁵ By Butler insisting that the Order stopped all female protest in its tracks he not only secured his memory as an effective Union general but he

³ "Queer Scenes in New Orleans," *The San Francisco Bulletin*, November 29, 1862.

⁴ As the officers and soldiers of the United States have been subject to repeated insults from women (calling themselves ladies) of New Orleans, in return for the most scrupulous non-interference and courtesy on our part, it is ordered that hereafter when any female shall, by word, gesture, or movement, insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States, she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation. United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion Series 1 Vol.15 Chapter 27* (Gettysburg: The National Historical Society, 1972), 426.

⁵ Alecia P. Long, "(Mis)Remembering General Order No.28" in *Occupied Women*, ed. LeeAnn Whites and Alecia P. Long (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 17.

also dismisses the impact of female resistance in New Orleans.

Mary P. Ryan also addresses female public resistance in New Orleans and the female response to Order No.28 in her book *Women In Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880*. Ryan states that although Order No. 28 reduced female resistance in New Orleans it did not stop it entirely. Ryan frames women's continued protest in New Orleans as "ceremonial" and merely fought from the "the margins of public life."⁶ This idea however lessens female resistance in New Orleans by reducing the impact of the female political voice. Ryan briefly addresses the Battle of St. Paul's in her chapter, "Of Handkerchiefs, Brickbats, and Women's Rights" and dubs it as a "symbolic victory."⁷ Ryan's focus on female resistance in New Orleans centers mainly around street activism and the impact on the male-dominated sphere that exists in public. But the Battle of St. Paul's was a contest over not just public space, but *sacred* space. For this reason, it sheds light on a somewhat neglected facet of daily life in the occupied South and complicates the sense of violation that white Southerners felt during the Civil War. The Union recognized the psychological toll exacted on white Southerners—especially women—through the violations of their private, domestic spaces and justified these violations by the labeling of civilian Confederate loyalist as "combatants."⁸

While the gendered nature of this violation is evident in accounts of the invasion and destruction of women's homes, few historians have explored the Northern invasion of houses of worship. By examining the Battle of St. Paul's, this sense of violation experienced by white Southerners, especially females, becomes more evident. White Southern females took notice of the Union's strategy of invading private spaces and in turn, they resisted these invasions by

⁶ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 146.

⁷ Ibid.,145.

⁸ Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 75.

strengthening their resolve and support for the Confederacy.⁹ In the pews of St. Paul's, instead of helpless, violated women, we see the opposite: women warriors on the occupied home front.

The Battle of St. Paul's was particularly useful to Confederate loyalists in the aftermath of the controversy over Order No. 28, enacted in response to public, allegedly unladylike protests of New Orleans women against the occupation of Federal troops. In addition to dropping contents of a chamber pot from a balcony onto Admiral David Farragut passing below, some women also spat on Union soldiers and refused to share sidewalks and street cars with them.¹⁰ In his correspondence with Secretary of War, E.M. Stanton, Butler insisted: "No.28 became an absolute necessity from the outrageous conduct of the secession women here, who took every means of insulting my soldiers and inflaming the mob."¹¹ Perhaps the most indelible account of the "Woman Order" controversy was a cartoon that appeared in *Harper's Weekly*, offering a "before and after" view of the city's white female citizenry [Figure 1]. Whereas the *Daily Delta* portrayed the women of St. Paul's as aggressive and, again, unladylike, the story Confederates told to themselves about the incident polished the tarnished image of the women of New Orleans. In contrast to the women rendered in *Harper's*, the upstanding and church-going women of St. Paul's were the exemplars of Christian Confederate womanhood.

As portrayed in Confederate renderings, by defending their church and their pastor, the women of St. Paul's reclaimed the mantle of respectability and morality for the women of New

⁹ Lisa Tendrich Frank, "Bedrooms as Battlefields" in *Occupied Women*, ed. LeeAnn Whites and Alecia P. Long (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 43.

¹⁰ Although popular belief is that the insult of throwing chamber pots on passing Union soldiers was a common practice, there was actually only one recorded incident involving Admiral Farragut and a woman who dumped the contents of a "vessel" on him as he walked below. Alecia P. Long suggests in her article "General Butler and the Women" printed in *The New York Times*, that writers have turned the "vessel" into a chamber pot.

¹¹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion Series 1 Vol.15 Chapter 27* (Gettysburg: The National Historical Society, 1972), 423.

Orleans. Both versions of the story used caricatured representations of women to send a political message, from opposing sides. Yet they nonetheless reveal the political importance of Confederate women's faith-based activism.



Figure 1 – *Harper's Weekly* July 12, 1862

In fact, the sacred space of St. Paul's church became an additional front in the ongoing battle between Confederate loyalists and Union officials on October 12, 1862. For middle-class women in the antebellum period, North and South, churches were places in which they could both direct and participate in the benevolent labors of their denomination. They were places of sanctioned activism and leadership for women. Giselle Roberts states the importance church played in the development of identity of young women in the South in her book the *Confederate Belle*. Roberts states that a woman's "enlightenment and religious thought" secured her place

among the social order of the upper class.¹² Religious studies and piety were integral to the upbringing of young girls. These traits allowed girls to grow into the moral compass of their future family. Idealized Southern women possessed an innate sense of goodness and served as a perfect moral vessel of proper Christina values. The strength of their religious faith assured women a place in society. Churches also gave female congregants a semi-autonomous voice within Southern patriarchal society. In her essay, “Without Pilot or Compass: Elite Women and Religion in the Civil War South,” Drew Gilpin Faust writes, that upper class white women found a new public identity within the church, away from the direct scrutiny of men.¹³ With New Orleans under occupation, the church was the one area where female congregants still maintained some level of control. The religious community of St. Paul’s provided them a safe haven from the occupying “invaders.” Although by definition a public space, behind church walls women were safe from the oppressions, both real and perceived, brought forth by the occupying troops. For its female members, St. Paul’s Church was the last community-held space in occupied New Orleans. With the invasion of this space that October morning, the women of St. Paul’s quickly assumed the role of warriors in the name of the Confederacy.

¹² Giselle Roberts. *The Confederate Belle*. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 20. Roberts focuses on the church as a social aspect of life for white upper class women in the South. Church was integral to the socialization and grooming of young Southern women.

¹³ Drew Gilpin Faust. “Without Pilot or Compass: Elite Women and Religion in the Civil War South” in *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout and Charles Regan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 251.

Religion and the Building of Confederate Nationalism

Southern churches like St. Paul's had taken on renewed importance within their communities with the start of the Civil War in 1861. Religion quickly became a vital component in the construction of Southern branded patriotism, with Confederate nationalism often relying on Southerner Christian faith to fashion a coherent ideology. Using the pulpit as an outlet of propaganda, Southern planting elite employed clergy to unite classes in the South and to expand on the ideals of Confederate nationalism. According to Drew Gilpin Faust, "Confederate nationalism became a hybrid of elite purpose and popular influence."¹⁴ "The Cause" depended on the rapid construction of a Southern branded patriotism, built largely off the perceived religious righteousness of their position. The use of religion further cemented the growth and momentum behind the building of Confederate nationalism. Each week, clergymen reinforced the sentiment of Confederate leaders and bolstered the patriotic resolve of their parishioners from the pulpit.

As the war progressed, Confederate leaders framed it as a righteous battle taken by a chosen people against an enemy with no moral standing. Southern clergy, too, seized upon Biblical justification for Confederate military action, some going so far as to liken the conflict to that of a war fought between "Christ and Anti-Christ."¹⁵ Other pastors compared themselves to the Israelites and opened their sermons with the first chapter of *Jeremiah*:¹⁶

Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the

¹⁴ Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 14.

¹⁵ Eugene D. Genovese, "Religion in the Collapse of the American Union" in *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout and Charles Regan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 80.

¹⁶ Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, 29.

entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.¹⁷

Through skillful navigation and careful employment of choice Bible passages, church leaders were able to rationalize Confederate victories as well as defeats. Confederate political leaders drew upon the Bible to gather support for the cause as well. The carefully crafted interpretations of scripture by both political and religious leaders quickly demonized the North while placing the Confederate cause on moral high ground. Southerners developed the notion that they were on a righteous path laid out by God himself. Some clergy even perpetuated the idea that the South was yet an innocent victim in the war. On February 28 1862, Rev. R.H. Lafferty of North Carolina preached to his congregation of Sugar Creek during a Fast-Day sermon, “We, my hearers, citizens of these Confederate States, are engaged in a terrible war, in self defense. It is a war, not of our seeking, but forced upon us.”¹⁸ Victimizing the South as the innocent people of God further vilified the North. The continuous inculcation of these notions fostered and furthered fledgling patriotism among the Confederate states.

Women’s Roles in Confederate Nationalism

White male Confederate sympathizers were not the only ones to hear the rallying cry of the new Confederate Nation. Southern white women also took to the fervor perpetuated by political and religious leaders. Prior to the war, the realm of electoral politics was closed off to women. Societal standards of the antebellum South upheld to the notion that respectable white women were pious, humble, and virtuous. A woman of proper standing’s whole lot in life was to be the enforcer of religious faith, the familial caretaker, and the guardian of the family’s

¹⁷ *Jeremiah* 1:14-1:16, <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Jeremiah-Chapter-1/>

¹⁸ Rev. R.H. Lafferty, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/lafferty/lafferty.html> (accessed January 5,2014).

reputation in society. She was to be moral, loyal and refined. According to Carroll Smith-Rosenberg in *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, middle-class men fostered this ideal by discouraging women's work outside the home. Men in this emerging class were able to socially restrain women by "economic discrimination" which resigned them to the "kitchen and nursery."¹⁹ This ideal left little to no room for a woman to take part in political debate. Politics and political opinion were to be left to men; meaning women were not to extend their voice in matters outside their domestic spheres. The South, ruled by patriarchal ideals, defined the gender roles of Southern white females under this same pretense.

As war approached, gender roles began to shift with the birth of Confederate nationalism. These prevailing roles were further stretched and in some cases abandoned under enemy occupation. Women under Northern occupation dealt with a sense of loss and violation that persuaded them to break with antebellum social proscriptions. They became more outspoken as Southern society—particularly Southern cities—became mobilized for war and as daily life in the South became politicized. Some refused to conform to their pre-war roles by publicly protesting occupation and speaking out against Northern invaders, all the while giving little thought to the repercussions of such actions. These shifts gave white Southern women a greater sense of autonomy and assertiveness in public settings, particularly in the urban South. Urban settings afforded women with a greater opportunity to express political interests in public. Women were encouraged to attend and even participate in political rallies held in major cities such as New Orleans.²⁰

By intertwining politics and religion in the construction of Confederate nationalism,

¹⁹ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 13.

²⁰ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880*, 141.

women adopted new avenues into the male-dominated political sphere. From the pulpit, pastors preached the importance of secession. Women, being considered the moral compass and the monitor of their family's faith, embraced the message. Southern white women saw it as their duty to support the war effort by any means, even if it meant sacrificing a loved one for "The Cause." Many saw this type of sacrifice as a duty, and took it as being a privilege to serve their country. According to Drew Gilpin Faust, women were encouraged by Confederate publications to further the war effort by the "rationalization of female sacrifice and a silencing of women's direct interest in protecting husbands and sons."²¹ Women were urged to hide their feelings of grief and instead focus on the needs of their country. In this way, a sense of martyrdom was achieved. Women were to be the angelic spiritual heroes, whose sacrifice came in the truest form: sacrifice of their loved ones.

Based on statistics of war casualties, no one, North or South, was untouched by death. Recent research on Civil War casualty rates places the number of deaths from the war at 750,000 between years 1861 and 1865.²² This new statistic places the death toll twenty percent higher than originally thought, and would be the equivalent of seven million deaths in the United States today. Women faced rising death tolls of loved ones who were casualties of both war and disease on the home front.²³ Many clung to their religious faith to reconcile the carnage of war and to seek spiritual strength when faced with the horror of reality. As war brought death to nearly

²¹ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 17.

²² Guy Gugliotta, "New Estimate Raises Civil War Death Toll," *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com (accessed May 4, 2014).

²³ In her book, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, Drew Gilpin Faust addresses the ways the country was faced with death on a large scale. Faust explains that although death-and the culture associated with it-has always been a fact of human life, it was the amount of it seen during the war that fostered a "new relationship" with people of the nineteenth century. Faust focuses on not only casualties of the battlefield, but casualties of civilians as well.

every household, many women clung deeply to their faith. Churches existed as outlets for their grief, strengthening their resolve through means such as the Christian belief of reuniting with loved ones in the after life.

Administering charities and benevolent societies gave affluent Southern white women the opportunity to play an indirect yet significant role in wartime communities. Women busied themselves with domestic duties as a way to distract them from the tragedy of war and to further Confederate war efforts. Giselle Roberts terms this as “domestic patriotism.”²⁴ Advertisements ran in local papers to bolster support for sewing societies across the South. *The Macon Daily Telegraph* of Georgia called to “arms” the ladies of Macon and Bibb County. The Soldiers Relief Society, founded on April 27, 1861, was calling for all available hands to sew winter clothing for troops as a “labor of love.”²⁵ The article goes on to tie in the idea of self-sacrifice as well as the unity of the Christian cause. “There are from this county regiment of loyal sons, as self-sacrificing and well drilled as the Southern Confederacy has furnished. Is there not an equal number of mothers, wives, sisters ladies’ love who are ready with willing hands and prayerful hearts to unit as a band of sisters to provide for their necessities and invoke Heaven’s blessings?”²⁶

Women of the South gave momentum to the Southern Cause with their involvement in churches. Churches reinforced the idea of tying together politics and religion to further Confederate efforts as well as existing as an invaluable social network. It is in this light that we may view the Battle of St. Paul’s. By focusing through the lens of gender constraints as well as understanding the construction of Southern branded patriotism, we are able to gain insight from

²⁴ Giselle Roberts, *The Confederate Belle*, 47.

²⁵ “Attention, Ladies-Recruits called for the Soldiers Relief Society,” *The Macon Daily Telegraph*, Macon, Georgia July, 6, 1861.

²⁶ Ibid.

their reactions to the closing of the church. It allows for an understanding of the passion they displayed in protesting the invasion, and the eventual loss of their sacred, female-dominated space.

Episcopalian Churches Prior to Occupation



Figure 2- Photograph of St. Paul's Church circa 1950's prior to relocation.

Louisiana's Episcopal churches caused a stir the year before Union General Benjamin Butler's arrival, by being the first Episcopal diocese to secede from the national organization. In January of 1861, Bishop Leonidas Polk of Louisiana declared that the Episcopal churches of the state would secede from the General Convention.²⁷ Soon after, other Southern bishops followed, declaring their churches separate from the North. The General Convention, which is the governing body of the church, never accepted the declaration of secession. Southern dioceses

²⁷ Joseph Blount Cheshire, *The church in the Confederate States: A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1912), 13.

were still called upon when a governing decision needed to be made and were merely considered “temporarily absent “ during the General Convention held during the war.²⁸ Polk, along with the other Southern bishops, formed the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Confederate States of America. Re-writing the original *Book of Common Prayer*, Polk and others replaced prayers for the President of the United States with prayers for the President of the Confederate States. This undoubtedly marked St. Paul’s, as well as other Episcopal churches of New Orleans, as potential troublemakers as the city fell under Occupation.

Though a prominent institution by 1861, St. Paul’s Church had very modest beginnings. The church got its start in the latter part of 1836 when Rev. J.T. Wheat was sent to New Orleans as a missionary. Wheat was familiar with the area, as he had convalesced in the city during a mild outbreak of smallpox earlier that year. Wheat was sent to establish a parish in the “upper portion” of New Orleans. In a schoolroom close to present day Lee Circle, the first sermon was held in November of 1836. The following year, services were held in a warehouse on Julia Street before then moving to Camp Street. It was during this year that the Parish was organized, becoming the third oldest Protestant Parish in the state.²⁹ \$40,000 was pledged by prominent members of the parish to erect a permanent building. The financial panic of 1837 rendered many of the wealthy congregants unable to contribute to the building fund, thus leaving the parish without a permanent structure and, soon after, without a pastor as well.³⁰ With the arrival of Rev. Charles Goodrich in 1838, the congregation renewed its building plans and a church was erected in 1839 on Camp and Gaiennie streets, the present day intersection of Camp and Clio

²⁸ James Dator and Jan Nunley, *Many Parts, One Body: How the Episcopal Church Works* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2010), 121.

²⁹ Edwin Belknap, *A History of Saint Paul’s Protestant Episcopal Church November 1836 to 1926* (New Orleans: Hauset Printing Company, 1926), 11.

³⁰ In 1838 Rev. Wheat left during this time and took another position in Nashville, TN.

streets. Goodrich was respected and well liked by his congregation, and served as rector from 1838 till 1868.³¹

According to the Church's official history, among St. Paul's members, female congregants held a special place in the church. Women were contributors to the financial stability of the church in its beginnings. They contributed by raising funds through the Ladies Sewing Circle and selling their products at fairs. They raised \$2,200 in 1843 and made significant monetary contributions throughout the years.³² The contributions of female parishioners were not over looked in the writing of the history of the church in 1926. "The history of St. Paul's is full of instances of the constant and energetic and mighty efforts of the Faithful Women of the Congregation, and of the practical and substantial aid rendered and results achieved."³³

Due to a fire in 1891, relocation to Lakeview in the 1950's, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005, church records or directories no longer exist from the nineteenth century. However, we can get an idea of the make up of St. Paul's congregation by what is known about the demographics of the neighborhood. Between the years 1825 and 1850, Northerners flocked to the port city of New Orleans, with the majority coming from the states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.³⁴ We see an influx of Anglo-Americans moving to the New Orleans area, bringing with them their Protestant denominations as they settled in neighborhoods above Canal Street.

³¹ Under Goodrich, an improved secondary structure was built in 1853 on the same location and stood till a fire destroyed the building in 1891. The church was rebuilt after the fire and stood on the Camp and Gaiennie location until the 1950's, when it was moved to Lakeview due to the expansion of the Mississippi River Bridge.

³² Belknap, *A History of Saint Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church November 1836 to 1926*, 16.

³³ Ibid., 15.

³⁴ Joseph G. Tregle Jr. "Creoles and Americans" in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press: 1992), 155.

From this new population, Protestant churches sprung up around the Uptown area, St. Paul's Episcopal being one of them.³⁵

The migration of Anglo-Americans was due in large part to the economic prosperity and opportunities the port city of New Orleans offered in the nineteenth century. New Orleans was noted as a "chief citadel of southern merchant capitalism" because of its location on the Mississippi River.³⁶ The city being situated on the river offered logistical ease for import and export, which allowed a flourishing trade between the United States and European countries. Northern merchants developed strong ties to the planting class in Louisiana and the surrounding Southern states. These relationships sometimes developed beyond commercial relationships and resulted in marriages between Northern merchants and the daughters of the Southern planting elite.³⁷ These newly forged familial relationships as well as the belief that an independent South would afford more direct trade with Europe caused Northern-born merchants to sympathize with secessionists.

Butler's Strategies for Occupation

While native Creole populations tried to maintain their Catholic European culture, the influx of Anglo-Americans transformed the spatial and cultural landscape of New Orleans.

³⁵ A marriage announcement in *The Daily True Delta* on April 23, 1862 gives information on two members of St. Paul's Church. The marriage of Helen H. Gillingham to George Coppel was officiated by Rev. Goodrich at St. Paul's Church. Helen Gillingham was the daughter of Harper Gillingham, who sat on the Special Committee of Board of Directors for New Orleans Public schools in 1856. George Coppel was the acting British consul in New Orleans in 1862.

³⁶ Scott P. Marler. *The Merchant's Capital: New Orleans and the Political Economy of the Nineteenth-Century South*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 16. Some Northern transplants to the city sympathized and sided with the South. Marler focuses mainly on the merchant class and their loyalties to the planting elite. This, he points out, was easier because merchants had more invested in the way of social ties. He also argues that many merchants began investing their own funds in agricultural ventures to diversify their earning potential. This of course strengthened their personal investment in supporting secession.

³⁷ Ibid, 125.

Tensions rose in the early part of the 1830's between Creoles and Anglos as Anglo populations gained financial and eventually political pull.³⁸ New Orleans faced these growing pains on the heels of the Civil War, adding another facet to the complexity of Butler's task in subjugating an enemy territory. Facing resistance, along with the logistical difficulties that come with occupying an enemy territory, Butler enacted several General Orders as tactical measures aimed at controlling the civilian populace during Federal occupation.

With the surrender of the city, Union leaders were in fear of New Orleans churches becoming a hotbed of secessionist activity. Butler took swift action upon arriving in New Orleans to address the issue of churches that supported the Confederacy. Butler enacted General Order No. 27 on May 13, 1862. The order was written to quell Confederate patriotism in congregations that observed Confederate-decreed and clergy-supported fasts in support of the Southern effort. Jefferson Davis called for a day of fasting and prayer nine different times during his presidency of the Confederate States of America. To regain favor with God, he called upon all Confederate citizens to do their spiritual part to further the war effort.

Order No. 27 stated:

It having come to the knowledge of the commanding general that Friday next is proposed to be observed as a day of fasting and prayer, in obedience to some supposed proclamation of one Jefferson Davis, in the several churches of this city, it is ordered that no such observance be had. Churches and religious houses are to be kept open as in time of profound peace, but no religious exercises are to be had upon the supposed authority above mentioned. By command of Major-General Butler:

Geo. C. Strong
Assistant Adjutant-General.³⁹

No. 27 was written to address all churches of the city. However, Butler went a step

³⁸ Tregle, *Creoles and Americans*, 156.

³⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion Series 1 Vol.25 Chapter 27*, 426.

further to write an order to deal specifically with the Episcopalian churches. Episcopal churches of Louisiana had already established themselves as supporters of the Confederacy with their secession from Northern churches in January of 1861. On September 29, 1862, G.F. Shepley, military governor of Louisiana, enacted Special Order No.33 under General Butler, as the Head of the Department of the Gulf. Special Order No.33 was enacted to restrain and possibly prevent any uprising staged through the Episcopal churches.

The omission in the service of the Protestant Episcopal Church in New Orleans of the prayer for the President of the United States and others in authority will be considered as evidence of hostility to the Government of the United States.

By order of BRIG.GEN. G.F. Shepley
Military Governor of Louisiana.
James F. Miller, Ass't Adj't General.⁴⁰

With the separation from the General Convention in 1861, New Orleans Episcopalian clergy argued it was their right under separation of church and state to continue to preach support for the Confederacy during church services. They refused to take orders from Northern church leaders and to pray for the Union president. In a response to Special Order No.33, on October 2, 1862, the clergy wrote a letter signed by members of every Episcopalian church in the city, ten days prior to the closing of St. Paul's. The clergy's response was posted in the *The Daily Delta* in an open letter on December 16, 1862.

In their letter to the military governor G.F. Shepley and to General Butler, the Episcopalian ministers of New Orleans refused to offer prayers for Union leaders, and instead cited their right to practice religion freely according to the Confederate Episcopalian diocese. They claimed Bishop Polk, the head of Louisiana Episcopalian diocese, forbade them to offer

⁴⁰ "General Butler and the Clergy of New Orleans," *The Daily Delta*, December 16, 1862.

prayer for Lincoln and Union leaders.⁴¹ They also asserted their right under Federal Law to continue to practice their religion freely. It was under their U.S. Constitutional rights that they argued justification in their refusal to partake in Union ordered prayer. “Your order No.33 conflicts with our canonical obligations and therefore we cannot obey it; but we solemnly protest against our disobedience being regarded as an evidence of hostility to the Government of the United States.”⁴² The solution agreed upon by the clergy was the complete omission of the prayer for national leaders. It was this omission that prompted Strong to close St. Paul’s during the Sunday service on October 12, 1862.

Services had started as usual on October 12, 1862 in the church on Camp Street. However, seated in the pews of St. Paul’s was Adjutant General Major George C. Strong. It is unknown if Strong was in attendance for his personal benefit of worship or there as a monitor of the clergy’s adherence to No. 33. Either way, as the Rev. Goodrich conducted the service, he omitted the prayer for President Lincoln. Strong took note of the omission but allowed the service to continue. It was not until the congregation fell silent and bowed as if to say a silent prayer that Strong stood and announced the closure of the church. The congregation, shocked by the abrupt announcement, began to voice their hostility and protest Strong’s proclamation.

Julia Le Grand, a prominent woman of New Orleans, reacted to the event in her diary. Le Grand recalled the retelling of the church closure as told to her by a member of the church. She wrote that Butler watched from his “residence” as the commotion developed in the church that Sunday morning. “It is said that Butler was gazing with the aid of a glass from his window; he had not then stolen Mrs. Campbell’s house and was residing in General Twiggs, and was

⁴¹ “General Butler and the Clergy of New Orleans,” *The Daily Delta*, December 16, 1862.

⁴² Ibid.

reported to have been highly amused...”⁴³ It is possible that Butler got wind of the situation unfolding and watched as the congregation exited the church. After arriving in New Orleans, Butler looked for a residence in the city that would in his mind be fit accommodations for the Head of the Department of the Gulf. General Butler settled on the mansion of Confederate General Twiggs. Twiggs mansion, located at 1115 Prytania in Uptown New Orleans, was within view of the church. Le Grand also mentions an exchange on the lawn of the church between the women and Major Strong. Le Grand writes that she was told that Strong threatened to bring artillery to the church to disperse the crowd after the closing. “An old lady made a protest by saying that she had as good a right as Butler himself to stand upon the banquette and that she would return home in her own time.”⁴⁴ This same exchange is also mentioned in the song lyrics.

Competing Accounts of the Battle of St. Paul’s

As with Le Grand’s recollections and retelling of the events that day, competing accounts emerged surrounding the closing of St. Paul’s Church. These contrasting testimonies give weight and justification to both Union and Confederate factions. A very distinct interpretation of the closing arose in the original article that first told the “tongue wagging” story of St. Paul’s, posted in *The Daily Delta* on October 19, 1862. The article, with the headline “Embalming A Fly,” written by a journalist simply known as Trelawny, reported the closing of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. Nothing is known about the author of the article and the name “Trelawny” was probably a pseudonym used to hide the identity of the actual author. It was in this article that America was first introduced to his version of the “rabbleroising” female congregation of St. Paul’s.

⁴³ Julia Le Grand Waitz, *The Journal of Julia Le Grand 1862-1863*, ed. Kate Mason Rowland and Agnes E. Browne Croxall (Richmond: Everett Waddey Company, 1911), 123. Le Grand was not a member of St. Paul’s church. She based her retelling on the remembrances of a friend.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 123.

Trelawny's article regarding the incident was reproduced and reported across the United States. It was through the dissemination of the information contained in his article that the female congregation of St. Paul's was portrayed in a negative light. Trelawny opened his article by painting the pastor of the church, Rev. Charles Goodrich, as an arrogant diehard secessionist who saw the pulpit as a social ladder in his community: "Dr. Goodrich is one of those persons who espouse the Episcopal Church because it is respectable—because it is likely, if he can win robes in it, to give him a social position, such as he had previously never known."⁴⁵ Overall, he represented the reverend as a social climber, and ascribed him traits hardly fit for a man of the cloth.

Trelawny goes further in his attack on Goodrich's character by portraying him not only as a robe grabber, but also as a ladies man who gallivants about the sewing circles of the church. As the journalist so colorfully puts it, "His next service to Almighty God is to become popular among the ladies—to be high in stitching circles and apple peeling associations."⁴⁶ In this respect, Trelawny's character assassination of Goodrich also becomes a belittlement of the value of charitable activities by female parishioners. Before he is finished, Trelawny derisively accuses Goodrich of being open to bribery, even when delivering funeral rites: "if the [deceased] had been rich, and left the pastor a quiet 'five thousand,' his rendition of the burial service would certainly be pushed to the clouds."⁴⁷ It is obvious from Trelawny's article that he was a Union supporter and disagreed with Goodrich's sympathy for the South. Goodrich was Northern born and is said to deny his Northern heritage by Trelawny. "He has said that if he knew there was a drop of Yankee blood in his veins, he would let it out. If such blood is to suffuse the earth

⁴⁵ "Embalming A Fly," *The Daily Delta*, October 19, 1862.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

anywhere, let it be sprinkled in a thistle bed, that asses may fatten upon the products of such manure.”⁴⁸ Goodrich, along with three other Episcopalian ministers, was relocated to Fort Lafayette in New York.⁴⁹ Trelawny applauds Butler’s removal and relocation of Goodrich to the North. However, in an article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* the clergy were said to have been “received with kindness and attention” by Northerners in New York.⁵⁰

Trelawny and other Union supporters saw the New Orleans Episcopal clergy as ardent, arrogant secessionists, hiding behind their Bibles to preach rebellion. They in turn saw their congregations as rebellious as well. Trelawny writes of Goodrich’s “muffled treason” preached to his “flock” on Sundays. Trelawny also renders the congregation of St. Paul as self-absorbed, and equates the Sunday service to an ice cream social in his article. “The young people adore such a pastor, because he never *bore*s them about the future, and never reminds them of anything higher or diviner than their own Sabbath morning appearance.”⁵¹ Trelawny’s portrayal of the congregation gives readers the idea of a young parish that focused on the purely social aspects of Sunday services, easily led by a manipulative man like Goodrich.

It was Trelawny’s portrayal of these female parishioners that gained national attention in his article. News of St. Paul’s closing and the removal of Rev. Goodrich was circulated in papers across the United States. These articles were partial reprints of the original article from the *Daily Delta*. However, they were not exact replicated re-running’s of the article in full. While many glossed over the actual reasons for the closing of the church, there was one aspect of Trelawny’s

⁴⁸ “Embalming A Fly,” *The Daily Delta*, October 19, 1862.

⁴⁹ “Additional From The North.” *Richmond Examiner*, November 18, 1862. Union officials also removed Rev. Fulton and Rev. Leacock from their congregations for omitting the prayer for President Lincoln and sent to Fort Lafayette in New York. The article has all three charged with being “disloyal Episcopal clergymen.”

⁵⁰ “Our New York Letter.” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 21, 1862.

⁵¹ “Embalming A Fly,” *The Daily Delta*, October 19, 1862.

article that showed up in articles from Philadelphia to San Francisco: the women's reaction to the closing and removal of Rev. Goodrich. The article gives a descriptive and sensational recount of the reactions to the closing of the church.

Twice in his article, Trelawny refers to the colorful language of St. Paul's "indignant Southern ladies." The portrait Trelawny painted of these brash New Orleans women helped the North to rationalize Butler's treatment of Southerners and the women of New Orleans. It all but justified Special Order No.28 and other harsh tactics as a way of dealing with ogre-like women and mealy-mouthed men. It cast the women of New Orleans as enemies of the state. These were not just women caught in a man's war, these were disobedient, vulgar, and potentially violent rebels that needed to be dealt with accordingly.

Though skillful in his negative portrayal of the women of St. Paul's Church, Trelawny's article had the opposite effect among Confederate supporters, who sympathized with these women. Confederate supporters rallied around the female congregation, equating the outcome of the "battle" to a Southern victory. Southern troops elevated the ladies of St. Paul's to the status of heroines. A song in praise of their bravery and support from the home front, written as a counterpoint to Butler's enforcement of General Order No.28, also appeared after the events at St. Paul's. The author of the song as well as the date the song was penned is unknown.⁵² The title of the song was coined as the "Battle of St. Paul's," and the female parishioners were portrayed in its lyrics as Confederate patriots fighting against crude Northern aggressors. The portrayal of women in the lyrics celebrated their resistance against the North. The opening lyrics even compare and contrast the event to the major battles of the war, such as the Battle of First

⁵² The song appears in Marion Southwood's book *Booty and Beauty* in 1867 as well as in the publication of *The Old Guard* from October 1866. The tune to which it was sung is also unknown.

Manassas. By comparing the female parishioner's protest to a Confederate victory, the women of St. Paul's fought in parallel with Southern troops. By describing women as Confederate female warriors, it not only counteracts their vulnerability against the Yankees but also feminizes the Union troops in the church that day by "ridiculing Yankee masculinity."⁵³

A metanarrative of helplessness under Union occupation, as well as the violation of the domestic sphere, is also portrayed in the lyrics. By referring to St. Paul's as a "house" of the Lord, and later having Strong insult the same space as an "impious nest," the song takes on an emotional tone among those of the faith.⁵⁴ The author of the song conveys the notion of an invasion into a domestic space where women and children are most vulnerable. "Up rose the congregation-We *men* were all away, and our wives and little children alone remained to pray."⁵⁵ The lyrics also express Butler and Strong as violating the concept of "refuge" the church provided from the invading North.⁵⁶

We know in darkest ages,
A church was holy ground,
Where from the hand of Justice
A refuge might be found;
And from the meanest soldier
To the highest in the land,
None dare to touch the fugitive
Who should within it stand,
'Twas left the beastly Butler
To violate its walls,
And to be known in future
As the victor of St. Paul's.⁵⁷

⁵³ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880*, 146. Ryan addresses the symbolism of "clothing" the role of masculine politics in "feminine garb." As the women assume this new role, it in turn feminizes their opponents.

⁵⁴ *The Battle of St. Paul's 1862*.

<http://louisdl.louislibraries.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/AAW/id/344/rec/1>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

With the sanctity of the church violated, and its most helpless parishioners left to defend against “beastly Yankees,” the lyrics evoked emotional resolve for Confederate troops and their cause. However, as the song continues, these “helpless females” emerge as capable foes of Butler and Strong.

But when has a Southern woman
Before a Yankee quailed?
And these with tongues undaunted
The Lincolnite assailed.
In vain he called his soldier-
Their darts around him flew,
And the *Strong* man then discovered
What a woman’s tongue can do.⁵⁸

As mentioned in Julia Le Grand’s retelling of the event, Strong threatens the congregation with the artillery as the angry parishioners assembled on the church lawn and sidewalk. The creator of the song has the women of St. Paul’s bravely taunting Strong as he calls for the artillery.

The gallant Yankee hero
Behind him all the while,
“You better bring a gunboat,
For that’s your winning card,”
Said a haughty little beauty,
as the *Strong* man called the guard⁵⁹

St. Paul’s female congregation was no longer the helpless, fairer sex who needed to hide behind their men. After their verbal attack on the Yankees, they were portrayed as capable and formidable enemies of Butler. Metaphorically, these women transformed into “brothers in arms,” doing their part to further the Confederate cause through courage and wit. The voice of

⁵⁸ *The Battle of St. Paul’s 1862.*

<http://louisdl.louislibraries.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/AAW/id/344/rec/1>

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the women of St. Paul's Church was celebrated and rallied behind in the song lyrics. Women were being praised for speaking out and utilizing a political voice for public protest. This was acceptable and encouraged in light of the situation. The commemoration of these female "combatants" gave other Confederate women across the South the permission to speak out against occupation in a very new and uncharacteristic way. Whereas Trelawny used female reaction and protest in the church that Sunday to portray women in an unbecoming light, Southern troops used it in a wholly opposite manner all to their advantage.

THE BATTLE OF ST. PAUL'S,

Fought in New Orleans, Sunday, October 12, 1862.

SUNG BY A LOUISIANA SOLDIER.

Come, boys, and listen while I sing
The greatest fight yet fought—
That time the hated Yankee
A real Tartar caught.
'Twas not the first Manassas,
Won by our Beauregard,
Nor Perryville, nor Belmont,
Though Peck then hit him hard ;
Nor was it famous Shiloh,
Where Sidney Johnston fell—
No, these were mighty battles,
But a greater I will tell.
'Twas fought on Sunday morning,
Within the Church's walls,
And shall be known in hist'ry
As the battle of St. Paul's.
The Yankee Strong commanded
For Butler the abhorr'd,
And the Reverend Mr. Goodrich
Bore the banner of the Lord.
The bell had ceased its tolling,
The service nearly done,
Th' Psalms and Lessons over,
The Lord's Pray'r just begun ;
When as the Priest and people
Said "Hallowed be Thy name,"
A voice in tones of thunder
His order did proclaim :
"As this house has been devoted
To Great Jehovah's praise,
And no prayer for Abra'm Lincoln
Within its walls you raise,
Therefore of rank Secession
It is an impious nest,
And I stop all further service,
And the clergyman arrest ;
And in the name of General Butler,
I order furthermore,
That this assembly scatter,
And the Sexton close the door."
Up rose the congregation—
We men were all away,
And our wives and little children
Alone remained to pray.
But when has Southern woman
Before a Yankee quailed ?
And these with tongues undaunted
The Lincolnite assailed.
In vain he called his soldiers—
Their darts around him flew,
And the Strong man then discovered
What a woman's tongue can do.
Some cried, "We knew that Butler
On babes and women warr'd,
But we did not think to find him
In the temple of the Lord."
Some pressed around their pastor,
Some on the villian gazed,
Who against the Lord's anointed
His dastard arm has raised.
Some said, "E'en to a Yankee
We would not do such wrong,
As to mistake another
For the gallant Major Strong ;

So we'll look upon the hero
Till his face we cannot doubt,"
While a stout old lady shouted,
"Do some one kick him out."
"Don't touch him," cried another,
"He is worthy of his Ruler,
For he fights with women braver
Than he fought at Ponchatoula."
But when the storm raged fiercest,
And hearts were all aflame,
Like oil on troubled waters,
The voice of blessing came—
For though with angry gestures
The Yankee bid him cease,
The Priest, with hands uplifted,
Bid his people go in peace ;
And called down heavenly blessings
Upon that tossing crowd,
While the men their teeth were clenching,
And the women sobbing loud.
And then with mien undaunted
He passed along the aisle,
The gallant Yankee hero
Behind him all the while,
"You better bring a gunboat,
For that's y'ur winning card,"
Said a haughty little beauty,
As the Strong man called a guard,
"Tis only 'neath their shelter
You Yankees ever fight,"
Cried another spunky woman
Who stood upon his right.
But the Major thought a cannon
(If his men could not succeed
In clearing off the sidewalk.)
Would be all that he should need.
And I guess his light artil'ry
'Gainst Christ Church he will range,
When his "base of operations"
Next Sunday he shall "charge,"
'Twas thus the tyrant Butler,
Mid women's sobs and tears,
Seized a priest before the altar
He had served for twenty years.
We know in darkest ages
A Church was holy ground,
Where from the hand of Justice
A refuge might be found ;
And from the meanest soldier
To the highest in the land,
None dare to touch the fugitive
Who should within it stand,
'Twas left the beastly Butler
To violate its walls,
And to be known in future
As the victor of St. Paul's.
He has called our wives "She-adders,"
And he shall feel their sting,
For the voice of outraged woman
Through every land shall ring.
He shall stand with Austrian Haynau
Upon the rolls of fame,
And bear to later ages
A base, dishonored name.

The Historic New Orleans Collection (<http://www.hnoc.org>)

Figure 3- Lyrics to the Battle of St. Paul's. The Louisiana Digital Library, The Historic New Orleans Collection.

Conclusion

The Battle of St. Paul's sheds light on life in New Orleans under Union occupation as well as the sense of violation experienced by some of the white citizenry. Accounts of the event convey a sense of infringement felt by Secessionists under Union subjugation, but also particularly on a specific group of women as they experienced the violation of a sacred space. Although the North used the invasion of this sacred space as a strategy to quell resistance, it had a contradictory effect on Southern loyalists. Confederate supporters dealt with this intrusion by spinning the event into propaganda and painting its participants as heroines. In the same respect, Union supporters marketed the same female reaction as justification for treating civilians as combatants.

While accounts of the battle focus mainly on female reactions to the church's closure, this emphasis on a gendered response elevates the importance and viability of the Southern female political voice in this period. Women shed pre-war social and cultural restraints placed upon them to participate in the war effort. Naturally seated at the helm of domestic and ecumenical spheres, middle-class white women were able to navigate through the once male-dominated political waters. This newfound motility of Southern females also perpetuated the Confederate agenda on the home front. By way of charitable means as well as sacrifice of male loved ones, women gave legs to "The Cause."

Although the congregation of St. Paul's church still exists today in New Orleans, church archives have long been destroyed by fire, flood, and relocation. In 1926, a commemorative pamphlet was written by the church to preserve the church's history. Although it mentions the closure of the church and removal of Rev. Goodrich, the church's history of the incident gives no mention to the female congregation's reaction. The present day website of St. Paul's also offers

visitors a brief history of the church with a vague explanation of the closure, and also with no mention of the protests of the female parishioners.⁶⁰ Although ignored in present day accounts of the church's past, the voices of the women of St. Paul's still echo. This story of female religious activists and their support for the Confederacy was captured and preserved in lyric and newsprint. Although both North and South promoted a biased caricature of these women, the preservation of their story challenges us to think more broadly about white women's activism, and its ties to religion, in occupied New Orleans.

⁶⁰ The website also mentions in its history that the church was used to house the Union's horses from 1862-65. However, Sunday services were being announced in November of 1864 in *The Daily-Picayune*. Also, church services resumed within days of the "Battle of St. Paul's". On October 19, 1862, the same day Trelawny broke the story, an ad ran in *The Daily Delta* announcing the reopening of the church ministered under a Union clergyman. This reopening—with a Yankee giving Sunday rites—would have no doubt angered the congregation of St. Paul's. <http://www.stpaulsnola.org/welcome/history-of-st-pauls/> *The Daily Delta*, October 19, 1862.

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