Liberty University

Accepting the Cost:

German Baptist Brethren, Faith, and the American Civil War

A Dissertation Submitted to

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by

Sheilah Rana Elwardani

Lynchburg, Virginia

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Introduction

Abstract

Key words: Appalachia, Shenandoah Valley, Civil War, Religion, German Baptist Brethren, Dunker, Desertion, Unionist Underground Railroad, Conscientious objectors, Non-Violence

The German Baptist Brethren, Dunkers, were a Pietist sect which organized in the Palatinate region of the German lands in central Europe in 1708. The sect was founded upon the structure of the Apostolic, or Primitive, Christian Church. The founder, Alexander Mack, was strongly engaged with the theology of the Pietist movement and taught that the structure of the Christian life must be firmly founded in scripture with Mathew 5 proscribing the elemental principles of the sect. The Brethren practiced adult, believers, baptism and firmly adhered to core peace principles as interpreted from Mathew 5. Increasing persecution forced the two small groups of Brethren from the Palatinate within a couple of years. The Brethren subsequently immigrated to Pennsylvania in two migrations, settling in the vicinity of Germantown during the 1720s.

The peace principles of non-violence/ non-resistance became a core element of the theology of the Brethren from the earliest founding. These peace principles prohibited participation in militia drilling, enlistment in the military, or even physical self-defense. These principles created extreme difficulties for the Brethren during the American Revolution, contributed to a stronger dedication to separatism, and a subsequent migration west and south. A large number of German Baptist Brethren settled in the Valley of Virginia, (the Shenandoah Valley), and south throughout Southwest Virginia in the years following the American Revolution. Here they formed close knit farming communities, planted new congregations, and

lived semi-separatist lives centered on the core peace church theology. The Brethren were staunchly opposed to slavery and prohibited membership in the church to slaveholders.

The American Civil War brought extreme difficulty for a peace principle population who refused to muster into either army. The conscription laws passed by the Confederate government placed the Brethren in the south in a situation where they could either adhere to the laws of man or the laws of God. The Brethren chose the laws of God and refused military service. The Christian mission of the Brethren led them to give aid to any man, regardless of church membership, who chose to not participate in carnal warfare. This Christian mission soon led the German Baptist Brethren to become key figures in the development and organization of the Unionist Underground Railroad. The stalwart of faith, peace church Brethren willingly accepted the potential consequences of aiding deserters and conscription evaders who sought to escape the Confederate army and cross Union lines.

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A significant research project cannot be conducted by a single person operating in a vacuum. Research requires the researcher to depend on friends, family, experts in the field, and nearly any person willing to lend an ear and offer advice or support. I have been fortunate in both garnering significant interest and support for this topic as well as in having been blessed with a supportive, close-knit family who were willing to sacrifice and support to help me accomplish this goal.

The Church of the Brethren is blessed with a brilliant array of talented researchers, historians, and archivists who have worked tirelessly to preserve and share the rich history of the German Baptist Brethren. I cannot here list everyone who contributed significantly to this research but one person stands above for offering continuous support and encouragement. Pastor Paul Roth is the director of the Elder John Kline Homestead and the foremost expert on the life of Elder John Kline in the nation. The support I have received by Paul made this research far less daunting and helped me develop a broader perspective of rich contribution of the Brethren to the history of the Shenandoah Valley and beyond.

I have been truly blessed with a family that pulls together, sacrifices together, and makes the goals of each member the goal of the entire group. My children, sister, brother, and brother-in-law have contributed unimaginable time, effort, and encouragement to keep me going. The ways they have supported me are far too numerous to recount. I certainly cannot count the number of times my sister or brother-in-law called to say they were cooking dinner because they knew I was currently overwhelmed. It meant so much in those moments and actually means

even more now. My children, in particular, sacrificed the most in the form of precious time with their mother while I was buried in the writings of people long in the grave.

We are shaped, for life, by our parents. The guidance, encouragement, teachings, work ethic, and belief system imparted by our parents can set us up for achievement from our earliest childhood. In this respect I have been incomparably blessed. My parents have believed in me even on the days when I could not believe in myself. My mother has been my biggest supporter, praying, encouraging, and guiding me every single day of this PhD process. She specializes in brutal honesty which I needed at every turn of this process. My father understood me. He understood how I think, how I react, and how I set goals in a way that nobody else on earth ever will. He understood me because he was so much like me. He modeled for me a level of work ethic, moral strength, determination, and independent thought that gave me the courage and the determination to see this degree, and this dissertation through to the end. What I may have achieved here was the work of a support network which is far more valuable than the project itself.

Chapter 1

The German Baptist Brethren and the Unionist Underground Railroad

The Blue Ridge Mountain marks the easternmost line of the Appalachian Mountain range in the eastern United States. Running north to south they extend from southcentral Pennsylvania through Maryland and bisects the state of Virginia. For the populations of Appalachia the Blue Ridge marks a sharp departure from the urban populations of the eastern lowlands. Through northern and central Virginia the western flank of the Blue Ridge gives way to the rich farmland of the Shenandoah Valley. In Southwestern Virginia the Shenandoah Valley meets the sharp up thrust of the Blue Ridge Plateau. The first European settlers made their way down the Shenandoah Valley from Pennsylvania in the years immediately following the Revolutionary War. Among these early settlers were groups of religious dissenters, displaced and long persecuted in Eastern and Central Europe, seeking religious freedom and tracks of farmland on which to raise families, crops, and congregations. Among these religious groups were the Mennonites and groups of German Pietists, specifically, the German Baptist Brethren, commonly known as Dunkers.[1]

[1] The German Baptist Brethren came to be referenced by a variety of names throughout their history, particularly following their arrival in Pennsylvania in the early 18th century. They have often been referenced as simply German Baptists. The terms Dunker, Dunkar, Dunkard, and Tunker all developed based on the method of adult baptism by submersion. The word Dunkard, specifically, was initially cast with a negative connotation by critics of the sect, however, by the Civil War era was commonly used by members and non-members of the church. In primary sources produced by members of the German Baptist Brethren several terms have been frequently used in self reference. From the Colonial period onward the German Baptist Brethren often referenced themselves as German Baptist, but more often simply as 'Brethren'. In communicating with government representatives the Brethren would often identify themselves as Dunkers or, occasionally, Tunkers, but again, the term Brethren was commonly used to identify this group. Direct quotes in this work will demonstrate the common usage of all terms of reference. For the purpose of this work, and respecting the self-use of these identifying titles throughout their history, the terms Brethren and Dunker are used interchangeably.

The German Brethren were stalwart of faith, practiced adult believers' baptism, were pacifist, and resolute non-oath takers. The German Brethren developed during the early 1700's from the Pietists movement of Philip Spener. Closely aligned with the Anabaptists groups such as the Mennonites, the Brethren sought religious tolerance and freedom in Germany's Palatine region. Several early leaders emerged from a group of Pietists who settled in Schwarzenau and Marienborn. Schwarzenau sits in the Eder River Valley and, in 1700, continued to suffer from the impacts of the Thirty Years War with very low population and lack of economic growth. Count Henry Albert encouraged immigration to repopulate the region and extended religious toleration to separatist groups. Alexander Mack settled in the region in 1706 and found like-minded Pietists who soon coalesced around him. Alexander Mack, his wife and six others baptized one another in the River Eder in 1708 thereby forming the first German Baptist Brethren congregation.

Increasing pressure from the state church, specifically the Reformed Church, forced the growing Brethren to flee Schwarzenau and Marienborn. The Marienborn Brethren settled in Krefeld and the Schwarzenau group settled in the Netherlands. Under increasing religious intolerance these groups found religious toleration in Pennsylvania. The Marienborn group, led by George Grebe, emigrated from Krefeld in 1720 and the Schwarzenau group, led by Alexander Mack, emigrated from the Netherlands in 1729. In search of rich farmland and religious freedom following the American Revolution, groups of Brethren migrated west of the Blue Ridge toward the fertile mountain valleys of Appalachia.[2]

[2] Donald F. Durnbaugh, Editor. The Brethren in Colonial America: A Source Book on the Transplantation and Development of the Church of the Brethren in the Eighteenth Century. (Elgin, Il., The Brethren Press, 1967). The settlement of the Brethren in Pennsylvania followed by the subsequent transplantation to frontier regions following the Revolution has received significant scholarly attention and will be reviewed in context with the peace church principles in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

The Brethren settled along the entire length of the Shenandoah Valley, through Southwest Virginia, and into Eastern Tennessee and the Carolinas. A strong core of Brethren Congregations grew at the southern end of the Shenandoah Valley near present day Roanoke and on the Blue Ridge Plateau in the region which would become Floyd County during the 1830's. The Brethren maintained a strong connection to the Pietist faith and developed closely connected farming communities. The Brethren were theologically opposed to slavery and in practice were generally, but not universally, non-slaveholders and advocates of abolition.[3]

The Civil War brought a distinctive set of difficulties and disputes for populations of the Mountain South. Divided beliefs concerning slavery, a slow move to support secession, rapidly waning support for the Confederacy when the harsh realities of war brought extreme hardship for rural communities, and a complex mixture of partisan loyalties led to violent guerrilla warfare and high levels of desertion from companies mustered in the highlands. The Brethren congregations opposed secession and, as conscientious objectors, refused to serve willingly in either army.[4]

During the American Civil War members of the German Baptist Brethren, Dunkers, became actively involved in the aiding and moving of Confederate deserters, conscription evaders, and escaped Union prisoners north out of the active war zones. Driven by a worldview grounded in Pietist theology of non-violence, the Brethren viewed opposition to the war and

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[3] Sappington, Roger E. *The Brethren in Virginia.* (Harrisonburg: The Committee of Brethren History in Virginia, 1973). The Brethren were not politically vocal abolitionists but within their church and communities non-slave holding was taught and enforced with withdraw of church membership for slaveholders.

[4] The connection between Unionist sympathies and the Dunker Church was first identified by Henry T. Shanks in Shanks, Henry T. "Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1865." The North Carolina Historical Review 21, no. 2 (1944): 118-35. The Southern Claims Commission Approved claims reveal a disproportionate number of approved claims for claimants connected with the Church of the Brethren. Similar patterns have been uncovered by Kenneth Noe and Sheilah Elwardani.

active involvement in undermining the Confederate war effort to be a faith-driven imperative. Dunkers were willing to face imprisonment and even martyrdom for their decision to be actively involved in what has been identified as a Unionist Underground Railroad.

Recent scholarship uncovered a high level of involvement of some Brethren congregations and preachers in the hiding and moving of Confederate deserters and escaped Union prisoners throughout Southern Appalachia. Likewise, several church leaders in the Shenandoah Valley were connected to the active protecting and moving of men north into Pennsylvania. Floyd County, on the Blue Ridge Plateau in SW Virginia, sits on the southern edge of the Shenandoah Valley. This county had a high concentration of Brethren congregations during the Civil War. Research has demonstrated that the congregations in this county became highly involved with the hiding and feeding of large numbers of Confederate deserters and their families during the war.[5] Likewise, the Shenandoah Valley was home to large numbers of Brethren who have been identified as active participants in the Unionist Underground Railroad.

Throughout the Southern Appalachian Mountains, Brethren pastors and laypeople became the targets of violence, with at least two martyred for their participation in counter-Confederate activity. Threats against laypeople and entire congregations are recorded throughout the primary sources. One newspaper headline went so far as to call for all Brethren to be run out of the county, the churches to be burned and the preachers to be hung.[6] The extreme level of animosity from Confederate loyalist toward this specific denomination is referenced throughout the region under consideration. There was a wide understanding that the Dunkers held anti-Confederate sympathies which were acknowledged in both the public and

[5]Sheilah Elwardani, "Traitors in the Service of the Lord: The Role of Church and Clergy in Appalachia's Civil War" (2019). *Masters Theses*. 554.https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/masters/554. 56-58

[6] Ibid. 78-80.

military arenas. Whether this public perception was warranted will be answered by developing an understanding of the actual beliefs and actions of the Brethren during the war. The extent and motives of Dunker activity in the Appalachian Civil War is the subject of this dissertation.

As devout Pietists, non-oath takers, and pacifist conscientious objectors the Brethren were placed by the war in a situation where maintaining a true observance of faith required an active involvement in aiding men seeking to evade Confederate authorities and military service. As pacifist non-resistors the Brethren did not believe in violent action against Confederate loyalists, regular or irregular military units. When forcefully conscripted the Dunkers have been noted to refuse the taking of human life.[7] To date no instances of Dunkers persecuting or threatening pro-Confederate citizens or forces have been uncovered. These German Brethren held a deeply established understanding that observance of belief system and true witness to faith at times requires men to risk personal safety and even life in service to God's commandments. The Brethren consciously accepted the potential cost of Christian piety and became fully involved, albeit non-military pacifist, in the American Civil War.

This research seeks to explain the involvement of Brethren congregations and church leaders in the Unionist Underground Railroad from an exploration of the foundational belief system of the Brethren faith. The recorded statements of faith given by those involved with these activities serves to illuminate the motivation for risking arrest and death to aid men moving north. From this foundation of illuminating belief system in the actions of Brethren the research explores the extent of involvement to demonstrate a cooperative network of Brethren extending

[7] Subsequent chapters, particularly chapter 5, will explore the perceptions and testimonials of Generals and politicians from both armies concerning the Brethren refusal to break their pacifist beliefs.

from Eastern Tennessee, north through Southwest Virginia and up the Shenandoah Valley into Pennsylvania.

The involvement of Brethren, functioning as individuals and congregations, in the aiding of men seeking to evade Confederate authorities has been well documented by self-identification, testimonies, taken under oath, to the Southern Claims Commission, Confederate and Union military authorities as well as in local court documents, and the letters and diaries of Confederate loyalists frustrated with Brethren activities. This research approaches the active involvement of the German Baptist Brethren, Dunkers, from the perspective of a religious/theological history as well as from a Civil War/anti-Confederate conspiracies history. Therefore, multiple historical research methods are employed to construct a fuller interpretation of events. As a theological interpretation exploring belief as motive for social and political involvement the work examines the primary sources as written by Brethren involved with clandestine Civil War activities for themes of theology and belief system. The religious explanations of the involved Brethren will be compared with the theological writings of the early European leaders and theologians to reveal common threads of belief. These theological explanations are placed into context with the interpretation and perception of Dunkers both in the early European records and in the Civil War era records from secular authorities. Political and military authorities in Europe often expressed the same frustration with the Brethren which political and military authorities expressed 150 year later during the American Civil War. European Brethren and their American decedents faced persecution, arrest, and martyrdom for their beliefs. Widely published apologetics of faith reveal the continued dedication to foundational Brethren beliefs through the Civil War and provide clear explanations of motive.

The research methods for exploring the extent of Brethren involvement and connections between congregations and church leaders along the north-south expanse of the research region requires examination of a multitude of primary sources. Connections between church leaders can be found in personal letters, diaries, congregational and conference records. Individuals identified as actively involved by both Union and Confederate militaries and governments can be found in the body of sources related to the Civil War in Southern Appalachia and specifically the campaigns of the Shenandoah Valley. This portion of the research explores the documented cases and the wider understanding, held by Confederate and federal governments, of Brethren belief and involvement. The records of local governments offer information on Brethren arrests and prosecution on charges of disloyalty to the Confederate government. Broader themes of the Brethren as a trans-regional confessional community, working in concert, can be found in Confederate documents and orders to arrest those suspected of treason as well as correspondence between Brethren and military authority. Several Brethren pastors and leading laypeople have risen to the forefront of this research including Elder John Kline of the Harrisonburg-Winchester region of the Shenandoah Valley and Elder Benjamin Moomaw of the Botetourt County-Roanoke region of the southern Shenandoah Valley. The leadership and connections between these men provide considerable insight into all aspects of this research.

During the Civil War the Union Army often impressed horses, livestock, foodstuffs, and supplies from the local civilian population. Following the war the Federal government established the Southern Claims Commission whose purpose was to pay reparations to civilian populations who sustained losses to the Union Army on the condition of proving that the claimant had remained loyal to the Union throughout the war. The burden of demonstrating consistent loyalty was on the claimant and there were several significant factors which were

taken as evidence of disloyalty and nullified a claim made to the Southern Claims Commission. Any support to the Confederate government was considered an act of disloyalty. This included the buying of Confederate bonds, sale of grain or livestock to the Confederacy, service in the military or home guard, or voting in favor of secession at the onset of the war.

The Southern Claims Commission established specific questionnaires and required the claimant to provide sworn testimony as well as produce witnesses to testify as both witness to the property loss and witness to verify loyalty to the Union. The Commission also pulled voting records from the vote on the Ordinance of Secession which were subsequently used to verify honesty in the sworn testimony. A vote in favor of Secession, even under duress, was considered an act of disloyalty. Many of the Brethren men who felt threatened into voting for secession later demonstrated loyalty to the Union through active involvement with the Unionist Underground Railroad.

Records of the Southern Claims Commission are housed in the National Archives and due to the length and detail of each claim, provide significant insight into the impacts of the war on civilian populations. The witness testimonies were taken outside the presence of the claimant but the lawyer of the claimant was permitted to cross-examine each witness. The Southern Claims Commission functioned with the same legal stringencies as other courts of law with perjury carrying the same legal consequences.

The tremendous impacts of the Shenandoah Valley campaigns led to large scale loss of livestock and crops for the prosperous Brethren communities. The losses became catastrophic with Sheridan's fall campaign of 1864 when General Grant ordered that the 'bread basket' of the Confederacy be turned into a wasteland so that the abundant fall crops would not be available to sustain the Confederate armies through the winter. The German Baptist Brethren sustained

severe losses and therefore a significant number made claims to the Southern Claims Commission following the war. The process of demonstrating loyalty to the Union offered the Brethren opportunity to explain individual involvement in the Unionist Underground Railroad. Thousands of claims to the Southern Claims Commission for the state of Virginia were submitted by Brethren farmers. These records, sworn testimonies with sworn witnesses, offer vital details in how the Brethren developed and operated the network known as the Unionist Underground Railroad.

This dissertation explores the point of convergence between the Church of the Brethren, Dunkers, and the Civil War in Appalachia, specifically focusing on the high levels of desertion and wavering loyalties which occurred in some mountain populations. Into this conversation will be pulled the history and theology of the German Baptist Brethren as pacifist supporters of desertion and the active participants in the moving of men north out of the active war zone. Therefore, an understanding of the current body of scholarship concerning both areas of study are needed so as to place this work into perspective with the current understanding of the Civil War in Appalachia and the Shenandoah Valley.

Scholarly attention to the shifting loyalties and high levels of desertion experienced in the Mountain South began in the 1940's. The primary sources are replete with references to high desertion from mountain mustered companies as well as Confederate concern, and growing frustration, over what was identified as high levels of Unionism growing in the mountains by mid to later periods of the war. Historian Henry T. Shanks established the thesis which has continues to be addressed and redressed with his article, "Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1865". (1944) Shanks, pulling largely from Confederate War documents and local court records, posits that the mountain region of Southwest Virginia shifted

from overwhelming pro-secession to overwhelming pro-Unionist in only two years. Shank's work set a foundation for exploring the complexity of partisan loyalties in SW Virginia. Although still seated as the pinnacle work his blanket thesis creates the most significant historiographical problem of Appalachian Civil War scholarship. Did the mountain south, in fact, shift to nearly wholesale Unionism by late 1863? A tremendous body of regional scholarship has attempted to support or redress this thesis. Recent scholarship has begun to illuminate a more nuanced interpretation of waning support for the Confederacy and increasing Unionist sympathies.

Kenneth Noe contributes to the convesation with, "The Red String Scare: Civil War, Southwest Virginia and the Heroes of America". (1992) Noe identifies the need for additional scholarship to explore the waning support for the Confederacy from a far more nuanced perspective. Interestingly, Kenneth Noe also reveals a link between the Church of the Brethren, Dunkards, and successful claims to the Southern Claims Commission.

John Inscoe focuses a tremendous amount of attention to the Appalachian regions of Western North Carolina's Civil War partisanship and accompanying violence. This body of work highlights the diversity of population in both ethnic and economic disparity and attempts to illuminate a definitive non-uniformity in loyalties. Appalachian historian Gordon McKinney also contributes to an understanding of the nuanced disparities which occurred in the partisanship of mountain communities. Inscoe and McKinney combine their knowledge of the Appalachian South in *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia : Western North Carolina in the Civil War*, (2000), which highlighted the social and economic structures that impacted the development of partisan violence and guerrilla fighting. Inscoe advances the conversation with his contribution to Kenneth Noe and Shannon Wilson's *The Civil War in Southern Appalachia.*(1997) Inscoe's

“Moving Through Deserter Country": Fugitive Accounts of the Inner Civil War in Southern Appalachia” highlights several key aspects of the guerrilla and highly partisan mountain war(1977). Noe and Wilson’s volume bring together top scholars in the field of Appalachian Civil War research to address key aspects of the regions unique war experience. Shannon Wilson directly confronts aspects of the Shank thesis in her contribution to the volume in, “Lincoln’s Sons and Daughters: Berea College, Lincoln Memorial University, and the Myth of Unionist Appalachia, 1866-1910” (1997).

Focused work to unravel the partisanship and shifting loyalties of Southwest Virginia have been largely overlooked by scholars since Shanks with the marked exception of Rand Dotson’s ""The Grave and Scandalous Evil Infected to Your People: The Erosion of Confederate Loyalty in Floyd County, Virgina" (2000). Dotson presents Floyd County, Virginia as following the path toward Unionsim in a thesis which closely mirrors the Shank thesis. This thesis does not address the possiblity of nuanced levels of anti-Confederacy to pro-Unionists sympathies. Sheilah Elwardani contests the accuracy of blanket interpretation in, “Traitors in the Service of the Lord: The Role of Church and Clergy in Appalachia’s Civil War”, (2019) suggests that waning support for the Confederacy does not necessarily indicate a definitive pro-Unionist sympathy. The county of Floyd only shifted to support secession following Lincoln’s call for 75,000 troops in April, 1861. The poor management of civil affairs and food confiscation practices of the Confederate government soon eroded support for the war effort. For populations of the Mountain South degrees of partisanship and alliegence to either Confederacy or Union mitigate the possibility of the ‘Unionist Appalachia’ blanket thesis.

The Civil War in the Shenandoah Valley receives focused scholarship due to the significant strategic value of the Valley and importance as a vital food producing region for the

Confederate armies. Historian Jonathan Noyalas has identified a 'Unionist Underground Railroad' of groups working to undermine the Confederate War effort by aiding men seeking to move north into Maryland and Pennsylvania. Noyalas has noted the role of Brethren and Anabaptist dissenters in this network of clandestine anti-Confederate activity. The presence of an organized network in the Shenandoah requires additional scholarly attention to determine composition of members and the extent of involvement.[8]

Pennsylvania was the original settlement region for the Church of the Brethren migrants arriving from Europe. The Brethren established permanent settlements across the state as the frontier continued to shift westward. Appalachian Pennsylvania became home to a significant population of Brethren with a distinctive history. Earl C. Kaylor, Jr. provides a comprehensive narrative history of these congregations in *Out of the Wilderness: The Brethren and Two Centuries of Life in Central Pennsylvania, 1780-1980.* (1981) High levels of desertion in the southern Appalachian Mountains has been explored in a wide and growing body of scholarship. However, limited scholarship has attempted to interpret the Civil War resistance and desertion in the Appalachian Mountains of central and western Pennsylvania. Robert Sandow has undertaken one of the only available scholarly works on this topic, *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians* (2011). This work considers issues of rural economics, the timber industry, and partisan loyalties. A consideration of possible religiously driven motive in partisan loyalties has not yet been undertaken for the high desertion and war resistance in rural Pennsylvania.

[8] Jonathan Noyalas has identified the Unionist activities of Brethren and Anabaptist groups in the Shenandoah Valley in multiple published works including: Noyalas, Jonathan A. ""that Woman was Worth a Whole Brigade"." Civil War Times Illustrated 51, no. 3 (2012): 43. *And* Noyalas, Jonathan. *Slavery and Freedom in the Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War Era.* United States: University Press of Florida, 2021.

Waning support for the Confederacy and even active work to undermine the war effort may speak more to disgust with the Confederate mismanagment of civil affairs, refocused localism, and a desire to see the war ended rather than to a belief in a just Union cause. Anti-Confederate partisanship did not *necessarily* translate directly into pro-Union partisanship. Local concerns, individual circumstances and worldview all shaped shifting loyalties. This work does not seek to answer this historiographic problem in whole but rather to demonstrate how confessional identity and Christian worldview may have shaped the loyalties and wartime actions of one denominiation.

Deserters and mountain guerrilla irregular groups have often been lumped into one tangled historigraphic problem unto themselves. The violence of the guerrilla fighting has been considered with a growing body of scholarship. Brian McKnight explores the guerrilla fighters of Appalachia in *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia.* (2006). Noel Fisher considers the topic in relation to the Unionism and guerrila fighting in Tennessee in, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869.* (2001) And Kenneth Noe brings attention to the social roots of West Virginia's irregular warfare in "Who Were the Bushwhackers? Age, Class, Kin and Western Virginia's Confederate guerrillas, 1861-1862." (2003) Martin Crawford analyzes the degrees and disparites of Unionist sympathies and loyalty shifts in "The Dynamics of Mountain Unionism". (1997)

The guerrilla warfare associated with high desertion rates and divided loyalties in the mountain south has been picked up with Rand Dotson's further consideration of Floyd County in *Sisson's Kingdom: Floyd County's Civil War*.(1997) The primary conclusion to be drawn from the growing body of scholarship on Appalachia's Civil War and partisan loyalties is that any

blanket thesis must necessarily overlook the ‘shades of gray’ between waning support for the Confederacy and full allegiance to the Union.

The point of contact between religion and the Civil War in the Mountain South has been garnering an increasing amount of scholarly attention in the wake of the tremendous and growing attention to the wider study of Christianity in Appalachia. Scholarship exploring the connection between confessional identity and loyalties are starting to receive focused research.

The denominational schism during the antebellum era has been considered through a wide body of scholarship. The specific nature and impact of the schisms in the three largest denominational bodies; Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian, in the border states is considered by April Holm in *A Kingdom Divided: Evangelicals, Loyalty, and Sectionalism in the Civil War Era.* (2017) Holm brilliantly tracks the development of church doctrine in southern branches of these denominations which answered the question of Christian morality in the face of slavery with an apologetic which difinively changed the inherent doctrinal structure of these congregations. A focus on spiritualism within church teaching and a move to separate political issues from moral consideration allowed the issue of slavery to be relegated as a political and therefore, non-moral problem. The core of Brethren congregations, which are the focus of this research, spanned the border states of Maryland and West Virginia. However, the Brethren did not experience schism and did not waver from the Pietist belief that Christian morality transcends political morality and therefore the question of slavery as a political issue was trumped by slavery as a Christian morality issue. This work takes some steps toward answering how foundational belief system and church doctrine impacted response to slavery and the Civil War for members of the large denominations in the border states.

The connections between Methodist preachers and Unionist sympathies in Eastern Tennessee and along the Holston River Valley has been explored from several perspectives. Durwood Dunn's *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism* (2012) follows the Methodist Episcopal Church, South's efforts to stamp Unionist pastors from its ranks. Richard Alan Humphrey's, "The Civil War and Church Schisms in Southern Appalachia" (1981) focuses the theological division. This is also undertaken by Church Historian Mark Noll in *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis,* (2006) as a regional consideration of schism and theological discussions of slavery. These works barely scratch the surface of exploring the denominational/worldview impact of the mountain population on partisanship and active involvement in the Civil War. Exploring the Church of the Brethren as concsiencious objects who activily supported desertion, as undertaken in this work, may partially answer this historiographic question for one denomination.

Much of the scholarship exploring the history of the Church of the Brethren both in their European foundations and through the periods of immigration and migration down the Appalachian Mountains has been undertaken by Brethren affiliated historans. Donald Durnbaugh has produced a comprehensive history of the Church of the Brethren in several volumes. *European Origins of the Brethren* (1987) and *The Brethren in Colonial America: A Source Book on the Transplantation and Development of the Church of the Brethren in the Eighteenth Century* (1967) offer a comprehensive narrative built on the earliest writings and letters of church leaders. These works are complemented by Marcus Meier's *The Origins of the Schwarzenau Brethren* (2008).

Several significant histories have been produced which offer a comprehensive narrative of Brethren history from the colonial through the antebellum periods. Earl Kaylor's *Out of the*

Wilderness focuses on the Brethren congregations in Pennsylvania. Roger Sappington focuses attention on the founding and growth of the Brethren from the Founding Era through the Civil War. *The Brethren in the New Nation: A Source Book on the Development of the Church of the Brethren, 1785-1865* (1976), *The Brethren in Virginia* (1973), and *Courageous Prophet: Chapters from the Life of John Kline* (1964) cumulatively build a strongly supported narrative history of the Brethren as they migrated and eventually settled in the Shenandoah Valley and Southern Mountains. The works of Durnbaugh, Sappington, and Meier provide a comprehensive narrative history of the Church of the Brethren with Sappington also exploring Elder John Kline, a key figure in this dissertation.

The assimilation of the Brethren into American society faster than Mennonites, Amish, or Hutterites, while maintaining a distinctive confessional identity, has been addressed by Carl Bowman in, *Brethren Society: The Cultural Transformation of a "Peculiar People"*. (1995) The separate, confessional identity but larger social interaction of the Brethren offers interesting future paths of scholarship and a theme of exploration in the current work.

Several monographs specifically focus on the history of the Brethren in Virginia and the relationship of the Brethren to war are of specific value to this research. In 1903 David H. Zigler produced the first volume that specifically concentrates on the congregations in Virginia. *A History of the Brethren in Virginia,* (1903), explores the early settlements and introduces a discussion of the specific tribulations faced by the Brethren during the Civil War. This book also provides brief biographies of some Brethren elders who have been identified as involved in the Unionist Underground Railroad. *The Brethren in Virginia,* (1973), by Roger E. Sappington provides a comprehensive history of the Brethren congregations in Virginia from the earliest settlements. The views and relationship of the Brethren to war across the entire history of the

denomination, through World War I, is undertaken by Rufus David Bowman. *The Church of the Brethren and War, 1708-1941* (1944) explores the consistent doctrinal stance taken by the Brethren concerning non-violence, non-resistance, and non-oath taking.

Church of the Brethren scholars have noted the activity of Brethren leaders in the aiding of deserters with particular attention paid to significant church elders during the Civil War. Records compiled and transcribed by Norman R. Wenger and David S. Rodes were subsequently edited by Emmert F. Bittinger to form a six-volume collection of Southern Claims Commission records. This research tool seeks to aid in developing a fuller understanding of the Brethren engagement in the war. This six-volume set includes biographical sketches of many claimants as well as genealogical research on many Mennonite and Brethren claimants from Rockingham County. As a collection of primary source material, *Unionists and the Civil War Experience In the Shenandoah Valley*, offers invaluable insight into the specific experiences of Brethren and Mennonite in the county which has been identified as the hub of Unionist Underground Railroad activity.

This dissertation seeks to fill a significant historiographic gap: it will touch multiple methodologies as an Appalachian Civil War, Appalachian religion/ religious identity, and Civil War partisanship contribution to the body of scholarship. The German Baptist Brethren are explored from the point of contact between biblical worldview, Civil War involvement, possible Unionist sympathies, and the aiding of Confederate deserters and escaped Union soldiers in the Shenandoah Valley of Southern Appalachia.

Understanding the history and theological underpinnings of the German Baptist Brethren is vital to developing an understanding of how and why individuals within the group responded to the Civil War in particular ways. Chapter Two will briefly explore the European foundations

of the Church of the Brethren, immigration and settlement in the Colonies, migration and settlement in the Shenandoah Valley and Southwest Virginia. The theology of the group will be explored in context with their cohesion as an apostolic church community and the close ties maintained between congregations. This chapter will include an exploration of the reaction and interaction of the group with the question of slavery and the unity which allowed the Brethren to avoid schism during the antebellum period.

The Brethren answered political questions from their biblical worldview. As the nation descended into war this worldview directly influenced how members of the church voted in the Presidential election of 1860 and the state votes on secession in the south. The unwillingness of the Brethren to serve in either the Northern or Southern armies, (through willing enlistment or conscription), was also directed by their Pietist worldview. Chapter Three will explore the connection between Pietist worldview and response to the political questions concerning slavery, the presidential election and secession. This chapter will also explore the growing numbers of deserters within the mountain regions, particularly from companies mustered in Brethren concentrated counties. This exploration will be balanced against the interaction and activities of the Brethren leaders who have been identified as most highly involved in the aiding of men seeking to evade active combat roles and Southern military authorities.

Chapter Four draws heavily from the records of the Confederate and Federal governments, church records, and the letters and diaries of Brethren leaders to trace the connections and activities of individuals involved with the aiding of men north. The movement of deserters and escaped Union soldiers follows their starting point and experience moving through the southern mountains. These records reveal valuable information concerning the people involved with aiding them in their movement north as well as providing insight into the

Confederate deserters and escaped slaves which traveled with these groups on occasion. Although it is impossible to gauge exactly how many men were aided by Dunkers through the U.U.R. it is possible extrapolate some information concerning group size and frequency of groups being moved north from the available records. This chapter will shed light on the connections between Brethren leaders who were active in the moving of men on the Unionist Underground Railroad. There were several cases of extreme consequences which Brethren faced for involvement in these anti-Confederate activities. The Dunkers accused of treason all counted and accepted the cost they might pay for their active faith.

Chapter 5 briefly explores the extent to which Confederate authorities and the military leadership of both armies were aware of Dunker involvement in the Unionist Underground Railroad, (hereafter referred to as the U.U.R.). This chapter will shed some illumination on the perception of the Brethren and the extent to which their clandestine activities were successfully kept a secret.

The German Baptist Brethren, Dunkers, developed and operated a logistically complex and highly effective network to aid men seeking non-combatant status move north. Driven by deeply held belief principles these men were willing to risk wealth, freedom, persecution, and death to sustain their Christian mission.

Chapter 2

A History of Pacifism and Non-Oath Taking

It is one of the primary arguments of this dissertation that the Brethren worldview informed all aspects of their interaction with human affairs. The German Baptist Brethren founded their theology on the primitive apostolic church and centered their worldview firmly in scripture, specifically, in a literal interpretation and application of the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5 became the core of belief and provided the directive for living a Christian life in the temporal world. I would encourage all readers to take a couple of moments to read Matthew 5 before proceeding with this chapter. Discussions of reaction, interaction, and motive for the remainder of this dissertation are best understood through an understanding of the Sermon on the Mount.

The doctrines which established the German Baptist Brethren as a distinctive Pietist sect were clearly defined with the earliest produced documents of its founder, Alexander Mack, and reiterated throughout the history of the denomination. The foundational, and initially most socially disruptive, doctrine was that of adult, believer baptism. The persecution this practice brought to the Brethren in Europe became a non-issue following immigration to Pennsylvania in the early 1700s. The doctrines of non-oath taking and non-violence, however, are well documented as points of contention between the Brethren and society from the founding in Europe, through the Revolutionary and antebellum periods. Exploring the role of these doctrines in the Brethren interaction with society and political events will demonstrate a consistent adherence to these doctrinal tenants throughout the history of the denomination.

The significant written record left by Brethren, which clearly stands as an apologetic for how doctrine directed action and interaction with social and political affairs, raises the question of why such detailed accounts were consistently recorded since the earliest formation of the group. The answer to this question can be gleaned from the first questioning of Palatinate

officials into the belief system of the Brethren. When questioned in 1713 as to belief system by Eberhard Louis Gruber, future leader of the Inspirationists, Alexander Mack submitted a response which clearly articulated the doctrinal foundations of the Brethren. The series of forty questions were answered in clear and succinct language which provided a scripturally based apologetic for many of the core doctrines. The response was introduced by Mack with the explanation that, "You have requested from us in love our motives. The Apostle Paul teaches believers (1 Peter 3:15) that they must always be ready to give an answer to anyone who calls them to account for the hope that is in them."[1] Five years after the first Brethren baptism in the Eber River, the Brethren established a tradition of providing an apologetic record of their beliefs and actions. It is this record which must be traced to establish a deeply rooted tradition of adherence to the doctrines of nonviolence and non-swearing, (non-oath taking).

The founding of the German Baptist Brethren dates to 1708 in Schwarzenau, Palatinate, along the Eber River. Influenced by the growing Pietist movement and increasingly convinced of the misdirection of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches, a small group led by Alexander Mack took the radical step of recommitting themselves to adherence of the New Testament and a following of the Primitive Apostolic Church. This dedication was cemented with the baptism by immersion of the first eight people who formed the founding nucleus of German Baptist Brethren. The act of performing adult, believers, baptism was a crime and the group was soon labeled as religious dissidents. The Pietist group maintained a separatist social structure, "founded in practical living based upon the New Testament".[2] A simple and productive lifestyle,

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[1] Alexander Mack and William R. Eberly. *The complete writing of Alexander Mack*. (Winona Lake, Bmh Books, 1991.) 22

2 David Rufus Bowman. *The Church of the Brethren and War, 1708-1941*. (United States: Brethren publishing house, 1944). 36

and avoidance of modern culture and fashion, and a community of believers focused on adherence to the societal structures outlined by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount instructed the daily life of the Brethren. These structures would endure to shape the involvement of the Brethren in the American Civil War.

The Brethren, led by Alexander Mack and greatly influenced by the Pietism of Christopher Hochmann, established several First Principles, drawn from the teachings of Christ. These principles established the core of Brethren belief and interaction with society. The first principle is that of peace. Peace, here, having multiple expressions and applications to daily life. Peace meant non-coercion in matters of faith and religion. This led directly to the principle that there should be no state established or funded religion. By inherent design a state religion establishes a measure of coercion in matters of faith. Each human must find their path to Christ, faith, and salvation independently of force or coercion.[3]

Peace also means non-swearing or non-oath taking as the Christian is foundationally obliged to only swear fidelity to God alone, through Christ. This application of the peace principle placed them in direct issue with state governments during the American Revolution and Civil War. The refusal to swear oaths of loyalty to state or federal government has placed the Brethren under implication of treason throughout their history in the United States.

The peace principle of non-violence expresses itself in multiple ways, all of which had direct impact on how they were perceived, treated, and tolerated during the Revolution and Civil Wars. Based in the literal application of Matthew 5: 38-41, the Brethren refused all acts of violence whether in self-defense, retaliation, or war. The taking up of arms for purposes of war formed one core aspect of the doctrine of non-violence. Prohibition against the protection of

[3] Ibid, 29-33.

one's personal property by force, loving of one's enemy, forgiving of one's transgressor, and the praying for those who persecute the believer were all expressions of the peace doctrine.

The second principle following Peace was one of 'No Creed'. The New Testament was the sole creed of the early Brethren congregations. Prior to the establishment of the Brethren in 1708 Christopher Hochmann had published a statement of faith for his Pietist movement in 1702. As close friends and similarly minded Pietists, Hochmann and Mack shared many points of agreement in Hochmann's statement of faith. However, Alexander Mack stood firmly opposed to developing a statement of faith which may inhibit future illumination of scripture through the establishment of a traditionalized creed or confession. The tradition of not following an established creed was considered by Benjamin Franklin in his interactions with the Brethren in Pennsylvania. Franklin recorded Michael Wohlfahrt, a leader of the Ephrata Society of Dunkers, as giving a clear apologetic for the non-adoption of an established creed.

Wohlfahrt explained that the God had enlightened the Brethren in scriptural truth from the early founding of the group. Errors in doctrine were illuminated to the early leaders and truth of scripture revealed. God had continued to reveal correct understanding to the Brethren during the intervening years. "Now we are not sure that we are arrived at the end of this progression and at the perfection of our spiritual or theological knowledge, and we fear that if we should once print our confession of faith, we should feel ourselves as if bound and confined by it, and perhaps be unwilling to receive further improvement, and our successors still more so, as conceiving what their elders and founders had done to be something sacred never to be departed from."[4]

[4] Ibid, 32. Also, Donald Durnbaugh. The Brethren in Colonial America: A Source Book on the Transplantation and Development of the Church of the Brethren in the Eighteenth Century. (Elgin: Brethren Press, 1967.)

Franklin marveled at the modesty of the sect which, rather than claim exclusive knowledge and correct interpretation of scripture, demurred to acknowledge that understanding of scripture was not complete and that errors and misinterpretations could still be revealed in the future. The modesty displayed in the continued effort in understand and apply scripture to daily life is clearly demonstrated in the application of the peace principles to questions related to slavery, war, loyalty oaths, and non-resistance to government seizures of grain and livestock, to arrests, and even imprisonment. Quiet modesty of speech but firm adherence to scripture with God being the final authority of all secular authority.

Future chapters will illuminate the modesty of speech and lack of claims of righteousness but a firm resolve in action which accorded Godly authority of questions of right and wrong in human affairs. The Brethren did not engage in public speech about slavery, they were not vocal or public abolitionists, rather they self-policed against the institution and actively aided freed slaves through employment, resettlement in the North, and equal treatment within the church. The Brethren did not publicly speak about secession or the violence directed at them over the Virginia vote on secession, but rather attempted to peacefully approach these worldly affairs from the teachings of scripture. Modesty of speech, non-resistance to violence, and refusal of swearing oaths to human authority did not inhibit firm resolve of action. When the question of moral responsibility to act as Christ would act presented Brethren adherents with a call to action the Brethren were firm in resolve. Persecution and martyrdom were but small risks when a failure to act would be a failure of faith. With the New Testament as the sole creed of the Brethren a call to Godly action could not be ignored.

The final First Principle of the Brethren was one of Ordinance as a Means of Grace. The ordinances of trine immersion baptism, communion service which includes feet-washing, the

brotherhood meal known as the Love Feast, the bread and the cup. The Brethren also practice anointing the sick with oil. These ordinances are a practical application of the actions of Jesus and the apostolic church into daily life as a symbol of belief and an active means of grace. Living the Christian life, for the Brethren, meant an application of belief into daily activity. Humility, modesty, and quiet dedication to Christ as taught in Matthew 18 were taught from childhood. This humble Christian resolve permeated secular activity and made threat of persecution a non-factor in decision making and the taking of necessary action. The Brethren differed from their Pietists foundations on in the creation of an organized church. Professor of Church History at Bethany Bible College, F. E. Mallott once described the Brethren as, "…Biblical, mystical Pietists".[5] The organization of a church structure allowed the Brethren to explore questions of faith, secular affairs, and scriptural interpretation within a broad network of fellow congregants. Therefore, the diversion from this element of Pietism was deemed essential for the well-being of the apostolic church.

Intentionally non-conformist and separatists, the Brethren were willing to stand in peaceful opposition to society when society diverged from the teachings of Christ. The application of the Peace Principle of non-violence can be found throughout the earliest records of the Brethren. These principles of non-resistance and pacifism must be considered in context with the Brethren relationship with civil authority. The earliest written records from Christopher Hochmann and Alexander Mack Sr. provide a clear apologetic of the purpose of civil authority and the relationship of the believer to government. Similar to the theology laid out by St. Augustine in the fourth century, the Brethren turned to Paul for guidance on the proper relationship, and limits of adherence to civil authority for followers of Christ. In a letter to

[5] Ibid, 34.

Christopher Sauer, a Brethren leader in Germantown, Pennsylvania, Christopher Hochmann wrote:

> "Concerning high power. I believe that it is a divine ordinance, I willingly submit in all civil matters according to the teaching of Paul (Romans 13: 1-7). On the other hand, however, with all true evangelical (believers) I accord no power to those who struggle against God's Word and my conscience or the freedom of Christ: for it is said: We ought to obey God, etc. (Acts 5:29), and if anything should be charged against God an my conscience I should rather suffer unjust force than act contrary to this…"[6]

Alexander Mack Sr. likewise wrote on the relationship to the state and the limits of submission to the state. "And believers are also taught by Paul, Romans 13: 1-7, that every soul shall be subject, for the Lord's sake, to human regulations…" Like Hochmann, Mack placed the limit of human authority at the line where human authority becomes contrary to the will of God, through the teachings of Christ. Mack continued on government, "if they will fulfill their office according to the will of God." [7] The theology of 'two-realms' of reality, the heavenly and the temporal, has formed the foundation for Christian interaction with civil authority for many Christians throughout the history of the church. For the German Baptist Brethren this distinction provided the point of final authority: God's law ultimately supersedes human law when conflict develops. This theological foundation informed the actions of the Brethren in every instance in which secular authority demanded military service.

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[6] Christopher Hochmann. "Glaubens Bekenniniss" Martin G. Brumbaugh. *A History of the German Baptist Brethren in Europe and America.* United States: Brethren publishing house, 1899. 75-88.

[7] Mack. In Durnbaugh, *The Brethren in Colonial America.* 358.

The Brethren did not adhere strictly to all tenants of Pietism, however, the direct influence of Pietism on the structure of the Christian life, as developed and followed by Brethren through the nineteenth century is firmly based in the teachings of Spener. Alexander Mack was greatly influenced by his friendship and travels with the mystical Pietist Christopher Hochmann. Hochmann had studied under August Herman Franke who had himself studied under Philipp Jacob Spener. The life of the believer, according to the Pietist influence, was one of personal spirituality. Focus on the personal relationship with God, achieved through prayer, devotional Bible study, simple, moral lifestyle, and practical piety became the central structures of the life for the believer. Adherence to God must always supersede adherence to civil authority. For the Christ centric life the limits of submission to government authority were clearly defined by the New Testament. When government requested the believer take action or defer to state in contradiction to the teachings of Christ the reaction was a firm, peaceful, resolve. The Brethren would not rise in physical self-defense, however, this proscription did not prohibit peaceful resistance to authority. Brethren were prepared to act in accordance with Biblical authority, their action would simply take non-violent forms.

A contemporary and friend of both Philipp Spener and Christopher Hochmann, Gottfried Arnold wrote an the influential, *A Genuine Portraiture of the Primitive Christians*, which provides a detailed discussion of the doctrines of trine immersion, adult baptism, feet washing, non-oath taking, and nonresistance. Alexander Mack was highly versed in the work of Gottfried Arnold, quoting him on the core doctrines and Peace Principles regularly. The Brethren tied themselves directly to the tradition of the Apostolic Church and therefore did not consider that they were organizing a new sect but were rather the practitioners of Primitive Christianity.[8]

[8] David Rufus Bowman. *The Church of the Brethren and War, 1708-1941*. (Elgin: Brethren Publishing House, 1944.) 54.

It was during the earliest years in the Palatine that the Brethren formed deep ties to the Mennonite congregations in the region. The Brethren and Mennonite practice many of the same doctrines and found a kindred relationship as adherents to the Primitive Church who were greatly influenced by the spiritualism of Christopher Hochmann. The first group of Brethren to immigrate to Pennsylvania had settle briefly in Marienborn, persecution in Marienborn forced an immigration to Creyfeld in 1715. The established Mennonite congregations in Creyfeld received the Brethren warmly and the groups formed deep and lasting ties. Intermarriage between Mennonite and Brethren dates to this period. The Schwarzenau congregation, led by Alexander Mack was forced to leave in 1720. They settle in Westervain, West Friesland. The first immigrations to Germantown, Pennsylvania saw groups of Mennonite and Brethren leaving Creyfeld during the same period. The first Mennonites immigrated from Creyfeld to Germantown as early as 1683. Increased immigration and the first Brethren immigration occurred in 1719 from the Creyfeld groups. Under the urging of Brethren and Mennonite in Pennsylvania, Alexander Mack led his Westervain Brethren congregation to Germantown in 1729. This marks the effective end of the German Baptist Brethren in Europe. The future of the Brethren became tied to the history of the United States. The long association between the Brethren and Mennonite led to cooperative communities and support when groups began to migrate across the Blue Ridge Mountains and settle in the Shenandoah Valley.

The Pietist weighed matters of secular and ecclesial authority against the teachings of Christ in all matters. As the persecution of Pietists increased across the Palatinate and neighboring regions the resolution of secular, church, and Godly authority was often the apologetic for refusal to abandon Pietism and adherence to the Apostolic Church. In Heidelberg

a group of Pietist suffered repeated arrests, imprisonment with hard labor, torture, and excommunication but remained devout in principle. The Elector Palatine issued orders for increased policing and punishment of suspected Pietists. In 1709 a group of repeat offenders was rearrested for holding private devotional, bible study, and singing in the hope of a Heidelberg button maker by the name of Martin Lucas. During extensive interrogation concerning their belief system and why they chose to separate from a recognized church the defendants, Martin Lucas, and brothers' Nicolas and John Diehl gave a clear apologetic for their Pietism. When asked, considering previous punishments, they chose not to desist and recommit to a recognized faith Lucas clearly articulated the balance of religious conscience and secular authority.

Interrogator: Why did they not desist, then, from such meetings and new doctrine as they had been punished?

Martin Lucas and Nicolas Diehl responded in agreement: "Because primarily they owe obedience to God in matters of conscience, and to the worldly authorities in matter of police regulation. This is no new doctrine either, but rather Christ's, for which they are ready to sacrifice everything they have, their bodies and their lives, for they are only dust and ashes."

Martin Lucas was offered one more opportunity to join one of the three recognized churches. Upon refusal he was imprisoned in Brabant, his wife expelled from the town, his home was sold and his children placed with a permanent legal guardian with funds from the sale of his home. Martin Lucas did not recant, his conscientious dedication to the Pietism of Primitive Christianity carried a high cost which he knowingly accepted.[9]

[9] Durnbaugh. *European Origins.* 27.

Dedication to the peace principles can be traced from the earliest years of the Pietist movement in Europe. Refusal to muster for militia duty drew attention from local authorities and electors by 1706, two years before Alexander Mack performed the first Brethren baptism in the Eber River. The refusal to appear on the muster grounds and participate in scheduled drilling became a significant complaint of municipal authorities even while local Priests and Reformed pastors complained about the refusal of the group to baptize their infants and young children.

Andrew Boni, (1673-1741), would be one of the first eight Schwarzenau Brethren baptized by Alexander Mack in 1708. His dedication to Pietism and repeated arrests and persecution had begun previously in Basel. In 1705 he was held for interrogation on charges of pietism including complaints by his local pastor that he refused to muster for militia drills or to bear arms in any manner, that he refused to swear oaths, and that he did not attend Holy Communion. The questioning led to Boni's case being passed to the Swiss Council of Seven for further review and interrogation. Andrew Boni's family resided in Basel, therefore, despite being continually imprisoned and expelled from the city he would return to visit his family, and preach to the Pietist groups who met secretly in homes. After his third arrest and expulsion from the city he seems to have settled, for period, in Schwarzenau and became an early leader in the Brethren movement.[10]

The Brethren did not begin to hold annual meetings and keep strenuous records concerning interaction with public affairs until during the American Revolution. However, there are records which clearly establish the Brethren refusal to swear oaths or participate in any militia or defensive actions from the period during the Colonial period.

[10] Ibid. 92-94.

A history of Pennsylvania published in 1798 outlined the Brethren stance on non-violence which had drawn considerable, and often unfavorable, attention during the Revolution. Author Robert Proud wrote an overview of the doctrines, social interactions, and views on civil authority of the German Baptist Brethren.

"They also hold it not becoming a follower of Jesus Christ to bear arms, or fight; because, they say, their true master has forbid his disciples to resist evil; and because he also told them not to swear at all, they will by no means take an oath; but adhere close to his advice, in the affirmation of yea and nay."[11]

As to adherence to a creed or affirmation of faith, Proud succinctly articulated the teachings of the founding Brethren leaders. "They have a great esteem for the New Testament, valuing it higher than the other books; and when they are asked about the articles of their faith, they say they know of no others but what are contained in this book; and therefore can give none."[12]

Christopher Sower, Sr. had emigrated with his family from Germany in 1724. An early leader in the Brethren congregations of Germantown, Christopher Sower, Sr. established a printing shop which produced the vast majority of Brethren literature and the first German bible to be printed in the Colonies. In 1748 Christopher Sower, Sr. published an article explaining the Brethren views on war, resistance, and the bearing of arms. Sower Sr. based his instruction on John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." Sower followed the verse with the explanation, "…for there is peace in our hearts which nobody can take." This peace of will

[11] Robert Proud. *The History of Pennsylvania, in North America*. (Carlisle: Applewood Books, 2010.)

[12] Ibid.

which salvation brings to the hearts of mankind provided the fortitude for nonresistance in the face of persecution. "So the great and the little 'world children' may argue, quarrel, beat, shoot, stab or destroy,--Christ's peace will remain in the hearts of His children although they have to live in the midst of all this. But he who cannot suffer little or great things, will soon lose peace and be in quarrel and fight, war and trouble."[13]

"Gottes wille sei gethan." God's will be done.

The French and Indian War and Pontiac's Rebellion brought tremendous bloodshed to the Pennsylvania frontier. Brethren who had settled on farms along the western frontier faced greater risk of death due to the nonresistant principles. Examples of Brethren calmly facing death rather than raise arms in self-defense can be found throughout the reports from the Colonial Period. A series of attacks in the Juniata Valley of southcentral Pennsylvania from 1777-1780 clearly documented the peace principles and the struggle of neighbors and military leaders to understand the willingness to die rather than kill in self-defense. An incident north of Fort Bedford relates the reaction of the Brethren to Indian attack. The Brethren had established farms in the 'Great Cove' north of Fort Bedford on the Juniata River. In 1777 tribes, largely spurred and supplied by the British, descended on the region. While many families were able to find safety at the forts in the region, the Brethren did not abandon their farms or raise arms in self-defense. Juniata Valley historian, Uriah James Jones, writing from local records some 50 years after the incident captured a clear image of the Brethren application of the non-resistance principle.

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[13] Der Hoch-Deutsch Americanishe Calendar, 1749, Sower. In Durnbaugh, *Colonial America*. 459. Also, Bowman, *War*. 72.

"The savages swept down through the Cove with all the ferocity with which a pack of wolves would descend from the mountain upon a flock of sheep. Some few of the Dunkards, who evidently had a latent spark of love of life, hid themselves away; but by far the most of them stood by and witnessed the butchery of their wives and children, merely saying "Gottes wille sei gethan". [14]

In the immediate aftermath of the attack on the Brethren settlement in the Cove the war party moved north and east, stopping at Neff's Mill. Neff is recorded as being a Dunkar who was the miller, not the owner, of the mill. When two Indians rode up to the mill Neff shot one of them, then following a quick chase and reload shot the second as well. Early histories reported that Neff was excommunicated for taking a human life. In reality he was reprimanded by the church but upon continued public discussion of the incident was expelled from the Brethren Church.[15]

The Revolutionary War brought the first direct confrontations between civil authority, namely the Pennsylvania government and the Continental Congress. The refusal to muster, bear arms even for defense against Indian raids on the western border, and refusal to swear oaths of loyalty to the new nation brought tremendous persecution. Brethren lost significant amounts of property, wealth, prestige, and even freedom due to their adherence to the foundational peace principles.

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[14] Uriah James Jones. History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley: Embracing an Account of the Early Pioneers, and the Trials and Privations Incident to the Settlement of the Valley; Predatory Incursions, Massacres, and Abductions by the Indians During the French and Indian Wars, and the War of the Revolution. (Philadelphia: H.B. Ashmead, 1856.)

[15] Durnbaugh, *Colonial America*; Bowman, *War*; and Jones, *Juniata*. 145.

During the first years of the American Revolution the organization of militia was handled solely by the individual colonies. The vast majority of Brethren settled in Pennsylvania, therefore falling under Pennsylvania Colonial authority under militia laws. The petitioning of government to attain exemption status during the Revolution set the precedent for subsequent petitions.

The Brethren worked in close conjunction with the Mennonite churches to secure acknowledgement of their non-resistor principles from the onset of hostilities between colonies and England. In 1775 the Assembly of Pennsylvania requested that all male citizens of the colony 'associate' for the common defense. This included the organization of militia units for military drill at locally designated muster grounds. Populations who held pacifist principle were consider 'Non-Associators'. Pennsylvania, still largely influenced by earlier Quaker leadership, acknowledged the religious freedom of those churches who held to peace-principles, including: Quakers, Mennonites, and Dunkers, (Brethren). On June 30, 1775 the Pennsylvania Assembly released a statement asking that 'Associators' respect those who were, "conscientiously scrupulous of bearing arms" and that they, "bear a tender and brotherly regard toward this class of their fellow-subjects and Countrymen". The Assembly asked of the Non-Associators that, "these conscientious people it is also recommended, that they cheerfully assist, in proportion to their abilities, such Associators as cannon spend their time and substance in the public service without great injury to themselves and families."[16]

These early recognitions' of conscientious objectors to the war effort were soon eroded by the demands of war. Patience with the Brethren began to wane, particularly when these

[16] Votes of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania. Vol. VI. 1767-1776. Printed and sold by Henry Miller, Philadelphia.. 594.; also recorded in Bowman, *War*. 78.

objectors were asked to swear oaths of allegiance. Many of the Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren were financially comfortable, with many being rather affluent farmers. This wealth, when held from contribution to the war effort soon contributed to the waning patience. On September 27, 1775 the Pennsylvania House of Representatives released a statement of protest against leniency toward those who conscientiously opposed the war. This statement demanded that all citizens contribute to the war effort with either person or property. This was the first step toward taxes, fines, and confiscation of property from the peace churches.[17]

On October 26, 1775 the Quakers submitted a petition to preserve the religious toleration established by William Penn with respect for the religious conscience of the peace churches. The Mennonite and Brethren co-drafted a petition to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on November 7, 1775. This petition demonstrates the close relationship between the Mennonites and Brethren, during the Civil War the Brethren and Mennonite would again work jointly to gain exemption status. The groups demonstrated a willingness to pay taxes rather than be engaged in the destruction of human life. The focus of this petition can be summarized in two key paragraphs:

> "The advice to those who do not find Freedom of conscience to take up arms, that they ought to be helpful to those who are in need and distressed circumstances, we receive with cheerfulness towards all men of what station they may be—it being our principle to feed the Hungry and give the Thirsty Drink;--we have dedicated ourselves to serve all men in everything that can be helpful to the preservation of Men's Lives, but we find no Freedom in giving, or doing, or assisting in any thing

[17] Ibid. 599.

> by which Men's Lives are destroyed or hurt. We beg the Patience of all those who believe we err in this point.
>
> We are always ready, according to Christ's Command to Peter, to pay the Tribute, that we Offend no man, and so we are willing to pay Taxes, and to render unto Caesar those things that are Caesar's, and to God those things that are God's, although we think ourselves very weak to give God his due Favor, he being a Spirit and Life, and We only dust and ashes."[18]

The petition was answered on November 8, (the following day), with a statement that each province should calculate the expense to the Associators in military service and that be the fees paid by Non-Associators. A committee was subsequently appointed to calculate the taxes to be collected from the peace church members. Frustration with the Non-Associators increased through the winter of 1775-76. In April of 1776 the Pennsylvania Assembly ordered that all quality arms be collected from the conscientious objectors.

On June 13, 1777, Pennsylvania passed an Oath of Allegiance law requiring that all Non-Associators swear a Loyalty Oath. The Mennonite and Brethren, being founded on the principle of swearing no oaths to human civil authority were placed in an impossible position with this law. In fact, their stance on loyalty was rather complex with the Brethren having established a position of 'wait and see' who God might chose to win the conflict. The Brethren were rather content to live peacefully under whichever government should happen to win the war. There were neither Tories nor Loyalists, but rather politically ambivalent concerning the outcome of the war. Working from the premise that civil government is ordained by God, the Brethren

[18] Votes of the Pennsylvania House of Rep. p 645

viewed themselves as obligated to live, work, and sometimes simply endure the government placed by providence. Neither Tory nor Loyalist, but in the climate of growing conflicts between loyalists in Tories in the backcountry a stance of neutrality was considered highly suspicious.

The impacts of the growing crisis of war seems to have functioned as a driver of increased organization for the Brethren congregations. In 1778 the Brethren met for their first Annual Meeting. The first meeting focused on the Oath of Allegiance, referenced in the minutes as 'the attest'. The opening statement from these minutes records, "After much reflection, in the fear of the Lord, it has been concluded in union, that the brethren who have taken the attest should recall it before a justice, and give up their certificate, and recall and apologize in their churches, and truly repent for their error." Penalty for failure to reject the oath would find the church, "withdraw ourselves from every brother who walketh disorderly, and such a brother will be deprived of the kiss of fellowship, of the counsel, and the breaking of bread, until he becomes obedient again."[19]

The structured statement of neutrality in the conflict was clearly articulated in the Annual Meeting Minutes of 1779. "On account of taking the attest, it has been concluded in union as follows: Inasmuch as it is the Lord our God who establishes kings and removes kings, and ordains rulers according to his own good pleasure, and we can not know whether God has rejected the king and chosen the state, while the king had the government; therefore we could not, with a good conscience, repudiate the king and give allegiance to the state." The minutes

[19] *Minutes of the Annual Meetings of the Old German Baptist Brethren, from 1778-1955: And Appendix Designed for the Promotion of the Peace and Harmony of the Brotherhood.* Winona Lake, 1981. 1778. 5.

continue with the proscribed procedure for readmitting those who had taken the oath of loyalty into full activity in the church.[20]

The refusal of the Brethren and Mennonite to swear the oath of loyalty, known as a test, to the Republic of Pennsylvania, led to extreme hardship and loss of property. Under the April 1, 1778 law failure to take the loyalty oath would lead to the loss of all legal and social rights. The penalty would begin with imprisonment, but upon continued refusal, would lead to banishment from the country and the forfeiture of all personal property. The first significant case occurred in Upper Milford when two justices of the peace summoned Brethren and Mennonite men to take the test. Upon refusal they were condemned to leave the country within thirty days: all personal property was sold at public auction including flour and spinning wheels. During this period two Quakers were imprisoned and ultimately hung, in Philadelphia for refusal to swear oaths of loyalty to Pennsylvania.[21]

Vigilante justice directed against the Brethren and Mennonite increased in Lancaster and surrounding areas during the first three years of the war. While the peace-churches worked together to petition for exemption from muster and military service and subsequently paid the significant fines for this exemption, popular resentment increased. In Lancaster the threat of mob violence against the Brethren increased to a level that the county issued a broadside urging patience with the "divers persons whose religious tenets forbid their forming themselves into military associations". The broadside reminded local residents that the Brethren and Mennonite

[20] Ibid.5.

[21] Durnbaugh, *The Brethren in Colonial America*. 352-353.

cheerfully paid fees to exempt themselves from service and strongly discouraged the "mob spirit".[22]

The colonial authorities took an increasingly non-tolerant stance in regard to Brethren attempts at neutrality; the refusal to swear the loyalty oaths led to arrests, prosecution, and seizure of personal property. Christopher Sower Jr. had inherited his father's printing business in Germantown. During the fall and winter of 1777-1778 Sower stayed with one of his three adult sons in Philadelphia. Two of the three sons made a close allegiance with the British during the occupancy of the city. This association with suspected Tories combined with his refusal to swear an oath of loyalty to the state of Pennsylvania led to his arrest.

Sower had returned to his home in Germantown by mid-May 1778. During the late evening hours of May 23, 1778 Sower was arrested and marched several miles to a neighboring barn. Possibly due to his wealth, his clothing and shoes were confiscated. "Then they stripped me naked to the skin and gave me an old shirt and breeches so much torn that I could barely cover my nakedness. Then cut my bread and hair and barefooted and bareheaded in a very hot sunshining day. A friend of mine seeing me in that condition asked them whether they would not take the shoes from me if he would give me a pair." The officer promised that Sower would be permitted to keep a pair of shoes, but only a couple miles further toward Valley Forge and the shoes were confiscated. [23]

Sower arrived at the camp on May 26, and noted his official charges as, "an oppressor of the Righteous and a spy." He was granted permission to petition General Washington as to his case and innocence. He was freed on May 29 but not permitted to return to his home until June

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[22] Ibid, 363.

[23] Sower's manuscript in Durnbaugh, *The Brethren in Colonial America.* 364.

23. On May 27 it was discovered that while held in the Provo at Valley Forge he had missed his opportunity to petition the Supreme Court in Lancaster in regard to his conscientious objection to war and to oath taking. Having missed this single opportunity his property was to be auctioned off and his home rented out. Christopher Sower Jr then watched as his entire estate was confiscated with him only keeping a suit of clothing and his spectacles. His printing presses and all business equipment was also sold. Later the same year his home was sold. Christopher Sower Jr. lost an estimated wealth of one-hundred fifty thousand dollars. Sower never recovered his health from the forced, barefoot march. He never recovered his success or even a modest amount of his previous wealth. He died a 'crushed man' on August 26, 1784.[24]

As the war continued the church had to address the laws requiring non-resistors to supply a substitute on their own behalf to serve in the Continental Army. This passage in the minutes from the Annual Meeting of 1781 would set a precedent which would be considered and applied when conscription laws went into effect in the South during the Civil War.

Annual Meeting of 1781

> Article I. Inasmuch, at the big meeting at Conestoga, last year, it has been unanimously concluded that we should not pay the substitute money; but inasmuch as it has been overlooked here and there, and some have not regarded it, (sad conclusion), therefore we, the assembled brethren, exhort in union all brethren in all places to hold themselves guiltless, and take no part in war or blood-shedding, which might take place if we would par for hiring men voluntarily; or more still, if we would become agents to collect such money.[25]

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[24]Bowman, Brethren in War. 98

[25] Annual Minutes, 1781. 7.

The Annual Minutes of 1785 undertook a scriptural apologetic for the principal of non-resistance in reaction to an ongoing dispute with a Brethren leader who had taken a pro-resistance stance. The Brethren remained clearly aligned with the established peace principle. "So we hope the dear brethren will not take it amiss when we, from all these passages of Scripture, and especially from the words of Peter, can not see or find any liberty to use any (carnal) sword, but only the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by which we cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, as Paul, (II Cor. X. 5) says." The minutes of the 1785 Meeting concluded with a second action:

"Article 2. Further, it was discussed, and unanimously considered, that no brother should permit his sons to go on the muster ground, much less that a brother go himself."[26]

The relationship of the Brethren to questions of war and civil authority in matters of war were clearly defined during the American Revolution. The consequences during the war would be extreme for the Brethren living in Pennsylvania, with tremendous loss of wealth, property, and freedom. The application of these principals in the War Between the States would be even more costly for Brethren living in Virginia.

The seizure laws regarding refusal to swear an oath of loyalty cost the Brethren across Pennsylvania a tremendous amount of wealth. The exemption fees were equally impactful of accumulated wealth. The impact led to a rededication to separatism and the need to relocate to regions west and south of Eastern Pennsylvania. During and immediately following the Revolutionary War large numbers of Brethren and Mennonite families migrated west across

[26] Ibid, 1788.13.

Pennsylvania. Many settled in the western portions of that state or in Ohio. Many more turned south down the Shenandoah Valley and found rich farm land readily available. Several factors drove the decisions to sell valuable farmland in Pennsylvania and to resettle on what was still, temporarily, the western frontier. These motivations drew from the strict adherence to the peace principles which the Brethren upheld during the Revolution. The persecution of Christopher Sower and multiple other Brethren and Mennonite leaders, the tremendous loss of property, and the execution of two Quaker's for the treason of refusing the loyalty oaths functioned to encourage Brethren to migrate away from Pennsylvania's large population centers. Directly connected to these events was a growing adherence to separatist teachings. Brethren further cemented an observance to distance from social trends, to avoid environments which might draw attention from Pietous living, and avoid modern trends in fashion or morality. The large expanses of territory available in the Shenandoah Valley offered Brethren and Mennonites the opportunity to create peace church congregations within a community of believers. Although not strictly isolated, the Brethren and Mennonite found the availability of abundant farmland ideal for maintaining the separatist principle.

Intermarriage between the Mennonite and Brethren congregations continued from the early settlement period and through the Civil War. Sharing of meeting houses, and invitations for pastors of one church to preach at the other were common. Shared beliefs concerning the peace principles created these cooperative communities and contributed to the cooperative actions concerning slavery and later secession and the war.

The War of 1812 led the Brethren to again prohibit their sons from presenting themselves for militia duty, appearing at the muster grounds, or taking any active role in the war. The Annual Minutes established again that the payment of fines associated with refusal to muster was

a responsibility to be carried by the congregations in support of young men unable to pay the fines themselves. The burden of supporting military age men in their conscientious decision to abstain from war the responsibility of the church members and the raising of the funds a priority for each congregation.[27] The Brethren, by consensus, stood opposed to the supplying of paid replacements for men eligible for military conscription. However, when fines were assessed for the objectors these were generally paid as the only alternative to military service. The Annual Minutes of 1815 record the decision to pay such fines for men who were unable to afford to pay them. The sons of Brethren who sought to adhere to the non-violence principle would have the full support of their church. "…a brother's sons who consider themselves according to the teaching of the brethren, "defenseless," and prove themselves to be such and wish to obey the teachings of the brethren; when these shall be hard pressed with the payment of fines they shall be assisted by the brethren according to the teaching of the apostle;…"[28] The financial support would only be extended to congregants who were able to demonstrate an adherence to Brethren teachings on the matter of war and non-violence.

During the 1820s and '30s the stance on Brethren attending militia training was also addressed on multiple occasions. Some Brethren had considered if simply attending militia training might be acceptable to avoid fines so long as those Brethren did not actually march to war or in any way harm another human being. Here the Annual Minutes again record an opposition to learning the art of war. In 1817 the question was posed as to, "Brethren or their children may go on the muster ground or not."[29]

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[27] Annual Minutes, 1815. 49

[28] Ibid, 1815. 49

[29] Ibid, 1817. 52

"The counsel was, that no member may go there, and prevent also their children from going on that ground…" The penalty for attending militia musters would be loss of full fellowship with the church.[30] This would include denial of communion, foot washing, and the love feast. Loss of full membership, essentially excommunication, was consider a harsh punishment meant to stress the severity of any militia service. Statements prohibiting participation at the muster grounds were further recorded in 1822 and 1835. Article 7 of the 1835 Annual Meeting Minutes states, "How it is considered when brethren go to muster and drill. Considered, that it is contrary to our baptismal vow, contrary to the world of god, and contrary to the professed principle of the church, and can by no means be permitted or tolerated."[31] In 1840 a similar statement was again recorded with specific scriptural references. "Art. 9. Whether it could be allowed for brethren to go to train, (or muster), in the militia? Considered, that training or mustering is a preparation for war, and since we are inclined to peace and a defenseless state, it would in no wise be proper nor allowable for brethren to learn war. Is. II. 4; Mic. IV. 3."[32]

The Mexican American war did not put the Brethren in a position of forced conscription or requirements to pay fines for failure to muster, though the war did bring an additional apologetic for nonresistance and the free choice to live as, "…altogether defenseless, not to withstand the evil, but overcome evil with good…" In this conclusion the Brethren established that following the Lamb of God, in His willing submission to earthly evils, was the biblical directive concerning resistance. The Brethren again concluded that the adherence to non-

[30] Ibid, 1817. 52

[31] Ibid, 1835 74

[32] Ibid, 1840 88

resistance was critical to the Christian life, "even to the loss of our property, our liberty, and our lives."[33] This is a statement on non-resistance which John Kline helped to construct, and an apologetic he would apply in full during the Civil War. This statement articulated the Pietistic worldview which the Brethren would apply to inform their response to the Civil War, particularly in the Confederate States where conscription became increasingly difficult to evade during the progression of the war.

Participation in celebrations such as Independence Day and George Washington's birthday also came before the members of the Annual Meeting during the late 1840s. Under the peace principles these celebrations were considered from the biblical directive to love all men in peace and to reconstruct the understanding of patriotism from one of arms bearing in defense of a nation to one in which society lived in Christian love so that arms bearing in national defense became unrequired of society. John Kline's apologetic on this topic recorded in 1849, again, informs his future response to the Civil War.

> "My highest conception of patriotism is found in the man who loves the Lord his God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. Out of these affections spring the subordinate love of one's country; love truly virtuous for one's companion and children, relatives and friends, and in its most comprehensive sense takes in the whole human family. Were this love universal, the word patriotism, and its specific sense, meaning such a love for one's country as makes its possessors ready and willing to take up arms in its defense, might be appropriately expunged from every national vocabulary."[34]

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[33] Annual Minutes, 1845. 107

[34] John Kline. February 22, 1849. . Benjamin Funk. *Life an Labors of Elder John Kline, the MartyrMissionary Collated from his Diary.* Elgin: Brethren Publishing House, 1900.

The focus on the Christian founded patriotism was a dominating ideal which cast the loyalty of the Brethren with the government more aligned with Christian morality. While the dominate loyalty of the American citizen, on the eve of the Civil War, remained with ones' state first and nation second; the Brethren placed their loyalty to the nation as the secular government most in line with Christian morality.

The destruction of Sower's printing business and subsequent migration of the majority of the Brethren to frontier regions created an extended period of relatively little published material from the Brethren. However, some letters and diaries give a record of the upholding of peace principles and separatist communities during the period. The best evidence concerning Brethren stance on issues such as slavery, the War of 1812, the Mexican American War, and even participation in Independence Day celebrations was recorded in the Minutes of the Annual Meetings. It was not until 1851 that the Brethren began to publish a regular church paper, the *Gospel Visitor*, which soon created a record of the Brethren response to slavery and growing regional tensions.

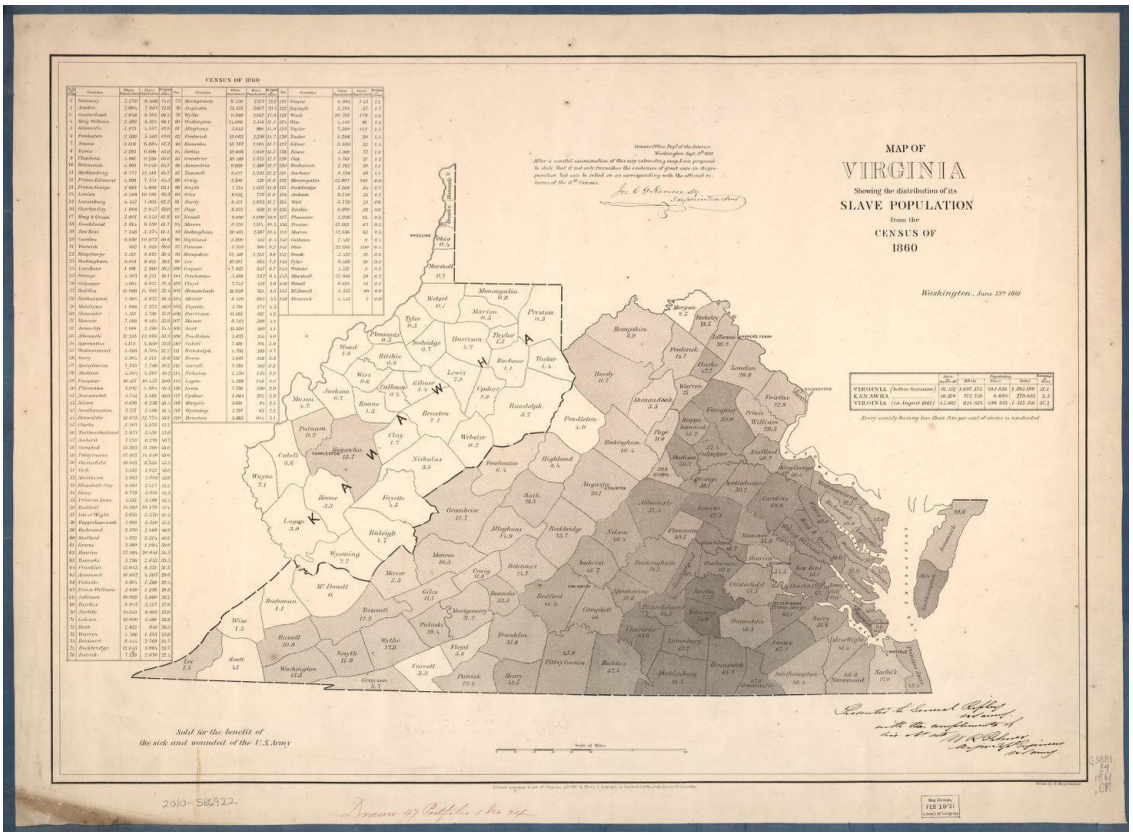
This period of strict adherence to separatism saw a period of the Brethren standing in opposition to Sunday Schools, Singing Schools, and the education of children in institutions of higher education. The suspicion of higher education, Sunday Schools, and even highly educated elders and pastors was a common theme among congregations centered in rural Appalachia during the period. The growth of the Primitive Baptist and similar churches founded in Calvinist principles spread rapidly in the regions where classically educated pastors were limited in number, and literacy levels were in decline due to the lack of teachers and accessible schools.

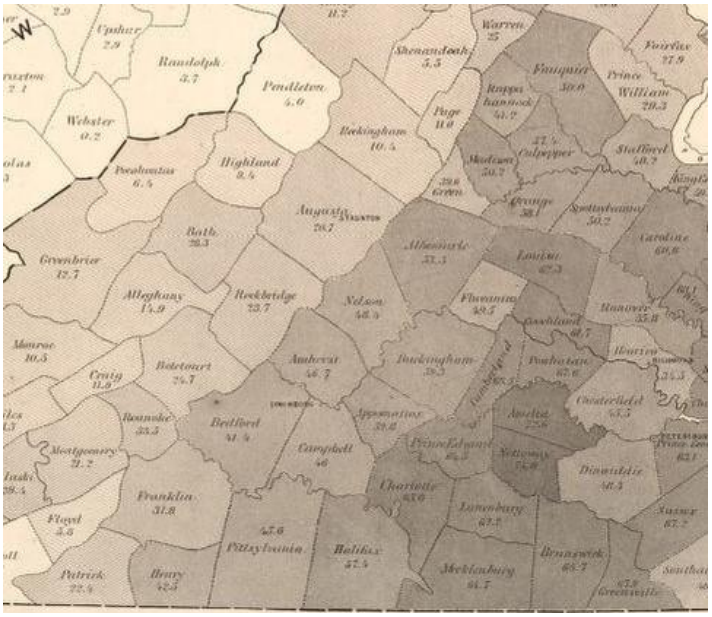
Sunday Schools, frowned upon by the Brethren during this period, were often the only opportunity for basic literacy skills to be taught in Appalachia and across rural America. The Annual Meeting Minutes of 1831 reflect this distrust of higher education. "Article 1. Whether it was considered advisable for a member to have his son educated in a college? Considered not advisable, inasmuch as experience has taught that such very seldom will come back afterward to the humble ways of the Lord." [35] Separatism was reinforced in participation in public affairs, codes of dress and avoidance of current fashion trends, adornments on clothing, participation in elections, investments and usury, and even attendance of theater or public entertainment events.

During the antebellum period the Brethren of Virginia applied themselves to Pietous, agrarian lives, became successful farmers and highly respected members of their communities. Living modest lifestyles allowed the accumulation of wealth for large landowners without any reliance on slave labor. The Brethren grew and expanded, building churches throughout Southwest Virginia and into Tennessee. While not participating in the growing public debate over slavery the Brethren were highly cognizant of the growing divide in the nation over the 'peculiar institution'. The reintroduction of a printed periodical allowed a greater connection between the congregations being planted across the growing nation. This also allowed a high level of unity concerning the questions of slavery and eventually secession.

[35] Annual Meeting Minutes, 1831. 69

1860 Census Slave Population Map of Virginia





The county of Rockingham was an affluent farming county but with high populations of anti-slavery Brethren and Mennonite farmers the slave population remained relatively low on the eve of the Civil War. The mixed crop farming practices of the Shenandoah Valley, particularly Brethren and Mennonite, are also credited for the lower dependence on slave labor.

H.S .Graham and E Hergesheimer. Map of Virginia: showing the distribution of its slave population from the census of. Washington: Henry S. Graham, 1861. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/2010586922/.

Chapter 3

Slavery, Secession, and Objector Status

The Church of the Brethren took a definitive and consistent stance on slavery from the initial contact with the institution upon arrival from Europe. The early church statements and Annual Minutes Meetings record the church stance on the issues of slavery, race relations, and non-white church membership. The inclusive nature of these statements placed the Brethren well ahead of even the early abolitionist on matters related to racial equality and acceptance. The Brethren had also taken a definitive stance on voting and involvement with public elections during the post-Revolutionary period which maintained the separatist relationship with contemporary society. The events surrounding the election of 1860 and the Virginia Vote on Secession saw a dramatic shift in Brethren perspectives on public involvement which needs to be explored in context with the subsequent petitioning for recognized religious objector status.

The Brethren maintained a consistent position on slavery and race relations from the Revolutionary period through the antebellum period. The resettlement of a significant number of Brethren into Virginia placed an increasing number of members in direct contact with slavery. The preferred vocation for the Brethren was agriculture and expansive farming operations presented the temptation for inexpensive labor in the form of slaves. There were rare instances of Brethren ownership of slaves from the founding period onward, however, those instances seem to have universally brought censor from the local congregation, and occasionally, from the Annual Meeting.

The first record of an official stance concerning slavery occurred in 1782 in response to a specific case brought for consideration at the Annual Meeting. The Minutes record both details of the case and a clear statement against slave holding by church members. "Concerning the unchristian Negro slave trade, it has been unanimously considered that it can not be permitted in any wise by the church, that a member should or could purchase Negroes, or keep them as slaves."[1] The case which prompted this pronouncement concerned a Brethren church member who owned a slave woman accused of fornication which resulted in the birth of four children. The minutes record the exact steps the congregant should follow to properly free the slave woman and her children as well as guidance on convincing her of the sin of fornication.[2]

The position of the church on slavery and the punishment for continued ownership of slaves should no plan for manumission be established, was fully defined in the Annual Minutes of 1797. As this statement clearly defines the Brethren position on slavery it will be quoted in its entirety.

Annual Meeting of 1797

> ARTICLE 1. It was considered good, and also concluded unanimously, that no brother or sister should have negroes as slaves; and in case a brother or sister had such, he (or she) has to set them free. And in case a person is drawn by the grace of God, who has negroes, and desires to be received into the church, then it is to be laid before him (or her) before being received by baptism into the church, that it is the brotherly and united counsel that brethren and members having negroes for slaves, and thinking that they could not at once emancipate them, may hold them so long as the nearest church may deem that they had

[1] Annual Minutes, 1782. 8

[2] Ibid. 8.

> earned the money, and then, according to the counsel of the church, to let their slaves go out free, with a good suit of wearing apparel (frei kleid) as is given to a white serve. And if they (the slaves) have children, they shall stay with the brother as servants until they are twenty-five years old; he is to have them taught reading and writing, and bring them up in fear of the Lord, and when they enter their (26) twenty-sixth year, to let them go out free with a good suit of clothing (frei kleid). Further it is considered, if a brother, contrary to this conclusion, would purchase negroes, and would not emancipate them, he would have to be considered as disobedient, and we could have no fellowship with him until he sets them free.

The annual meeting addressed the issue of slavery regularly throughout the Early Republic and antebellum periods. The continued interstate slave trade, which expanded south and west with the opening of ideal cotton growing territory, was addressed in 1812. "Art. 5. Concerning the slave trade and slaveholding; it was considered that it is a most grievous evil, and should be abolished as soon as possible."[3] The following year the Annual Meeting Minutes begin with an expansive condemnation of slavery. "ARTICLE 1. With regard to the slave trade and slave holding, it was unanimously considered that it is wrong, and it belongs to the inequities of Babylon, making merchandise of the souls of men (Rev. XVIII. 13), and that it is carried on by the spirit of this world, and contrary to the good and holy spirit of God,…" This statement reiterates the conditions for the releasing of slaves held by Brethren with guidelines for eucation, moral instruction, and the consequences for Brethren who continue to hold slaves.[4]

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[3] Annual Minutes, 1812 40

[4] Ibid, 1813. 41-42

The Brethren stance on slavery was clearly prohibitive for members and sought total abolition of the institution for the nation. This stance on abolition was firmly planted prior to the rapid expansion of the abolitionist movement in the antebellum period. The Brethren took a decided stance on race relations within the church that placed them well beyond the stance taken even by the majority of abolitionists. The question of black membership within Brethren congregations was taken up in 1835 when the Annual Meeting was held in Rockingham County, Virginia at the home of Elder John Kline.[5] The question of black membership and race relations was addressed in Articles 1 and 12. "Article 1. How it is viewed to receive colored people into our church? Considered, to make no difference on account of color." This article demonstrates a certain level of equality before God which was much more clearly defined with the subsequent article.

> ART. 12. How is it considered to receive colored persons into the church? (The object of the question was, not whether they should be received at all, but whether they would or must be received or treated altogether like white members). It was considered, that, inasmuch as the gospel is preached to all nations and races, and if they come as repentant sinners, believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and apply for baptism, we could not consistently refuse them. But inasmuch as we receive our fellow members with the holy kiss, and there is a repugnance in some of our white members to salute colored persons in this manner, the colored members should bear with that weakness, and not offer the kiss to such weak members until they become stronger, and make the first offer, etc. Otherwise,

[5] The holding of the Annual Meeting at the home of John Kline is indicative of his growing influence within the Brethren Church. This influence would continue to grow during the antebellum and Civil War periods.

> if they (the colored members) prove faithful, they should be considered on an equality of full membership.[6]

There are several significant aspects of this passage in relation to the Brethren perspective on race relations and equality. The burden of weakness and failure to adhere to the teaching of scripture falls to the white members who view race as a condition of equality. *"…the colored members should bear with that weakness, and not offer the kiss to such weak members until they become stronger,…"*[7] places the burden of self-improvement on the white members who are unable to view black members as fully equal before Christ and, therefore, before the church. During the period in the antebellum South when pastors and intellectual leaders were developing influential apologetics which claimed an inherent and divinely mandated inequality between the races the Brethren were taking an extraordinary step toward standardizing racial equality. Essentially, if God created all races in His own image then those who viewed blacks as inherently unequal were the ones out of line with scripture and, therefore, weak in faith and morality.

In 1837 the Annual Minutes further clarified that should a member own slaves the selling of those slaves is not permitted. This clarified that the manumission of slaves was the only alternative for a member seeking to avoid excommunication for the ownership of slaves.[8] The Annual Meeting of 1845 further reiterated the Brethren position that race should have no impact on the acceptance of any person into church membership. The burden of weakness was again

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[6] Annual Minutes 1835. 75

[7] Ibid. 75.

[8] Annual Minutes, 1837 Article 10. 81.

placed on white members who held racial stigmas against close association or physically touching black members. "…but if colored persons are once received as members into the church, the members should be at liberty to salute them in like manner as white members, at the same time having patience with those who may be weak in the faith, and can not do so." This article was immediately followed by a further discussion of slavery. "ART. 3. In regard to hiring slaves, it was considered but little better than purchasing and holding slaves, and that it would be best for a follower of Jesus Christ to have nothing at all to do with slavery."[9] The meeting of 1845 was held in Roanoke County, Virginia and hosted by Brethren who collectively owned some of the larges orchards in the United States. Certainly the use, even the hiring out of slave labor from the surrounding area, would have been tempting for the owners of these massive orchards. The question of race arose again in 1849 with the clarification of black members partaking of communion in conjunction with the white members. It was established that, "…that these ought not to be debarred from the Lord's Table on account of their color."[10] The question of under which circumstances a member might be denied communion were addressed in some respect at nearly every Annual Meeting dating from 1778 thru the Civil War era. However, this was the first time in which the denial of communion based on race was clearly addressed and forbidden.

In 1843 a gentleman by the name of Andrew McClure applied for membership to the Brethren Church and was told that membership was contingent on the freeing of his slave. McClure agreed and was baptized into the Brethren Church in February, 1843. His slave, Samuel Weir, also petitioned for membership and was baptized on May 14, 1843. The Virginia

[9] Ibid, 1845. 107

[10] Ibid. 107.

slave laws prohibited freed slaves from remaining in the state with a penalty of being returned to bondage. He was given a horse by his master upon manumission. Accordingly, Elder Benjamin Moomaw of Botetourt County, escorted him to Ohio in the fall of 1843. Samuel Weir became a highly respected elder of the Ross County, Ohio congregation.[11]

The prohibition against Brethren Church members seems to have been held in wide agreement among the congregations of the Shenandoah and highland SW Virginia. However, there are some notable exceptions of prominent, large land holding, Brethren holding slaves. The regularity with which the discussion of slavery appears in the Annual Meeting Minutes suggests the admonishments of the local church was not always sufficient to deter the temptation of slave labor for the more prosperous landowners.

The majority of the, small number, of Brethren who held any number of slaves thus far identified can be found in the southern end of the Shenandoah Valley and Southwest Virginia. Floyd County was a significant center for Brethren congregations and home to a number of Brethren who held significant land holdings and a small number of slaves. The Hylton and Weddle families were prominent in the Topeco Church congregation, had donated the land for the Topeco Church, and maintained leadership in the congregation and local ministry. During the 1850s several members of these influential families acquired slaves to assist with the large family land holdings. The slave holding members of this congregation have not been connected to the activity of the Unionist Underground Railroad in the county. However, a non-slave holding member of the Weddle family and the Topeco congregation seems to have become key to the success of the U.U.R. in the county. Early in the war, Christian Bowman, a leading elder

[11] Landon West, "A New Field", *The Brethren at Work, 1881.* Brethren Digital Archives. https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives

of the Topeco congregation, planted a new congregation halfway between the Topeco congregation and Roanoke. Elder Christian Bowman worked with the members of the Weddle family at Topeco to feed and move a claimed 150 men per week along the U.U.R.[12]

The election of 1860 saw the Brethren break from established guidelines pertaining to the active participation in national elections. The months leading to the election of 1860 saw the Brethren engage in a public debate considering the doctrines related to participation in national elections being published in the Gospel Visitor. Leading Brethren elders from across the county weighed in on the discussion as to whether it would be acceptable for a confessed member of the Brethren Church to cast a vote in the upcoming presidential election. Differing opinions, written with scriptural based apologetics, were published in the monthly editions which explored the varying perspectives.[13]

The initial interpretation was published in February, 1860 in an article titled, "Essays on the Civil Law". This interpretation began with a clear reiteration of long established doctrine that the church is subject to the authority of civil law and members must abide by civil authority up until the point where God's law is transgressed by human law.

"Should the law of the land be oppressive, it would be no violation of the gospel to petition our rulers to repeal the obnoxious law. And I do most sincerely believe that inasmuch as the church is bound by gospel to support the civil government, that it is the bound duty of every enlightened brother of the church to exercise the elective franchise."[14] This call to the brethren

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[12] Elwardani. 82-85.

[13] Henry Kurtz, James Quinter. *The Gospel Visitor, 1860*. Church of the Brethren Periodicals. https://archive.org/details/gospelvis0112kurt

[14] Essays on the Civil Law, Gospel Visitor, 1860. 45.

to participate in the forthcoming election was followed by a discussion of Brethren responsibility when civil authority and God's law were not compatible.

"Christ and the Apostles in no instance resisted the existing authorities. And when the law came in contact with, or conflicted with the word of God, they obeyed God and suffered the penalty of that law."[15] This would become the recipe for the Brethren reaction and interaction with the Civil War in Virginia. As long as the Brethren were able to negotiate a path of submission to civil authority they were content to comply. When that civil authority overstepped the strictures of Gospel then the Brethren acted in accordance to God's law and passively accepted the consequences for their decisions.

In response to these interpretations an article was submitted to the Visitor in the August edition from the Goshen, Indiana congregation. The writer is simply identified as J. L. The concern as to the potential consequences of this particular election are made apparent in the mention of the potentiality of even the best elected official being placed in a situation where they might call for militant action.

> I must say, and I say it with love to all my brethren, that I have never read in the Holy Scripture that it is our duty, or that we are commanded by God, to go to the polls and vote for the best candidate for sheriff or president, for while they may make good laws, they will also, if circumstances require it, continence the shedding of blood. But, while we are not commanded to go to the election and vote, we are commanded to watch, and to pray, and to pray without ceasing and to put all our confidence in Jesus.[16]

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[15] Ibid. 45.

[16] "Remarks on Voting", Gospel Visitor, 1860. 344.

The Brethren of Virginia left a significant record of attempting to vote but being refused based upon preferred candidate and being threatened with violence if they should refuse to change an unpopular vote. There is also a strong record of complaint that Lincoln was not on the ballot in Virginia. The phrase, "I was a Lincoln man", appears so often in the records that it seems to have been an established talking point.[17]

Throughout their history, prior to the election of 1860, the Brethren had discouraged its members from participation in elections or the holding of public office. Just as statements related to non-resistance, no military service, non-oath taking, and opposition to slavery were recorded from the earliest records of the church, the position regarding the ideal interaction between Brethren Church members and civil government can be traced throughout the history of the church.

The Annual Meeting of 1837 again cautioned the Brethren against participating in elections. "It is the advice of the old brethren to keep ourselves also in this respect as free as possible, and rather not go to the election. As regards electioneering, it is the sense of the brethren that no brother ought to interfere so far with the offices and government of this world, according to the word."[18] This reminder followed the established doctrine related to the role of civil government and the counsel that Brethren distance themselves from matters of the temporal world. The strict adherence to separatism would not begin to shift until the period following the

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[17] "Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims Record Group 217." *National Archives Catalog.* 1871-1880. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/566157. ; "Southern Claims Commission Disapproved Claims Record Group 233." *National Archives Catalog.* 1871-1880. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/566157. Payment for wartime losses of livestock and commodities confiscated by the Union Army were contingent on the claiment proving loyalty to the Union throughout the war. The phrase, "I was a Lincoln man" appears repeatedly in the testimonies presented to the commission.

[18] Annual Minutes, 1837 Article 7. 81

1852 reintroduction of publication among the Brethren. A progressive line of thought developed in the church during the 1850's spoke to an evangelical requirement to take a certain degree of involvement in secular affairs while maintaining moral separatism from the dangers of modern society.

A further clarification in 1839 addressed the use of the private homes of Brethren members for elections with a clear and simple statement, "The answer was no, it should not be." This meeting also reiterated the stance against Brethren holding the office of county constable which had been established in 1812. This stance remained a firm 'no' as well. The question was again raised in 1842 on the acceptability of a current justice of the peace seeking membership and whether a member, when elected, might hold the office of justice of the peace. This was also deemed inadvisable. "Considered, that in case a man who holds such as office is convinced of the truth, and becomes willing to obey the gospel, it appears to us there would be no great difficulty to convince him that he can not serve two masters, nor be at the same time a follower of the Lamb and a servant of the world,"[19]

The shift toward some allowance of Brethren holding public office began in 1850. This was the year that the strict separatist stance of the church began to lessen. The discussion of publishing a Brethren newspaper entered the discussion and for the first time some allowance was made for Brethren members to hold public office, if and only if, their local church agreed to the benefit of the member holding such office.[20]

The significant shift from stringent separatism came in 1852. These shifts would have significant impact on the Brethren reaction to the Civil War. A further lessening of strictures

[19] Ibid, 1842, Article 10. 96

[20] Annual Minutes, 1850 Article 9. 145

against voting and the holding of public office established that Brethren should use extreme discretion in the decision to hold public office. On voting and public office the new recommendation was comparatively lenient.

> Considered, that the brethren should be careful and not betray their profession in helping to make and serve the civil government, and, if they give in their vote, they should do it in a quiet and peaceable manner, without taking part in electioneering, and return immediately from the ground; that brethren should hold no office under the civil government that would cause them to betray their faith;…[21]

This article further encourages brethren to only use legal action against any person if it is an absolute necessity and then legal action only be taken under the counsel of the church. The following article addressed the publication of the new Brethren newspaper, the *Gospel Visitor*. It was decided that publication had been well received and beneficial to the church. Members still hesitant about the correctness of producing a church publication were asked to observe forbearance and wait to see if the project would succeed or fail by its own merits. Further outside of the long established stance against actively spreading the gospel message it was decided that the Great Commission was an imperative mission for the church. "Considered, that the brethren acknowledge the great commission of Christ to its full extent, and that it is the duty of the church, the ministers, and every private member, to do all that is in their power to fulfill that commission in accordance with apostolic practice."[22]

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[21] Ibid, 1852. 161

[22] Annual Minutes, 1852. 163

As the church relaxed, previously rigorous, doctrinal stances concerning engagement in secular affairs, and the structured advocacy of extending the gospel message to non-Brethren citizens the Brethren opened themselves to increased engagement with the events surrounding the Civil War. During this period Elders John Kline and Benjamin Moomaw took an increasingly engaged leadership role which stressed the application of Brethren Church doctrine into every aspect of life. Increased engagement with public policy, especially policies which functioned directly against Brethren belief, grew as the nation entered the mid and late 1850s.

Although it would be difficult to track the exact numbers of Brethren who voted in the election of 1860 in Virginia, and for whom the majority might have cast a vote, the Brethren left a strong record of their general views concerning the election of 1860 in the Southern Claims Commission petitions for wartime losses to the Union Army. The counties of the Shenandoah and SW Virginia record a Brethren population which favored Lincoln due to his platform against the further expansion of slavery. Unable to vote for their preferred candidate, and considering the likelihood that regardless of the man elected a civil war seemed inevitable, many Brethren members remained home from the polls.

The Virginia Vote on Secession brought significant negative attention to the Brethren and Mennonite congregations of the Shenandoah Valley and SW Virginia mountains. The Virginia Convention voted to secede on April 17, 1861 pending the result of the popular vote on May 23. The period between January and April led to counties across the commonwealth holding local meetings to vote on the instructions which would be given to county representatives in Richmond. Elders of the Brethren congregations in Virginia took the uncharacteristic step of engaging in public meetings and contributing the Brethren voice into the question of Virginia's

ordinance of secession. In Botetourt County Elder Benjamin Moomaw remained in continual correspondence with Elder John Kline in Rockingham County. The two men represented the Brethren in establishing a clear apologetic against secession.

Moomaw reported his interactions with the prominent citizens of Botetourt to the *Gospel Messenger*. His experience in Botetourt offers a clear explanation of the debate over secession which was occurring throughout the Shenandoah Valley and SW Virginia where the populations remained hesitant against secession until news of Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers tipped the scales in favor of passing the Ordinance of Secession. Moomaw reported a meeting at the Botetourt County court house in the weeks prior to the bombardment of Fort Sumter. The men in favor of remaining with the Union met in council and composed a resolution in opposition to secession. A second committee met to write a resolution in favor of secession. Moomaw reported the persuasive tone of this resolution which was complimented by a rousing speech which turned the opinion of the men gathered for the decision. When a vote was taken as to whether the Botetourt representative at the Secession Convention would be instructed to vote for or against the ordinance, Benjamin Moomaw was the only man to vote 'No'.[23]

Following the April 17 vote for secession the only voice left for the Brethren was the popular vote on May 23. The long standing doctrine against participation in such votes had been questioned several times during the antebellum period. While many Brethren avoided the polling places based on this principle, some attempted to cast votes against secession. Tensions surrounding this public vote made attempts at neutrality equate, in public opinion, to Unionism. A number of accounts record Brethren who attempted to vote against secession being confronted

[23] D. Hays and S.F. Sanger. *The Olive Branch of Peace and Good Will to Men: Anti-War History of the Brethren and Mennonites, the Peace People of the South, During the Civil War*. Elgin: Brethren Publishing House, 1907. 55-56.

with threats of violence should they refuse to change their vote. The record indicates that a small number of Brethren recorded a vote in favor of secession based on a belief that secession might help to avoid the impending war.

When the vote on secession was cast to the counties of Virginia the Brethren faced tremendous pressure from neighbors and election officials to cast votes in favor of secession. The testimonies of Brethren in the Southern Claims Commission record a variety of responses to this local pressure. Exploring some of the typical responses reveals the multitude of ways in which Brethren evaded or were pressured into voting in of the referendum. Rockingham County, at the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley, was home to large concentration of Brethren including Elder John Kline. This county recorded hundreds of claims to the Southern Claims Commission following the war and reveals the array of responses the Brethren had to the pressure to vote in favor of secession.

The testimony given by Danial Landes in support of the claim of Noah Landes provides a typical statement concerning the vote on secession. Brothers Noah and Danial Landes lived near Mt. Crawford, Virginia south of North River. Questioned as to whether his brother, Noah, had voted on the question of secession Danial replied, "He did not. He went away the morning of the election and swore he would not vote, and continued away from home until after the election was over."[24]

Perhaps the most revealing testimony given concerning the vote on secession in Mt. Crawford was that of David E. Rhodes. Rhodes testimony reflects the common trend recorded from Shenandoah and Rockingham Counties south through the counties of SW Virginia. David

[24] "Southern Claims Commission Disapproved Claims Record Group 233." *National Archives Catalog.* 1871-1880. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/566157 CN. 8414. Daniel Landes.

E. Rhodes was a Mennonite with strong connections to the Brethren Church near Mt. Crawford, Virginia through his mother who was a Brethren and herself connected to the highly respected Bowman family. Following the war David Rhodes had close connections with the Brethren congregations of Rockingham County and helps to demonstrate the close relationship between the Brethren and Mennonite which had been established during the antebellum period. His testimony, and that of his witnesses provides valuable information on both the Brethren and Mennonite experience during the vote on secession but also on the function and design of the Unionist Underground Railroad.

David E. Rhodes gives collaborated testimony that he was an active Unionist throughout the war. "I took the union side and held to it all the time. I was opposed to secession and talked against it as long as it was safe for us to do so." In the same line of questioning Rhodes provides a valuable glimpse into the climate around the voting sites during the secession referendum. The statement by Rhodes is significant enough to be presented in full.

> I did not vote during the war, I voted for the union delegates to the Richmond Convention, and wanted to vote for the union when the state seceded, but the threats were so general and severe against all who opposed secession that I had concluded not to vote at all. I went to the voting place on business in Mt. Crawford, and while there saw and heard such violent demonstrations against union men that I was afraid to go home without voting. It was said that those who refused to vote would be marked and treated the same as those who should attempt to vote for the union or against secession. The excitement was very great and there appeared to be a settled determination that everybody should vote for secession. There was but one person who had the courage to vote against it that day at Mt. Crawford and he lived near Harrisonburg, and he was pursued by some armed men two or three miles and brought

> back and made to change his vote. There was a company of armed men near the poles all that day, and some of these pursued and brought him back. It was under such circumstances as these that I voted for secession, because I was afraid not to vote, and not because I believed in secession or from any desire to have the union dissolved for I never desired it. I wanted the union to be preserved. [25]

Rhodes also filed a petition to the Southern Claims Commission on behalf of his father's estate. In this testimony he again mentions the incident with the gentleman being forcefully brought back to change his vote, giving the man's name as Harrison. He further elaborates on the orators advocating violence at the polling place. "I heard public speakers say on the stump that union men who would not vote for secession would either have to leave the state or take the chance of being hung or shot."[26] The situation in Mt. Crawford was likewise collaborated with independent testimony provided by Abraham and Joel Garber. Joel Garber's testimony describes the placement of armed guards around the polling place who extended the threat of hanging to men suspected of favoring the preservation of the Union.[27]

The testimony of Joseph Click also provides compelling information regarding the Brethren response to secession, threats of violence, as well as significant insight into the logistics of the Unionist Underground Railroad. Click was the grandson of a prominent Elder in the Brethren Flat Rock congregation located near New Market, Virginia. Joseph Click was a

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[25] David E. Rhodes. Claim no. 16950. "Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims Record Group 217." *National Archives Catalog.* 1871-1880. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/566157. (Southern Claims Commision hereafter cited as S.C.C.).

[26] David E. Rhodes for John Rhodes. S.C.C. Claim no. 16949. The family of John Rhodes offers another example of inner marriage between Brethren and Mennonite families and cooperation in the operation of the U.U.R.

[27] S.C.C. RG 217, CN 8413. Joel Garber.

successful farmer who lived near Bridgewater. Clicks ancestors had immigrated prior to the Revolution as Mennonites and it is unclear when the family joined the Brethren Church, although, marriage seems to have been the link to the shift in denomination.

Joseph Click recorded that he had not intended to participate in the vote on secession in anyway. However, he found himself under direct threat by neighbors who visited him at his farm. "I was threatened by two neighbors with ducking in the river, & to be driven from my home, & under those circumstances I voted for the ordinance of secession under protest."[28]

A neighbor, and fellow Brethren, of Joseph Click likewise reported threats to his property should he not vote on the ordinance of secession. David Garber also worked in collusion with Joseph Click in the movement of men north. On secession David Garber testified, "I was told if I did not vote for the ordinance [of secession] my property would be destroyed and taken from me. I voted against my convictions. I did not think it would be a matter of great importance at any rate, as the war had already begun."[29] David Garber was an active member of the Cooks Creek German Baptist Brethren Church where is brother was an Elder. Garber later became a key figure in the communication aspects of the U.R.R.

Susanna Snell, the widow of Christian Snell, explained the wider Brethren approach to elections and the unique response to the vote on secession when she reflected on her husbands'

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[28] Joseph Click. Claim no. 2522. "Southern Claims Commission Disapproved Claims Record Group 233." *National Archives Catalog.* 1871-1880. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/566157. The threats of violence reported surrounding the vote on secession led a large number of Unionist to vote in favor of secession. During the claims process and hearings for the Southern Claims Commission the burden of demonstrating consistent loyalty to the Union was on the claimant. A vote in favor of secession was considered an act of disloyalty regardless of numerous reports concerning the threatening atmosphere surrounding the polling places. Click's vote in favor of secession was cast under threat of physical violence. Despite that he would become a key figure in the U.U.R. his claim was disallowed due to his disloyal act of voting in favor of secession. A signifcant number of men who became active in the U.U.R. would later have their claims disallowed due to their vote in favor of secession.

[29] S.C.C. RG 217, CN. 8412. David Garber.

involvement in elections during the war. "I don't think he voted during the war. He rarely attended elections. When the vote was taken on the secession question he took great interest in it, and went to the polls at Bridgewater to vote for the Union but found it was dangerous to attempt it, and came home without voting."[30] Christian Snell's decision to return home without attracting attention or casting a vote seems to have been the generally favored decision of Brethren who favored the Union.

William J. Miller was a Brethren minister of the Old Salem Church congregation at Singers Glen and operated a mill near Old Salem and Singers Glen. Miller reported his intention to remain home during the vote for secession. However, two men came to his home the morning of the vote with a message that refusal to vote might be unsafe for himself or his property. The two men prevailed on Miller to go vote for secession. Miller later recorded that caving to the threats became a lifelong regret.[31]

The Brethren practiced pacifism and non-resistance under the threat of violence throughout the secession crisis and war. This non-resistance in no way translated into cowardice or attempts to evade violence directed against them. Although, when threatened, the Brethren would not raise a hand in self-defense they also did not quiver or beg for mercy. The threats of violence occurring at the Timberville, VA polling place intimidate nearly all potential voters into either staying home or voting in favor of the ordinance of secession despite the large Brethren and Mennonite populations in the vicinity. The secession records show only two men voted against secession at Timberville. These were David B. Rhodes and his hired man, Joseph Blosser. David Rhodes reports being threatened with hanging should he vote for the Union when

[30] S.C.C. RG 217, CN 16942. Susanna Snell for Christian Snell.

[31], S.C.C. RG 233, CN 16524. William Miller William Miller was a farmer and minister in the Old Salem Brethren Church in the western portion of Rockingham County.

he arrived at the polling place. Rhodes walked into the polling place, recorded his vote, and walked outside to directly address the crowd. "[D]amn you, you said you would hang me if I voted for the Union, come on and do it. I have voted for the Union."[32] His address speaks to the firm resolve of the peace people to not cower in the face of physical violence.

The pressure to vote, against conscience and guidance of the church, in favor of secession did not go unaddressed by the Brethren congregations. Elder Jacob Miller of the Greenmount Congregation records an act of contrition occurring among members of that church who voted in favor of secession under threat of physical violence. "There were many threats of violence against Union men or any who failed to vote for secession. The threats were very severe and general. And many who went to the polls intending to vote for the Union were intimidated and frightened into voting for secession before leaving. This was the case with many members of our church who afterwards saw their error – and came before the church to make their acknowledgement."[33] This act of confession and congregational forgiveness offers insight to the loyalties of this Brethren congregation.

The secession crisis was still developing in January 1861 when prominent Brethren leader, Elder John Kline began to actively engage the government of Virginia to acknowledge and respect Brethren doctrine under increasing threat of war. John Kline had grown into a strong leadership position within the denomination during the 1830s. He was the representative from

[32] S.C.C. RG 217, CN 9314. David B. Rhodes. David Rhodes was particularly outspoken in his defense of the Union and became active in the U.U.R. There are a number of similar instances from throughout the war wherein Brethren faced threats against their lives, particularly threats of hanging, with calm defiance.

[33] Jacob Miller, S.C.C. RG 217, CN. 9783. A number of German Baptist Brethren and Mennonite congregations have been identified as requiring an act of public admission and forgiveness within the church for members who voted in favor of secession. The peace principles of both denominations required that the principle of non-resistance translated into bearing potential violence when adhering Biblical morality. A vote for secession was considered, in essence, a vote in favor of war. Therefore, accepting potential violent repercussions was considered preferable to voting in favor of secession. The volatile social conditions surrounding the vote led many Brethren and Mennonite to cast votes in favor of secession against their conscience.

Rockingham County, Virginia to the Brethren Annual Meeting from the 1830s through the Civil War; twice hosting the meeting himself and always taking a leadership role in the considerations before each meeting. His perspectives on slavery, war, non-resistance, and non-oath taking are represented in the sermons he delivered throughout the period as well as in the diary he kept throughout his adult life.

John Kline traveled extensively in his leadership role within the church. Beyond pastoring the Linville Congregation in Rockingham County, just north of Harrisonburg, he made regular circuits along the Shenandoah Valley and the through the Allegheny Mountains of western Virginia, into Southwestern Pennsylvania, south into Southwestern Virginia and into Eastern Tennessee. Kline kept a detailed record of where he traveled, with whom he stayed, where he preached and usually on what scripture he based his sermons. His visits functioned as organizing visits and served to keep the widely distanced Brethren communities connected with one another.

As the nation ended the year 1860 with a spreading secession crisis Kline's leadership became increasing sought for his perspectives on how the Brethren should respond to secession and the threat of war. His diary entries from December 31, 1860 and January 1, 1861 offer significant insights into his role in the wider Brethren community and his concerns for the impending war. In 1860 Kline traveled 5,686 miles on horseback ministering to the Brethren in his congregation and in remote locations to the west.

> Tuesday, January 1, 1861. The year opens with dark and lowering clouds in our national horizon. I feel deep interest in the peace and prosperity of our country; but in my view both are sorely threatened now. Secession is the cry further south; and I greatly fear its poisonous breath is being wafted northward towards Virginia on the wings of fanatical

> discontent. A move is clearly on hand for holding a convention in Richmond, Virginia; and while its advocates publicly deny the charge, I, for one, feel sure that it signals the separation of our beloved old State from the family in which she has long lived and been happy. The perishable things of earth distress me not, only in so far as they affect the imperishable. Secession means war, and war means tears and ashes and blood. It means bonds and imprisonments, and even death to many in our beloved Brotherhood, who, I have confidence to believe, will die, rather than disobey God by taking up arms.[34]

John Kline kept a close contact with Brethren pastor Elder Benjamin Moomaw of Botetourt County, Virginia at the southern end of the Shenandoah Valley. As the state convention convened in Richmond to consider the pending Ordinance of Secession, John Kline and Benjamin Moomaw set themselves to protecting the interests of the Brethren who would surely refuse to bear arms in the defense of either the Confederacy or the Union. Kline kept an open line of communication with the governor of Virginia and military leaders throughout the war. This line of communication opened on January 30, 1861 as the secession convention in Richmond met to consider Virginia's direction. In his letter he drew John Letcher's attention to the deeply rooted belief system of the Brethren to adhere to the authority of government while remaining dedicated to the principles of scripture. Kline urged Governor Letcher to preserve Virginia's ties with the Union. He recorded a significant portion of this letter in his diary entry for January 30. "The general Government of the United States of America, constituted upon an

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[34] Diary of John Kline. Funk, Benjamin. *Life an Labors of Elder John Kline, the Martyr Missionary Collated from his Diary.* Elgin: Brethren Publishing House, 1900. The prophetic nature of this entry has not been lost on Brethren scholars. John Kline, and many of the Brethren, would be imprisoned, conscripted, lose considerable wealth, and be forced from their homes during the war. Kline would suffer arrest, torture and ultimately martyrdom for his firm stance against the war.

inseparable union of the several States, has proved itself to be of incalculable worth to its citizens and the world, and therefore we, as a church and people, are heart and soul opposed to any move which looks toward its dismemberment."[35]

John Letcher responded to Kline's letter with support for the belief system of the Brethren and an acknowledgement that the Brethren would offer more benefit to the Confederacy if left to work their farms and provide for the feeding of the armies. Letcher also, over confidently, projected that there would be no shortage of men with no conscientious objection to war who would easily fill the Confederate ranks. Letcher's letter, dated February 1, 1861 offered hope to the Brethren that with secession impending the likelihood of gaining exemption was a possibility.

> I would be glad to see the arrangement in regard to military service, suggested in your letter adopted. I think it entirely reasonable, that those who have conscientious scruples, in regard to the performance of militia duty, should be relieved by the payment of a small pecuniary compensation. There are enough of others who take pleasure in the performance of such duties.[36]

The Brethren of Virginia now found themselves faced with balancing a doctrinal dedication to peacefully abide under the government instituted by God and an underlying preference for the principles held by the Union, namely, less tolerance for any expansion of the institution of slavery. Church of the Brethren historian Rufus Bowman assessed the predicament of the secession crisis as one of the lesser of two evils regarding wartime loyalties. "They did not want the war to come, but after it came, as an antislavery people, they favored the Union

[35] John Kline Diary, January 30, 1861. 439.

[36] John Letcher to John Kline. David H. Zigler. *A History of the Brethren in Virginia*. (Elgin: Brethren Publishing House, 1914) .96 Also in: Virginia Collections of John Letcher.

cause."[37] There is room for further nuanced consideration in the broad assessments of Brethren Unionism. The Brethren held fast to the principles of Christian obligation to live peacefully under the God ordained government. Furthermore, the Brethren efforts to assist men who chose not to bear arms in the war speaks more to the foundational peace principle than to overt Unionism. Efforts similar to those undertaken in Virginia to gain objector status occurred in the northern states following Abraham Lincoln's initial call for 75,000 volunteers. Favoring the Union and practicing active Unionism are not a given principle and consequence. However, the outspoken stance against secession taken by the Brethren during the secession crisis was followed by an active effort to aid men seeking to evade military service. For the Brethren this may have flowed from two different motives but from the perspective of their neighbors and military authority the activity of the Brethren was interpreted as active Unionism.

For the leaders of the Brethren churches in Virginia the spring of 1861 was one of increasing demands beyond the secession crisis and decent into war. John Kline records the first cases of diphtheria in the Shenandoah Valley. This outbreak would spread across SW Virginia and exact a tremendous loss of life through 1863. Beyond his role as an Elder in the church, John Kline held a degree in herbal medicine. He maintained extensive herbal gardens at his farm in Rockingham County and tended the physical as well as spiritual needs of, not only his own congregation, but all the families he visited in his wide ranging travels. During the spring of 1861 he recorded the rising tide of diphtheria and his increased travels was he was called to treat patients. His diary chronicles his frequent calls to treat the afflicted which, all too often, ended with his preaching the funeral service of the children and young people taken by the disease. The spring of 1861 also experienced a late planting season with snow recorded in the

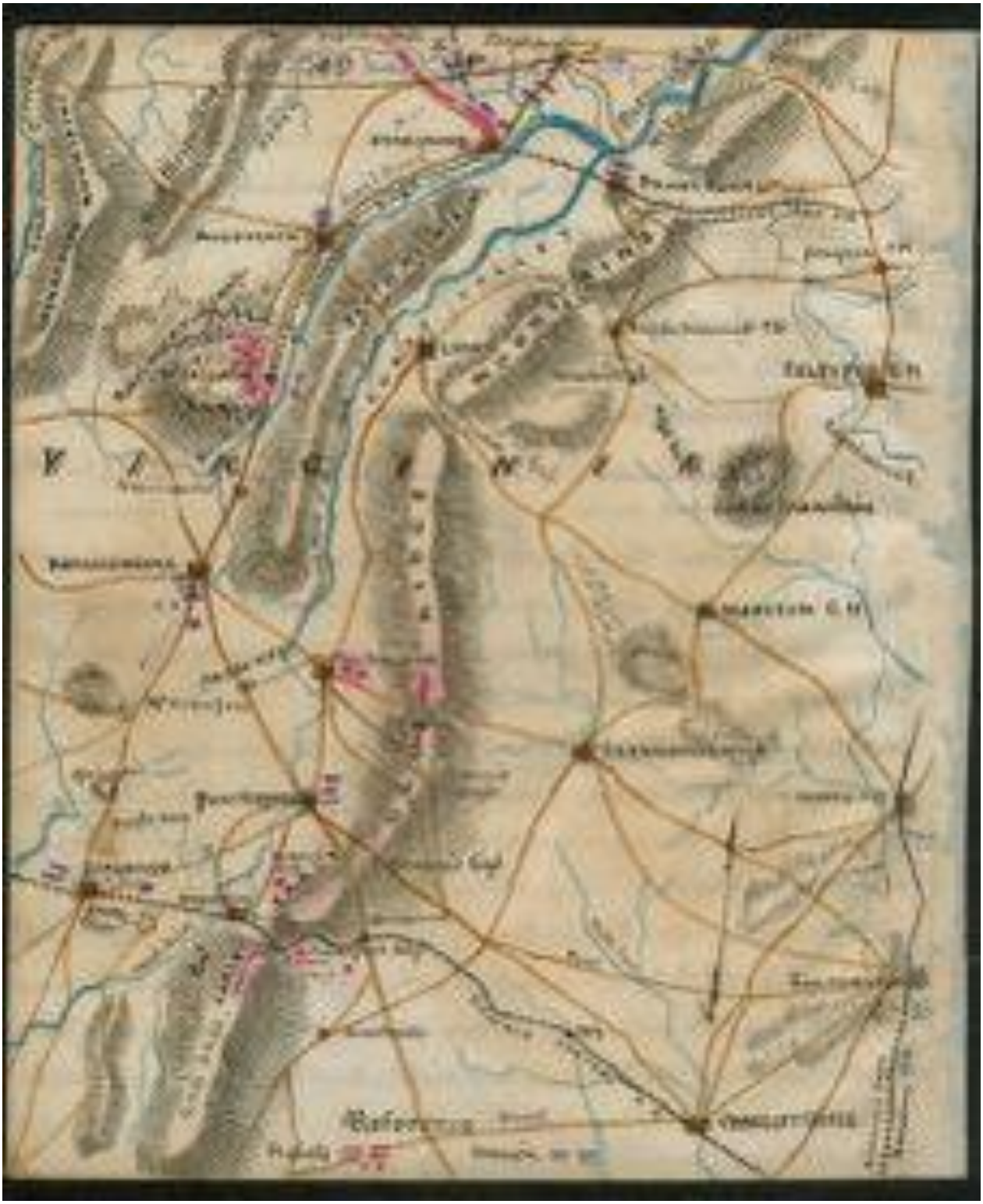
[37] Bowman, *War*, 121.

Shenandoah Valley as late as May 4.[38] A panic, resulting from false rumors, of a slave uprising terrified Rockingham County on July 21, likely spreading on news of the Battle of First Manassas. By October the Diphtheria outbreak was worsening and Kline recorded an increase in the number of funerals he had been preaching for young children.[39]

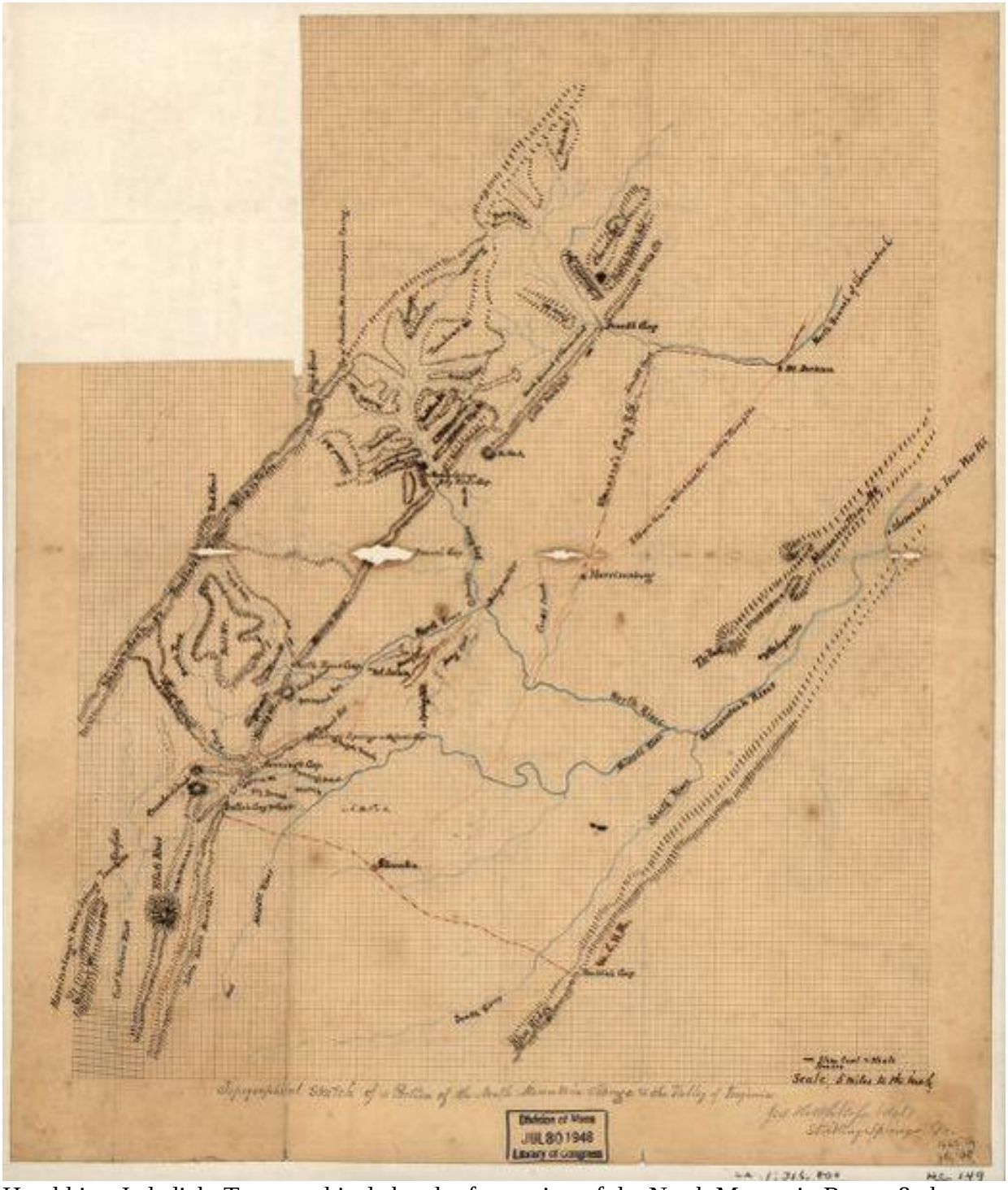
At the end of 1861 John Kline recorded his travels for the year at nearly 4,000. He had tended the sick, baptized, preached, functioned as the diplomate to the Virginia and Confederate government and made tremendous strides in gaining exemption status for the Brethren from military service. However, during this period the Brethren and Mennonite congregations of the Shenandoah Valley had already begun to orchestrate systems of hiding and moving men north out of the Confederacy. Kline's ministry took him on a weekly basis through the contested counties attempting to secede from Virginia to form West Virginia. As a minister and a healer he was well known and his travels easily noticed. He was also noted for his connections with fellow outspoken Unionists. As a Bishop and the most respected elder of the northern Shenandoah region his opinion was highly respected and his leadership unquestioned. John Kline had attracted the attention of the Confederate government.

[38] John Kline, 1861. 440.

[39] Ibid 438-447.



Sneden, Robert Knox. Map of the Shenandoah Valley Campaign. [S.l., to 1865, 1864] Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/gvhs01.vhs00195/.



Hotchkiss, Jedediah. Topographical sketch of a portion of the North Mountain Range & the Valley of Virginia. [1863] Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/2005625056/.

Hotchkiss, Jedediah. Map of the Shenandoah Valley from Harrisonburg to Mt. Jackson, with topographical detail along the principal roads from Thornton's Gap to Swift Run Gap and along several valley roads in northwestern Virginia. [186] Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/2005625053/.

Chapter 4

Silent, Resolute Resistance

The vote on secession led immediately to a flurry of correspondence to Virginia Governor John Letcher, Congressional leaders, Confederate Secretary of State Judah Benjamin, and military leadership in an attempt to draw attention to the peace-principles of the Brethren. Brethren elders across the state began to petition their state representatives for exemption status for members of the Brethren churches. Leaders were selected to travel to Richmond to meet with Governor Letcher as well as any influential political leaders who might sympathize with the religious principles of the peace-church people. Although the first attention of the Brethren was to protecting their religious principles, the opposition to warfare extended to supporting any man who sought to evade mandatory military service.

The onset of open hostilities placed the Brethren into a position of peaceful opposition to both secular authority and popular sentiment. Due to the long standing, and resolute, stance against the institution of slavery the Brethren of Virginia were generally classed as abolitionists. This classification suggests a political action associated with the anti-slavery stance which simply was not encouraged among the Brethren. Regardless of their lack of public action, the classification of Abolitionist became more widespread as war became inevitable and drew suspicion from neighbors and local authorities. Men across the nation were swept up in the excitement of marching to war; passions ran high and men were expected to take up arms and muster into the nearest open company. In Virginia, the perception that the call to duty was one which aligned with the call to defend state and hearth, placed tremendous local pressure on every young man to muster into his community militia. With few exceptions, the Brethren refused to

muster, a stance which was immediately noted and criticized by local leaders—particularly those engaged in mustering companies to fight with, what would soon be, the Army of Northern Virginia. Accusations of being active abolitionists, combined with a refusal to muster soon had many Brethren, particularly of the Shenandoah Valley and SW Virginia, classed as suspected Unionists. A letter to Captain Callohill Stiglemen from his home county of Floyd kept him apprised of the difficulty convincing Brethren men to muster. The sons of Elder Christian Bowman drew the irritation of local leaders in both their refusal to muster and, later, their suspected connection to the aiding of deserters and conscription evaders.[1] This same frustration among local leaders attempting to muster companies was repeated up and down the Shenandoah Valley and across SW Virginia.[2]

The accusations of favoring the Union were not wholly ungrounded as some Brethren congregations held the Confederacy to account for supporting slavery and initiating the war. Benjamin Bowman, a member of the Greenmount Brethren Congregation, offered an explanation of the established stance of that church while giving the impression that this policy was widespread among the Brethren Congregation of the area. "If any members of our church (the Dunkards) indulged in the expression of disloyal sentiments they were reported by the other members, and admonished, and if persisted in they were called to account, and if still rebellious they fell under the judgement of the church."[3]

The Brethren stance on the taking up of arms had been consistently taught and followed throughout the history of the church. Persecutions had occurred, particularly during the

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[1] Elwardani. 80-95.

[2] The Southern Claims Commission testimonies are replete with examples of Brethren reporting harassment, arrest, forced conscription, (followed by desertion), and continued threats for refusal to willingly muster.

[3] S.C.C. RG 233, CN. 16506. Benjamin Bowman for Henry Niswander.,

Revolution, but in general the peace principles of the Brethren had been tolerated, if not always respected, by the communities in which the Brethren lived. The dedicated work ethic and peaceful congregations had earned them respected places in the farming communities of the Shenandoah Valley. However, the rift which had opened during the vote on secession would soon deepen as once friendly neighbors began to resent the Brethren unwillingness to send their sons to fight in the Confederate Army. The call for volunteers following the vote on secession brought derision from local communities to the Brethren. The work to gain objector status became urgent in July, 1861 when the Virginia government passed the first draft law for able bodied men between the ages of 18 and 45 years old. The act specifically addressed the drafting of men from the state militia companies, per county, to the Confederate Army. The Brethren, already accustomed to paying a fee to avoid local militia duty refused to muster to militia companies under this Ordinance.[4]

During the initial months of the war each state was responsible for the mustering of regiments and managed the organization of enlistments as well as the granting of exemptions. The work to attain religious exemptions for the Brethren focused on petitioning of state government during 1861. In March of 1862 the General Assembly of Virginia passed *An Act Providing for the exemption of certain persons upon religious grounds*, which provided for religious exemption to the Society of Friends, German Brethren, Mennonites, and Nazarenes upon the paying of a $500 plus 2% of taxable property. Those unable to pay the fee were proscribed non-arms bearing duties.[5] This bill protected the Brethren for only a brief period

[4] Acts of the General Assembly of the state of Virginia… No 88. An Ordinance to provide for the drafting of the Militia of the State. July 1, 1861.

[5] Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, March 29, 1862.

before the Confederate government passed its own draft bill which effectively nullified the state bill. This put the Brethren back to the process of petitioning government officials once again.

John Kline anticipated the impact of the war on the Brethren who would refuse to bear arms for either army. As the counties of Virginia began to muster companies of volunteers Brethren leaders across the nation organized and began to petition state governments to gain objector status for peace-church members. The Brethren proved willing to pay state fees for avoiding military service. Early in the war some Brethren paid substitutes for service but this practice was soon discouraged as it still placed a man in arms as a representative of the Brethren church member. Throughout the early months of 1861 Elders John Kline and Benjamin Moomaw set themselves to the task of petitioning the state of Virginia and Governor Letcher to gain objector status for the Brethren. This endeavor involved the raising of large sums of money to pay the $500 fee required to avoid military duty.

The early months of the war saw a significant number of Brethren drafted before the exemption law passed and exemption fees raised. John Early was drafted and hired a substitute rather than muster. Daniel Bowman explained the predicament faced by poorer members of the Brethren church in the early months of the war. "When he was drafted it was exceedingly difficult to get through the lines- There were no runners to help then as there were afterwards – I know of no way he could have avoided personal service except by hiring a substitute."[6] The need to shield men from conscription created the significant need for the development of the U.U.R. network.

The work of obtaining, then attempting to maintain, objector status would keep leaders of the Brethren Church in Virginia continuously engaged in the writing of letters, petitions,

[6] S.C.C. RG 233, CN. 8939. Daniel Bowman for John A. Early

collection of fees and fines, and engagement with both Virginia State and Confederate Congresses throughout the war. Although the same methods were used in each state as Brethren, Mennonite, Quakers, and Nazarene Churches petitioned as peace-church objectors, the large Brethren population of Brethren in Virginia led to the largest of these undertakings. This became more pronounced as the war progressed and the granting of objector status was continually reevaluated and increasingly difficult to maintain. It was in this roll that Benjamin Moomaw became a distinguished leader and communicator, demonstrating an ability to present a strong, logical apologetic and a back-bone of steel in the face of increasing hostility and bodily threats.

John Kline opened lines of communication with officials and military leaders in his work to have the Brethren exempted from the drafts. The polemic in these letters always stressed the peace-church principles and duty of the Brethren to answer God's law above that of man. In a letter to friend and Confederate Army Colonel Lewis, John Kline reiterated the biblical foundation for Brethren refusal to enlist and considered the breach in religious liberty that the draft brought for the peace churches.

"The subject is this: We German Baptists (called Tunkers) do most solemnly believe that the bearing of carnal weapons in order to destroy life, is in direct opposition to the Gospel of Christ, which we accept as the rule of our faith. To this we have most solemnly vowed to be true unto death."

The letter continues:

"We feel bound to pay our taxes, fines, and to do whatever is in our power which does not conflict with our obligation to God. Whenever God speaks we think we should obey Him rather than man. But in this unholy contest, both law and all former precedents of making drafts have been set aside." Kline concludes that the result of the draft is that, "they are compelled to

take up weapons of carnal warfare to drill and if need be to shoot down their fellow man This is not only revolting to them, but a positive violation to their solemn vow to their God."[7] The apologetic for both the refusal to muster is clearly stated as is an apologetic for the actions the Brethren were already beginning to take in the aiding of men seeking to cross Union lines so as to avoid military service. Forcing a man to break a vow made to God was not something the Brethren, as a community of believers, were willing to countenance.

The Virginia General Assembly passed "An Act Providing for the Exemption of Certain Persons upon religious grounds", on March 29, 1862.[8] This act secured the release of Elder John Kline and both the Brethren held with him in Harrisonburg as well as the Brethren being held in Richmond. This reprieve would be short lived when just two weeks later, on April 16, 1862 the Confederate Congress passed a Conscription Act which only exempted ministers upon religious grounds and not populations whose principles prevented military duty. The work to petition the Confederate Congress for the exemptions which had just been granted by the Commonwealth of Virginia began immediately.

Colonel John B. Baldwin was a member of the Confederate Congress, friend to John Kline, and sympathetic to renewed threat of conscription. John Kline wrote to Col. Baldwin in July, 1862 following the passing the Confederate Conscription Act. Kline reiterated the stance of the Brethren concerning warfare before making his case that the Brethren should be granted exemption status under the Confederate government with recognition that the fees paid to Virginia had been dutifully paid. "I wish to be as short as possible. I will, therefore, at once

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[7] John Kline to Colonel Lewis, December 16, 1861. Bowman, *War*. 132.

[8] An Act Providing for the Exemption of certain persons. Statues at Large of the Confederate States of America; Passed at the Second Session of the First Congress, 1862. https://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/csstat62/csstat62.htmlS

inform you that we are a noncombatant people. We believe most conscientiously that it is the doctrine taught by our Lord in the New Testament which we feel bound to obey."[9] The letter expands on this apologetic and explains the Brethren obligation to adhere to civil law as long as those laws do not contradict the laws of God. Kline then appeals to Baldwin to support and advocate for an exemption for Brethren members. "Please use all your powers and influence in behalf of us, so that the Conscript law or all other Confederate laws be so constructed that Christian conscience be so protected that the south shall not be polluted with a bloody persecution."[10]

Kline's letter entered a new potentiality for the Brethren. The idea of the Brethren, collectively, leaving the state of Virginia came under open consideration and was introduced to the advocates working to gain support in Richmond. The Brethren and Mennonite were highly successful farmers throughout the Shenandoah and had maintained a significant portion of the rich farmland of the Valley under cultivation. The contribution of these farms to the feeding of the Confederate Army could not be overlooked by the Confederate government. The open discussion of the Brethren, and likely the Mennonite as well, leaving their farmland fallow and departing the region would have been detrimental to the sustenance of the armies. This was a reality which General Grant fully understood when he sent Sheridan into the Valley in 1864. The letter to Colonel Baldwin offers one, if not the, first mention of that possibility to a Congressional representative. "If we can not get protection of our Christian liberty in the south, the home of our nativity, we will be compelled to seek shelter in some other place, or suffer bonds and persecutions as did many of our forefathers. For we can not take up carnal weapons

[9] Kline to Baldwin. July 23, 1862. Bowman, *War*. 138.

[10] Ibid. 138.

of warfare and fight our fellow man to kill him."[11] This line is suggestive of the already developing system of moving men across Union lines into protection. The Brethren were fully aware that men of military age were not to being permitted to cross into the North unopposed.

The efforts of John Kline were not undertaken single handedly, but joined by the leadership of the Brethren congregations all along the Shenandoah Valley. Colonel Baldwin's response to Kline's letter was to recommend the church produce a petition to be presented to the Confederate Congress. John Kline organized a petition for the Brethren and Mennonite in the northern counties of the Shenandoah. A second petition was drawn up among the Brethren of the southern Shenandoah counties overseen by Benjamin Moomaw and Jonas Graybill. John Kline's petition presented an eloquent appeal for the respect of religious liberty. Referring to the previously passed Virginia Exemption Act Kline expressed an appeal for respect of strongly held doctrinal foundations. "This exemption was based upon the long established Creed or faith of our churches, against the bearing of arms. This doctrine is coequal with the foundation of our Churches, and is we think and feel, the Command of God. While we know there is strong popular feeling against such doctrine, yet it is none the less dear and sacred to us who believe it. The question which we present to you, is not one of persuasion in favor of our peculiar doctrine, but a prayer, that you may Exercise that same charity and respect for our opinions, and faith, that we so freely accord to others."[12]

Kline's petition was submitted to Colonel Baldwin for presentation to the Confederate Congress while the petition organized by Moomaw and representing the counties of Botetourt, Roanoke, and Franklin, was presented to the Honorable B. F. Anderson, also a member of

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[11] Ibid, 131-142.

[12] Petition to the Senate and House of Representatives of the Confederate States of America. Zigler, Brethren in *Virginia*. 119.

Congress, for presentation. The combined efforts contributed to the Exemption Act passed by the Confederate Government which included the peace-church members.

> APPROVED Oct. 11, 1862.
>
> CHAP. XLV.--An Act to exempt certain persons from military duty, and to repeal an Act entitled "An Act to exempt certain persons from enrollment for service in the army of the Confederate States," approved 21st April, 1862.
>
> October 11, 1862.
>
> …every minister of religion authorized to preach according to the rules of his sect and in the regular discharge of ministerial duties, and all persons who have been and now are members of the society of Friends and the association of Dunkards, Nazarenes and Mennonists, in regular membership in their respective
> denominations: Provided, Members of the society of Friends, Nazarenes, Mennonists and Dunkards shall furnish substitutes or pay a tax of five hundred dollars each into the public treasury;…[13]

The passing of the Exemption Act led to a series of orders on how the taxes would be collected and proof of active membership presented to the Confederate authorities so as to grant exemption.

VII. Friends, Dunkards, Nazarenes, and Mennonites.

[13] Statues at Large of the Confederate States of America; Passed at the Second Session of the First Congress, 1862. 78

> All persons of the above denominations in regular membership therein on the 11th day of October, 1862, shall be exempt from enrollment on furnishing a substitute, or on presenting to the enrolling officer a receipt from a bonded quartermaster for the tax of $500 imposed by act of Congress and an affidavit by the bishop, presiding elder, or other officer whose duty it is to preserve the records of membership in the denomination to which the party belongs, setting forth distinctly the fact that the party on the 11th of October, 1862, was in regular membership with such denomination.

The Confederate government, still in the process of developing bureaucratic structures managed the collection of exemption tax through the quickly growing quartermaster offices. Finding reliable officers to fill this position became a pressing concern as the exempt peace-church congregations organized to collect the tax money to assist poorer members in attaining exemption status.

> ADJUTANT AND INSPECTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE,
>
> Richmond, October 15, 1862.
>
> Colonel A. C. MYERS,
>
> Quartermaster-General, Richmond:
>
> SIR: The Secretary of War directs that you select some suitable officer of your department in this city to receive the sums paid in by members of the Dunkard Society to secure exemption from military service. This officer will perform this duty until further orders. This order will include also the members of the societies of Friends, Mennonites, and Nazarenes.

Very respectfully, &c.,

S. COOPER,

Adjutant and Inspector General.[14]

The passage of the Confederate Exemption laws presented a new difficulty as members who had initially paid their fees to the state were now threatened with the need to produce a second $500 fee. Under the renewed threat of arrest or conscription John Kline petitioned the quartermaster general with allowing the Brethren to organize a refund of state fees to be paid forward to the Confederate authorities as well as time to raise funds to pay the fees of those men unable to secure the hefty $500 needed for exemption. John Kline and Benjamin Moomaw both took strong leadership roles in the securing of exemption status for Brethren members in their counties. John Kline noted his trips to Harrisonburg to address the exemption status and paying of fines. At least three trips to Harrisonburg in December, 1862 secured the exemptions of a number of military age Brethren in Rockingham County.

On Saturday, December 6, John Kline traveled to Harrisonburg to address the paying of exemption fees. He noted meeting with the agent and addressing business associated with the procedure. On Tuesday, December 16, he returned to Harrisonburg with additional exemption fees and obtained the certificates of exemption for the Brethren whose fines he had paid during the trips. The certificates were provided by the Confederate Congress upon verification of fees paid.

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[14] U.S. Dept. of War. *The War o the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.* Washington D.C.. Seriel 128, 122. Hereafter cited as O.R.

Between December 16 and December 30 John Kline collected the military exemption fees for his Linville Church Congregation in Rockingham County. His records show the amount paid by each military eligible member of the congregation along with the amount they were able to pay of the $500. A significant number of these men were unable to pay the entire fee out of pocket, here the congregation contributed with a large amount of the remaining money being paid by John Kline himself. On December 30 he recorded in his account book that he, "paid to Mr. Woodward, the Receiver of Fines, $500 for each of the following persons:"[15] This list of 18 men included several whose were later confessed or mentioned as active in the Unionist Underground Railroad. Brethren elders and ministers across the region were likewise engaged in the raising of exemption fees for their congregants of military age.

Throughout the process of gaining exemption status during 1861-62 the Brethren did not passively await approval but rather took definitive action to aid men who sought to gain security from conscription north and west of the Confederate States. One hindrance to the gaining of exemption status was the perception that the Brethren were wholly Unionist sympathizers. This perception by the Confederate Government, military, and local leaders was advanced by the arrest of Brethren and Mennonite men being moved on the Unionist Underground Railroad.

John Kline traveled extensively during the spring, summer, and fall throughout the entirety of his adult life as a Brethren Elder. The careful documenting of miles traveled each day, the specific locations of meeting houses and homes with the distance between each stop notated in his diary, offers a clearly defined circuit which encompassed the Shenandoah Valley, the highlands of Southwest Virginia into Tennessee, the highlands of Western Virginia, Central and Western Pennsylvania and Ohio. John Kline was familiar with the terrain, the rivers and

[15] Account Book of John Kline. Funk, *Life of John Kline.* 458.

mountains, the remote valleys, the Brethren farms, meeting houses, and the shortest route between each across the entire region. These expansive travels had begun in the 1830s as he matured in his leadership role within the church. During the 1840s and 1850s he had come of age, grown in his leadership within the church and gained respect among Brethren across the nation. His was a household name, especially with the advent of the Gospel Visitor publication which brought his scriptural interpretations, polemics concerning Brethren interaction with secular affairs, and his strong faith-based worldview into the homes of Brethren families across the nation. His work to maintain unity and fellowship between Brethren in the Northern and Southern states contributed significantly to the church remaining united throughout the conflict.

John Kline's diary contains meticulous notes on the details of his travels. The routes taken, including direction along branches of creeks and rivers, distance between churches and homes, the names of families and specific individuals with whom he shared meals, prayer meetings, and lodging are all included. Exact distances, often written to within the half mile, allowed him to calculate his year-end distance traveled which was recorded on December 31 of each year. He also included the scriptures upon which he preached sermons to congregations during these travels.

Tracing the travels and men whom he visited regularly through his diary entries offers a clear image of his role as a coordinator of the U.U.R. The men who have been identified as offering their homes as safe-houses, depots, and their services as pilots and post masters throughout the region encompassing Rockingham County, Virginia and Pendleton, Hardy, and Hampshire Counties in West Virginia have nearly all been identified by John Kline as men he visited on a regular basis. John Kline's full role in the U.U.R. has yet to be identified in the existing sources. His skills as a 'healer', although not a licensed physician, were called upon for

men injured or sick when traveling the U.U.R. He was notably the Brethren Elder who traveled between the homes associated with the U.U.R. continually from the beginning of the war until his death on June 15, 1864.[16]

During the first two years of the war the men being moved on the U.U.R. were primarily Anabaptist men who were foundationally opposed to military service. The development of routes through the mountains, and organization of pilots and safe houses developed and expanded during this period. The spring of 1863 saw a dramatic increase in the violence of the war and a subsequent increase in desertion rates from the Confederate Armies. The Brethren network had become much more sophisticated and capable of supporting deserters with no previous connection with either the Brethren or Mennonite Churches. As a mission of mercy, based upon a worldview that warfare was a direct affront to the scriptural teachings of Christ, the Brethren would not deny access or support to any man seeking to avoid the war. For elders such as John Kline,

The movement of groups of men attempting to cross Union lines to avoid conscription from the Brethren and Mennonite communities began immediately following the passage of the state militia draft act of July, 1861. Confederate and Union armies were active in the northern Shenandoah Valley and northwestern Virginia, (soon seceding and forming West Virginia), throughout the period. Moving groups of men under the cover of night soon garnered the attention of both regular and irregular Confederate units operating in the region. Groups as small as 5 and 8 men up to groups of 70+ men attempted to move north through the Valley then turn

[16] John Kline's diary records frequent communication and visits with the men later identified as operating the 'depots' and many of the safe-houses in the northern Shenandoah Valley. Kline's route often traversed the known routes through the mountain gaps.

west toward the rugged mountains of Hardy County. During this period the system of safe houses and pilots familiar with the confusing and rugged terrain began to develop. The first arrests were made of men evading conscription, often with accusations of Unionism or aiding the enemy being made in conjunction with charges of evading the draft. Throughout this period John Kline was in nearly continuous movement along the Shenandoah Valley and counties immediately to the west in the Alleghany Mountains. His leadership role in the church, combined with nearly continuous movement drew the attention of Confederate authorities by the summer of 1861.

Kline's extensive travels placed him in regular contact with leaders and congregations all along the Shenandoah and into the northern counties in Western Virginia, later West Virginia. His travels attracted the attention of Confederate military authorities. When increasing numbers of Brethren men were arrested for evading conscription Kline was suspected of organizing the movement and aiding the Union. Kline was first arrested on April 5, 1862 and taken to the Harrisonburg where he was held in the jury room of the court house. A late spring brought cold and snow to the Shenandoah during April of 1862. Kline, along with several other Brethren leaders and men captured while attempting to cross Union lines, suffered from cold and illness while imprisoned. Kline's diary during this period, unsurprisingly, provides a reflection of the Apostle Paul's consideration of the proper and just role of civil government and the relationship of the Christian to both civil and God's law. Considering the charges of aiding deserters and conscription evaders, Unionism, and possibly treason, his diary offers a worldview apologetic for how he, and many Brethren, would continue to respond to the war.

> For our instruction here, it may be well to speak upon the subject of righteousness. What is it? Righteousness is obedience to law. This is its general meaning. This is its human

> sense. In its divine sense it is obedience to the laws of God. Wherein the laws of men depart from the laws of God obedience to their laws is disobedience to God's laws. Here arises a conflict in which each individual may decide for himself which he will do, the will of men or the will of God. The decision of the apostles was "to obey God rather than men." By this obedience they stood righteous in the eyes of God. To be sinners in the sight of men gave them no distress, so long as they felt sure of being righteous in the sight of God.[17]

John Kline dedicated himself to obeying the laws of God in regard to non-violence and non-resistance. Supporting men who chose not to fight amounted to treason against the Confederate government but when pursued, harassed, arrested, tortured, and threatened the Brethren would make no move of self-defense, there would be no resistance to persecution as each man accepted the punishment of civil government as his price for obeying the laws of God.

The passing of the Virginia Exemption Act on March 29, 1862 led to the release of the imprisoned Brethren upon the payment of the $500 fee. The Brethren congregation here demonstrated their high level of cooperative support and organization by raising thousands of dollars within a few days. Elder Benjamin Miller of Harrisonburg, Virginia was a close acquaintance of John Kline and selected by the local congregations to oversee the collection of money and paying of fines to gain the release of the imprisoned Brethren. Miller noted that, "The liberality of the Brethren was remarkable." The authorities had to establish the system for the collecting of the fines, however, the Brethren had been so efficient in the collection process

[17] John Kline, April 6, 1862. Funk, *Life of John Kline*, 451.

that they were prepared to pay the fines some days before authorities were prepared to receive the funds.[18]

The organization and logistical approach to protecting the peace principle religious liberty of the Brethren is exemplified, and was highly dependent, on the relationship between Benjamin Moomaw in Botetourt County at the southern end of the Shenandoah Valley and John Kline anchoring the logistics in Rockingham County near the northern end of the Valley. The two men had taken leadership positions in the Brethren Church in the decades prior to the Civil War, often working as key leaders at the Annual Meetings, working together on statements of doctrine and Brethren engagement in secular life. John Kline, in his extensive travels through central and western Virginia, visited Botetourt County annually. The two often shared a pulpit and corresponded regularly nearly every question or issue facing the church.

As threats of conscription increased for Brethren members Benjamin Moomaw and John Kline worked together to petition first the state, then the Confederate government for exemption status. Apologetic responses to criticism against the Brethren were produced by both men with Moomaw often taking the lead with his highly articulate and appealing written apologetics.

The foundations of the Brethren U.U.R. network are clearly planted in the doctrinal stance against bearing arms. The work of petitioning the Confederate government for exemption status, and the requirement for established membership in one of the peace-church congregations contributed to the impetus to move military aged men out of reach of Confederate conscription agents. In December of 1861 John Kline recorded, “Many have already expressed to me their

[18] Zigler, *Brethren in Virginia*. 113.

determination to flee from their homes rather than disobey God."[19] Men seeking to leave the South in obedience to God's prohibition against the bearing of arms would necessarily receive the support and assistance of the church. During this period the first groups of Brethren and Mennonite young men were organized for the walk across the mountains and into the North.

The organized movement of men north across Union lines began during the earliest days of the war. Groups of men reported being moved North immediately following the enactment Virginia conscription law. Through the fall of 1861 and into the spring of 1862 the system became functional as an organized network with dedicated pilots for each stage of the journey, designated safe houses, systems of supplying food and even a 'postal service' to move messages and letters north and south along the route. The separation of the northwestern portions of Virginia, during the process of organization for statehood, allowed men to be moved west from Rockingham County into the rugged, and Union supporting counties of West Virginia. Movement through the rugged Alleghany Mountains presented unique dangers and the need for hired pilots who were highly familiar with the terrain. These pilots of West Virginia were often paid for their services with records indicating some received as much as $20 per person to guide men to rail stations or the Pennsylvania state line.

Hundreds of written testimonies offer a clear understanding of how the Brethren and Mennonite of the Shenandoah organized and successfully moved hundreds, and likely, thousands of men north across Union lines. The testimonies recorded from the counties of the Shenandoah Valley south through Botetourt, Roanoke, and Floyd Counties in SW Virginia offer a very consistent system of how the safe-houses and depots were utilized, the cooperative involvement within congregations and connections to congregations in neighboring counties. The depot

[19] John Kline, December 20, 1861. Funk, *Life of John Kline*. 446

which developed in Floyd County centered with the Topeco Church congregation protected and fed up to 150 refugees, (deserters and conscription evaders), per week through 1863 and 1864. The county was experiencing extreme food shortages by 1863 so the feeding of an additional 150 men would have required advanced logistics. This church history records a counter-flow on the U.U.R. which brought in additional food supplies to help sustain the refuges and Brethren families facing starvation.[20] Depots along the route have been identified as being centered near Brethren churches with close knit congregations and often led by an Elder in that local congregation.

In Botetourt County, Elder Benjamin Moomaw took an active role in aiding deserters to move north across Union lines. Identified safe-houses in Botetourt have been identified as located at the farms of David Firestone, Samuel Lepes, and Benjamin Moomaw.[21] Elder Peter Nininger was arrested in the fall of 1864 for suspected activity in the U.U.R., however, there was not enough evidence to hold him. Nininger became associated with the Heroes of America, Red Strings, during this period through an investigation conducted by the Confederate government. The investigation into the growing Red Strings organization in Southwest Virginia led to the request that the government suspend the writ of habeas corpus so that arrests could be made with impunity. This same investigation revealed that Fincastle members of the H.O.A., Red Strings, estimated that the U.U.R. had move about 1000 deserters toward Union lines. The report further revealed that the U.U.R. could get deserters north and across Union lines in as little as 3 days from Botetourt County.[22]

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[20] Elwardani. “Traitors”. 84-95.

[21] S.C.C. RG 217,CN(s). 41748, 51447,41814.

[22] Report of Detectives, JNO B. Williams and Thos. McGill. O.R. Serial 29, 810-813.

Connections between the Brethren active in the U.U.R. and the Red Strings Unionist organization have been identified in Floyd County as well. The Brethren were scrupulous about not supporting Unionist organizations which employed guerrilla tactics, however, the work to aid deserters and weaken the Confederate war effort became increasingly accepted as support for the war weakened in the Southern Mountains. Floyd County was flagged by the Confederate government as being particularly traitorous against the Confederacy, however, the Brethren of this county remained focused on adherence to the peace principles of non-violence. The number of Brethren identified as pilots, safe-houses, or organizing meager food supplies for nearly starving deserters increased rapidly through 1863.

The relationship between the Brethren and Mennonite congregations in the Shenandoah Valley contributed to the cooperative effort required to operate the U.U.R. The sworn testimonies offer insight into the interconnected nature of the two denominations with many of the men involved having marital ties to both the Brethren and Mennonite churches. The families of David and Henry Rhodes of Rockingham County, Virginia provides an initial glimpse of peace-church activity when the conscription laws went into effect. Delilah Rhodes, wife of Henry Rhodes explained that her husband had hid in the mountains until the exemption law passed. The raising of the $500 exemption fee was difficult and took the contributions of family members to raise. "After this he helped others to escape and we kept them at our house until an opportunity offered for them to escape. He brought refugees and deserters to our house and helped them away, and has carried letters and sent letters to and fro to go through the lines and done other things to assist those wishing to escape."[23]

[23], S.C.C. RG 233, CN 21836. Delilah Rhodes for Henry Rhodes

Taken as an individual testimony there is often some suggestion of an elaborate network functioning among these populations. However, the sheer volume of testimonies giving witness to Brethren and, (in the northern Valley), Mennonite involvement presents a clear image of the sophistication of the operations. Multiple sources refer to the structure of the network, a functioning system of communication and specific locations where men could be hidden until larger groups could be gathered, the movement of Confederate Scouts and Home Guard could be monitored to minimize the risk of capture.

There were an unknown number of safe houses used to hold groups until guides gauged the route was safe enough to move men on to the next stop. John Geil was a member of the Mennonite Church in Rockingham County, Virginia. He and his brothers actively evaded conscription and aided men on the trek north. During the spring of 1862 when a number of Brethren and Mennonite men were arrested by Confederate authorities John Geil was one of a group of 70 men arrested and held in Richmond at Castle Thunder Prison while awaiting the passing of the exemption act. Jacob Geil and his wife Mary acknowledged Unionist sympathies and engaged in support of the Unionist Underground Railroad. Mary outlined her husbands' participation in clear detail. "Our place was called by the secessionist as a d___d Union hole." She further explained his role in the network. "During the war we had at our house a great many refugees which my husband kept and fed and harbored until the guides would come and take them to the mountains where guides would conduct them through the union lines and we had care of several families of the refugees and helped them get away to the north also."[24]

A number of these safe houses have been identified by the Brethren as being 'Depots' on the Underground Railroad. In Rockingham County alone there were at least four large depots

[24] S.C.C. RG 233, CN. 21844. Mary Geil for Jacob Geil.

and thirty identified safe-houses which functioned as a stop-over where men were give food, rest, and medical attention until the groups grew large enough, and the guides assessed the safety of the route, to deem the next movement advantageous.

Throughout the war John Kline's skills as an herbal physician placed him in the role of treating a wide array of ailments while he traveled in his ministerial duties. His function in the U.U.R. included that of medical provider for men who became ill or injured while being moved north. A glimpse into his role can be found in his diary entry for April 18, 1863. Kline records Abraham Funk waking him at one o'clock to treat a man injured while evading Confederate scouts. The group had been leaving the safe-house of Abraham Funk for movement to the depot to meet their pilot. After leaving Funk's the group had been near the steep embankment above the North Fork of the Shenandoah River in Harrisonburg when the alarm came through that scouts were moving up the road. The group dropped down the steep embankment but a deserter by the name of George Sellers slipped and suffered a serious broken leg. John Kline was the physician who treated Seller's injury.[25] George Sellers was eventually moved to the home of William Miller, minister of the Old Salem Church Brethren congregation. Miller took Sellers to the western border of his circuit to meet a guide north.[26]

The Greenmount Brethren Church was located on Linville Creek several miles from the Linville Brethren Church, the home church of Elder John Kline. Greenmount was pastored by several strong Brethren leaders with the Elder Jacob Miller being head of the church. Jacob Miller was a close friend of John Kline and was identified as being a Unionist and involved in the U.U.R. early in the war. A highly successful farmer and mill owner, he was estimated to be

[25] John Kline, April 18, 1863. Funk, Life of John Kline.453.

[26] S.C.C. 233, CN. 16524. William J. Miller.

worth about $30,000 in 1862. The work of raising funds to pay the exemption fees was advanced tremendously by the wealthiest Brethren landowners such as Jacob Miller who, himself, pledged to spend up to half of his own net worth toward securing of exemptions for members of the Brethren church.[27]

Among the men identified, with collaborating testimony, as being active in the Unionist Underground Railroad were the nephews of Elder John Kline. Elder John Kline had no surviving children but a number of nephews and nephew-in-laws in both Rockingham and Augusta Counties. Several of these nephews were young ministers in the Brethren Church and a significant number of these nephews have been identified as active participants in the U.U.R.[28] George and John B. Kline were the sons of Elder Kline's brother George. John B. Kline was a young minister in the Brethren Church when the war began. George Kline was a farmer who lived slightly out of the main area of settlement. The location of George's home kept him from being targeted as often by impressment agents seeking animals and food supplies for the roving armies. This location also allowed George Kline to offer his home as a safe-house with slightly less risk of notice. As the Confederate authorities became more determined to arrest deserters and Unionists in the early fall of 1864 the Niswander family came under increased suspicion. Samuel Niswander was able to escape on the U.U.R. using the same network he had supported

[27] Emmert F. Bittinger. *Unionists and the Civil War Experience in the Shenandoah Vol. II.* Dayton: Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, 2003. 150.

[28] The testimonies of Elder John Kline's nephews provides a wide description of the experiences of young Anabaptist men seeking to avoid service in the Confederate Army. The practice of adult baptism meant that young people often did not officially join the church until they were adults as membership was withheld until baptism. Ministers in the church were exempt from military service but young men not yet admitted to full membership when the conscription law passed were still eligible for military service. Young Brethren and Mennonite men who came of age during the war were still faced with the risk of conscription. Therefore, despite the exemption laws protecting members of Anabaptist churches many sons of these congregations were not eligible for exemption and were, therefore, forced to utilize the U.U.R. to escape north.

thus far in the war. His family, under increased risk of arrest, were hidden for over a week at the home of George Kline until they could be moved north safely.[29]

John B. Kline was a young minister in the German Baptist Brethren Church who spent a significant amount of time in the company of Elder John Kline.[30] Elder Kline seems to have had a particular affection for his namesake and protégée. The death of John B. Kline's young wife during the diphtheria outbreak of 1863 is noted in the diary with particular heartache. As the local physician Elder Kline was involved with the medical treatment for the twenty year old whom Kline described as, "…a lovely and tender plant; too tender for this world."[31] Following the death of his wife, John B. Kline traveled more extensively with Elder Kline. In 1864, when Elder Kline made his last clandestine crossing of Union lines to attend the Annual Meeting in Ohio, John B. Kline traveled in attendance, taking the same grave risk of being caught. John B. Kline offered his home as a safe-house throughout the war, aiding both conscription evaders and Confederate soldiers who deserted.[32]

Multiple sources place Jacob Miller as being at the center of the Unionist Underground Railroad operation in the northern portion of the Shenandoah Valley. In testimony to the Southern Claims Commission following the war Miller outlined his role. This testimony was reflected in the testimony of his witnesses.

> I aided and assisted a large number of refugees and deserters to escape from the Confederacy. I have kept them concealed or have fed them and sent them to other points

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[29] S.C.C. RG 217, CN 15250. George Kline.

[30] John Kline's diary mentions nearly weekly visits and travels with John B. Kline. The two men traveled into Pendleton and Hardy counties together as part of their ministerial rounds into the remote areas. Both men were very familiar with the rugged terrain and the loyal members of the local population.

[31] John Kline, February 13, 1863. Funk, *Life of John Kline.*. 460.

[32] Ibid. 460.

> to other agents and guides. I have had the come to my house from distant counties in the night. My house was one of the Depots of the underground R.R. as it was called.

Miller was also a guide who collected men from the scattered safe-houses and took them to the Briary Gap depot to meet their pilot. Miller's connection with John Kline and the movement of deserters and conscription evaders led to continual threats on his life and property. Miller came under increasing threat during the spring of 1864 and was warned that he would be the next Brethren leader killed in the weeks following the murder of John Kline. "My life was threatened so generally about the time that Bishop Kline was way-laid and murdered. The brethren thought it not safe for me to go preaching or to funerals alone and some of them would accompany me for safety."[33] This statement was collaborated by his brother Daniel Miller.

> I heard some rebel soldiers threaten claimant about the time the Bishop Kline was murdered. I heard them say he would be killed next and several more would be killed soon. It was considered dangerous for him to travel and when he went to his appointments some of the brethren would accompany him.[34]

The actions of the Brethren Elders had clearly been identified by Confederate loyalists, Home Guards and soldiers. Miller's hired farm hand, Samuel Kagey testified to his activity in the U. U. R. and function of his farm as a depot, or stop-over for men being moved north. As his hired hand, Kagey rented the house on Miller's adjoining property and was closely involved, and witness to, the activity across the property. "He use to harbor and conceal dodgers around his

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[33] S.C.C. RG 233, CN. 17288. Jacob Miller.

[34] S.C.C. RG 217, CN. 9783. Daniel Miller for Jacob Miller.

place. I have seen them come to his place many times in parties of 4 or 5. And I heard of parties starting from his place to go North over the mountains."[35]

Daniel Zigler had close connections to various participants, particularly the Miller brothers, functioning in different roles of the U.U.R. Zigler identified multiple safe-houses and pilots, suggesting that his role was complex and likely connected to maintaining communications across the network in Rockingham County. A pilot by the name of Noah Wetzel was identified as working from the home of Samuel Myers. Men were hid at the Myers home and Wetzel would take these men, along with additional groups, through the mountains.

Jacob Geil's brother, John, was also active in the movement of refugees and worked to connect the groups of men with the guides who took them northwest into the Alleghany Mountains. Henry Beery, a family friend of the Geil family, stated that a man by the name of John Reiley was regularly employed as a pilot by the Geil and Beery families to take men through the lines.[36]

With the depots functioning as points of collection for groups about to meet pilots for the next step of the journey, numerous safe-houses had to be employed as men made their way north in smaller groups. Depots would have been used to consolidate the men from multiple safe-houses. The testimony of John Flory offers better insight into the role of the safe-house, (of which at least a dozen have been identified in Rockingham County alone). John Flory testified, with supporting witnesses, to hiding men and even horses while they waited to be moved along the U.U.R. Flory is reported to have housed groups of up to fifteen men at a time, providing

[35] S.C.C. RG 217, CN 9783. Samuel Kagey for Jacob Miller.

[36] S.C.C. RG 233, CN 8701. Henry Beery for John Geil.

meals for men and horse alike.[37] Mennonite widow Rebecca Burkholder also had collaborating witnesses testify that she housed deserters and conscription evaders in her home throughout the war.[38] Many of these Brethren also had local reputations for willingly feeding Union soldiers as the lines continually shifted in the Valley.

Rockingham County became a logistical center for men being moved north on the U.U.R. for several reasons. The primary reason being the high concentration of Brethren and Mennonite churches with the county boosting the highest population of Anabaptists in Virginia. Among this population were some of the strongest church leaders who did not fear temporal retaliation but feared the wrath of God should they fail to adhere to their Christian mission. The practical reason for Rockingham County becoming an organizational center for the U.U.R. was the location near the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley with a western border anchored by the Alleghany Mountains and Pendleton County in West Virginia. Mountain gaps allowed ease of passage out of the Shenandoah but also drew surveillance and patrols by Confederate militia and Home Guard units. Utilization of these gaps required the Brethren to develop a highly sophisticated system of communications, pilots, food supply, and safe houses. The mountain gaps already anchored by large Brethren land holdings at the onset of the war became the logical corridors through which the U.U.R. flowed. Briery Branch Gap proved to be one such corridor and key to the movement of men out of the Confederacy. Briery Branch Creek becomes the head of the North River on the western side of this pass before cutting through the steep and rugged Narrow Mountain several miles west of Harrisonburg.

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[37], S.C.C. RG 217, CN 8411. John Flory.

[38] S.C.C. RG 217, CN 9730. Rebecca Burkholder

A complex system of safe-houses, depots, pilots, and food supply developed near Briery Gap, extending from Bridgewater and Harrisonburg. Christian and Susanna Snell housed small groups before sending them on to the Wine house 'depot' near the gap. From there at least 5 pilots have been identified who guided refugees through the rough terrain on the west side of the gap. The practice of keeping the system clandestine becomes apparent when Susanna Snell revealed that she didn't realize her husband's involvement until a message was delivered for her husband by a messenger. "The first that I knew of my husband being identified with those who were helping refugees to escape was when a neighbor of ours sent his son with a message to my husband telling him that a party of refugees would be at his house that night, and for him to notify some others who wanted to go along with the refugees."[39] The system of collecting groups into safe-houses near the 'depots' before being collected by guides from those depots for the trip over the mountain is explained by multiple witnesses and men involved in various roles. Samuel Whitmer became associated with the Snell's in 1863 as part of the U.U.R. organization. Whitmer's testimony reveals the high level of logistics involved in the operation. "They assisted a good many refugees in getting through the lines, and furnished them with food, and sent a barrel of flour to the depot for the refugees kept by a nephew of theirs who was a guide living near the mountains, when parties of refugees were sent while collecting together."[40] Susanna Snell was the daughter of Elder George Wine whose family near Briery Creek operated the primary depot through Briery Gap. The nephew referenced by Samuel Whitmore was likely one of George Wine's grandsons and the Wine who has been identified as a guide through the Briery Gap route.

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[39] S.C.C. RG 217, CN 16942. Susanna Snell.

[40] S.C.C. RG 233, CN 8930. Samuel Whitmore.

The network organized to take refugees through the Briery Gap route utilized ‘guides’, to take small groups for the rendezvous at the Wine house ‘depot’, and ‘pilots’ who took the larger groups through the Alleghany Mountains. Pastor of the Beaver Creek church, Jacob Miller was one such guide, taking small groups of refugees to the Briery depot.

Brothers Andrew and Jacob Lindsey worked in conjunction with the Briery Gap depot and primary pilot, John Keister to move men through the mountains. This route experienced increased traffic in 1863 when the Lindsey brothers and John Keister became involved. Questioning by the United States Commissioner and Virginia State Special Counsel provides insight into the development and expansion of the U.U.R. west through Briery Gap. Andrew Lindsey stated that pilot line he was involved with opened in 1863 and operated until the end of the war. When asked how many men were moved across lines by the Lindsey brothers and pilot John Keister, Andrew Keister stated, “Mr. Keester told me he had taken about 2000 men through during the last 2 years of the war.”[41] The commissioner next asked, “What was your object in forming that association, & how did you operate?” Lindsey’s answer hints at the high level of organization while downplaying the risks taken by individuals directly involved. The system was based upon the established relationships between men of both the Brethren and Mennonite congregations and a reliance on word of mouth communication when groups were about to be moved. Notice would be given of the impending arrival of a group from a safe-house and passed to the depot. When the pilots and scouts deemed it safe to move the outlying groups would be consolidated at the depot to meet their pilot.[42] Jacob Lindsey’s primary role on the Briary Gap route was sharing communications between pilots, the safe-houses and the refugees. Lindsey did

[41] S.C.C. RG 233, CN 8933. Andrew Lindsey for Jacob Lindsey.

[42] Ibid.

not function as a postmaster on this route, that role was undertaken by David Garber. Lindsey seems to have focused on passing verbal communications specifically related to when pilots would be meeting groups to move north.[43]

The father and son partnership of John Wine, (close friend to John Kline), and George W. Wine allowed the ideal location of their farm, two miles from Briery Gap, to function as a highly efficient route. The Wines' were both preachers in the Brethren Church, with John Wine being an Elder during the war. Following the war they outlined their function as a depot and named additional safe-houses and pilots who functioned on the Briery Gap route. "We assisted the Pilots and co-operated with them moving hundreds of refugees and deserters through the mountains to the Union lines. We have fed parties of 10 or 12 at times for a week or more at a time while waiting for a Pilot through the mountains, and have done this many times." [44] The role of the guides was to move small groups locally to meet with the larger groups at the depot. Numerous local guides have been identified but it is likely that this role was filled, on an as needed basis, by any available family member. Often teenage sons were employed as local guides to move small groups to the depots.

Bowman Gap seems to have developed as a route from the Shenandoah Valley into the South Branch Valley, Hardy County, during 1862. The Brethren and Mennonite moving men through this gap utilized a different group of safe-houses and pilots. Samuel Bowman's home, near the gap, became the depot for this route. Bowman recounted his house being a collecting point where the guides and pilots would come to collect groups for movement through the mountains. Tazewell Moubray was a fellow member of the Greenmount Brethren congregation,

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[43] S.C.C. RG 233, CN 8933. Jacob Lindsey.

[44] S.C.C., RG 217, CN 19267. John and George Wine for James Anderson.

therefore both men were closely associated with Elder Jacob Miller. Tazewell Moubray and Samuel Bowman both named four pilots who functioned through the Bowman Gap route. Moubray hid smaller groups until word was passed to move them to the depot at Samuel Bowman's home to meet the pilots. Joseph Moubray, brother to Tazewell, explained the importance of communication between the Brethren living in Bowman Gap. "There was a nest of Union people in the Gap where he lived and they helped each other, and gave notice when the rebel scouts were around."[45]

Several Brethren and Mennonite participants in the U.U.R. reported using their homes for groups for periods of time but not continuously. The movement of safe-houses reduced risk of attracting the attention of scouts and reduced the burden to feed these groups on the families. Christian Showalter kept groups of four or five men at a time, sometimes for several months at a time, until the guides could collect them to meet their pilots. Christian Showalter's son, Samuel, spend nearly a year imprisoned in Harrisonburg for evading conscription. When not dealing with conscription agents or hiding in the mountains, he witnessed the operation of the network as men awaited pilots. "When I was at home my father had a lot of young men refugees, and deserters, from the rebel army, concealed in his barn where he kept them and fed them some months."[46]

One of the most remarkable people identified in conjunction with the Bowman Gap route was Margaret Rhodes. The wife Henry Rhodes, an invalid who died in 1864, Margaret functioned in many roles for the U.R.R. A hidden room was dug under her home which was accessed through a trap door in her bedroom. The bedroom of an invalid husband would have

[45], S.C.C. RG 233, CN 17293. Joseph Moubray for Tazewell Moubray.

[46] S.C.C. RG 217, CN 17936. Samuel Showalter for Christian Showalter.

not seemed a likely place to hide deserters and Rhodes was able to successfully hid men throughout the war without detection. The remoteness of her home contributed to the guides moving without detection. Margaret Rhodes hid between four and five men at a time, providing meals from her limited foodstuffs. When the guides came to take men to the depot she would prepare rations for them to carry through the mountains. The first men she hid were part of the large group of 70 men captured near Petersburg, W.V. in 1862.

Beyond the dangers of offering her home as a safe-house, Margaret Rhodes was the postmaster for the Bowman Gap route. Pilots would carry messages and letters across lines with the refugees. The letters would be addressed in her care, once in hands she would walk to deliver the letters and messages. Likewise, return letters were sent in her care to be passed to the pilots for the journey north. Margaret Rhodes reported she would walk up to six miles to deliver letters, leaving her five children and invalid husband in the care of her mother-in-law. One deserter from the Confederate Army, Henry Brunk, was hidden by Margaret Rhodes for an entire year while he clandestinely oversaw the health of his own wife and family nearby. Brunk was eventually safely piloted across the mountains to New Creek.[47] John Rhodes was active on the Bowman's Gap route as a messenger, maintaining contact between pilots and refugees. Rhodes reportedly, "always knew when a party was going through the mountains."[48]

A second significant 'terminal' or depot for the Bowman's Gap route was the home of Abraham Heatwole. Heatwole reported keeping men in easily accessible hiding places and identified that they were sent by the 'regular guides to the mountain pilots'. Heatwole's home was identified as a rendezvous for refugees. John J. Rodes, (Rhodes), collaborated that the

[47] S.C.C. RG 217, CN 9527. Margaret Rhodes.

[48] S.C.C. RG 217, CN(s) 16949, 21858. David E. Rhodes for John Rhodes.

Heatwole home as a "'terminal' for the Underground R.R., which was a means of conducting sev…[several] thousand persons from the confederacy, during the war." Henry Rodes identified the Heatwole home as a "head quarters" for the network. Henry Rodes also reported encountering many of the men who escaped the Confederacy through Abraham Heatwole's depot in Ohio after he had utilized the network to evade conscription.[49]

John Wine, Michael Wine, and John Kline spent a significant amount of time traveling together and meeting throughout the year of 1863. Despite the extreme risks involved, John Kline and John Wine crossed lines to attend the Brethren Annual Meeting in May of 1863. The meeting was held in Blair County, Pennsylvania which required the men to travel through the West Virginia Counties of Pendleton and Hardy, and Hampshire, across Alleghany County, Maryland and into Pennsylvania through Bedford County. The route taken aligns with the route reported by men who were piloted along the U.U.R. from Rockingham County. Kline's diary is collaborated, with some additional detail, in a letter written to Henry Kurtz of the Gospel Visitor upon his return home. The diary, interestingly, outlines in detail the route, distance between stops, and brethren homes where he stayed, but does not mention that he was traveling with John Wine. However, the letter to Kurtz discusses the presence of John Wine as well as meetings with Jacob Miller and Michael Wine on the return trip. Both John and Michael Wine, as well as Jacob Miller have been well documented as being key leaders in the Briery Gap route through the mountains.

A third significant depot surrounded the home of Mennonite pastor David Hartman. In conjunction with his neighbor and fellow Mennonite, Daniel Good, a significant depot operated from the large Hartman farm. David Hartman is credited with harboring at least 100 refuges in his

[49] S.C.C. RG 217, CN 8997. Abraham Heatwole Also, John J. Rodes and Henry Rodes for Abraham Heatwole. The surname Rhodes is often recorded as 'Rodes' in the Southern Claims Commission records. Testimony and Claims by both John J. and Henry Rodes alternately spell the name as both 'Rhodes' and 'Rodes'.

home while Daniel Good estimates he harbored another 75-100 in his home. Hartman's son, Peter, functioned as the pilot for this depot, taking groups through the South Branch Valley where different pilots took them as far as New Creek, W.V. The use of the Hartman home as a depot was locally well known. David Hartman reported treats of having his property destroyed as well as threats that he would be hung if he did not stop aiding deserters. Neighbor John Brunk contributed to this depot by offering his home as a safe-house on multiple occasions.[50]

The structure and function of the U.U.R. was recorded in the diary of Samuel A. Rhodes following his dramatic efforts to evade conscription in the Confederate army which resulted in his utilization of the network in the spring of 1862. Rhodes, fearing his exemption petition would be rejected, decided to travel across Union lines. Rhodes records a number of traveling companions and the specifics of his route and safe-houses he utilized on his trip. The initial attempt took him along Dry River Road on the route which would soon develop into the Briary Gap route. Rhodes missed the opportunity to join a group of 50 men leaving by the same route, and therefore waited several days until a group of 12 men was formed. Rhodes' group seems to have been moving without a pilot as they lost their way several times. The group of 50 quickly grew to over 70 men and subsequently arrested near Petersburg, WV on March 15. When informed at a safe-house of the arrest the group turned back to Rockingham County and spent the next 6 weeks in hiding in several safe-houses. The next attempt began on May 5 and took Rhodes along a northerly route toward Winchester before turning west into the mountains. A number of known safe-houses and key figures in the U.U.R. were specifically identified by Rhodes in his detailed records. Among these were Daniel Showalter, Jacob Phifer, Abraham Funk, and John Kline. Rhodes recorded being directed to Abraham Funk for food and lodging on the morning of May 7, but along the route

[50] S.C.C. RG 233, Claims 18423 & 21852. David Hartman.

they were informed by Fredrick Miller that Funk was not at home and that John Kline would meet them along the road and provide further direction. Meeting John Kline three miles up the road they were directed to the home of a Mr. Hover who provided food and lodging before sending them on to the next safe-house.[51]

Samuel Rhodes' account of the arrest of the large group of refugees, troop movements, and early organization of the U.U.R. align with additional accounts of these events. Joseph A. Miller was a member of the large group of 70+ men captured near Petersburg on March 15. Miller's account provides valuable information on the capture of this group, their imprisonment in Castle Thunder, and the application of the Exemption Act to men already arrested for conscription evasion. Miller also provides valuable insight into the developing network which still lacked the sophistication of communications, pilots, and informants concerning lines and troop locations which it would develop during the next twelve months.[52] Rhodes' aborted first attempt sent him home to a period of being kept in the homes of a variety of family and friends across Rockingham County. Following the arrest of the refugee groups in March, John Kline was arrested and held in the Harrisonburg Courthouse until April 18. Upon his release he spent several days recovering from illness then resumed his travels by the first of May. Rhodes reported receiving directions from John Kline on May 7. John Kline's diary does not have an entry for May 7, 1862, however, he was traveling extensively around the county during that week.[53] Samuel Rhodes took a similar

[51] Samuel A. Rhodes, The Rebellion the Cause of my Traveling adventures to the north. In Emmert F. Bittinger, ed. Unionists and the Civil War Experience in the Shenandoah, Volume I. Dayton: Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, 2003.

[52] Joseph A. Miller, "Captured in West Virginia and Sent to Richmond". In Sanger and Hays, *The Olive Branch*. 65.

[53] John Kline, *Life and Labors*. 453.

approach to record keeping in his diary as John Kline. He attempted to note the distance traveled, homes where he found food and lodging, and his specific route to safety.

John Kline's diary records provide a means of tracking his contact with key individuals involved in the Unionist Underground Railroad and his regular trips over the gaps and mountains which have been identified as primary routes. Throughout the war John Kline accepted the risk of attending the Brethren Annual Meeting. Due to the war, the Annual Meetings were all held in Northern states during this period. In 1862 he was able to get a pass to cross lines and subsequently travel by train to the Annual Meeting. In 1863 and 1864 a pass for crossing lines was no longer an option, therefore, he undertook these trips by crossing lines through the mountainous West Virginia route. The diary entries for the 1863 trip offers a clear map of his route north across lines as well as the return trip. Interestingly, the return trip was subsequently recorded in correspondence to the editors of the Gospel Visitor and published. This publication was carried across lines and distributed throughout the Southern states throughout the war. These detailed travel notes offer the names of men later associated with being safe-houses and depots on the U.U.R.

John Kline's extensive travels allowed him to closely monitor the shifting Confederate and Union lines on a continuous basis. His freedom of movement as a minister, and knowledge of the terrain to the west of the Shenandoah allowed him to assess safe routes. His continuous contact with key persons operating safe-houses, depots, and operating as both guides and pilots allowed information concerning army, home guard, and scout locations to be disseminated across the network efficiently.

FRIDAY, May 15. Dine and feed at Newman's furnace. Then go up through Trout Run valley, cross the Church mountains and get into Lost River valley near the place where the river disappears at the base of the mountain. Stay all night at Landes's. I have seen no scouts or pickets today.

SATURDAY, May 16. Get dinner at Jonathan Flory's, and stay all night at Abraham Miller's.

SUNDAY, May 17. Stay at Abraham Miller's all day. Have preaching in the afternoon. Stay all night again.

MONDAY, May 18. Cross the Potomac river at Old Town; go up the towpath; pass through Gibbontown near Flint Stone, and get to Abraham Ritchey's, where I stay all night. Traveled thirty-three miles to-day.

Crossing into Pennsylvania at Flintstone, John Kline followed the valley to the west Evitts Mountain north to center of the Brethren community in Bedford County, Pennsylvania. The next three days provide a brief overview of his movement's and involvement in the Annual Meeting. However, the return trip offers equal detail on the exact locations of Brethren homes which welcomed him with meals and lodging.

FRIDAY, May 29. Come six miles to Chanyville; the eleven miles to Gibbon; then two miles to John Deacon's where I get dinner and have Nell fed; the twenty miles to Brother Abraham Miller's in Hampshire County, Virginia, where I stay all night. Fine day.

SATURDAY, May 30. Come ten miles to Souer's, where I dine and feed; then five miles to the pike, and eight miles to North River; then three miles to Brother

> Wilson's, but to get there have to ride two miles out of way to pass unmolested. Stay all night at Brother Wilson's. Rain to-day.
>
> SUNDAY, May 31. Come twenty-two miles to Nimrod Stradaman's, where I dine and feed; then sixteen miles to James Fitzwater's where I stay all night. Fine day.
>
> MONDAY, June 1. Come ten miles to Michael Wine's; get dinner, and in afternoon cross the mountain and get home.

The day following his arrival home he penned a letter to the editors of the Gospel Visitor to notify the Northern Brethren that he had arrived home safely. This letter reveals several key aspects of the trip not mentioned in the diary. John Kline was not traveling alone but rather attended the Annual Meeting in the company of Elder John Wine, who along with his brother Michael, were key in the operation of the depot which moved men through the Briery Creek gap from Rockingham County into Pendleton, County, West Virginia.

> After we left the place of the Y.M. we came to our beloved brother Daniel Snoberger at Yellow Creek M.H. (14 miles), where we staid all night, and remained till after midday next day, when we started and came through Snakespring Valley to Bloody Run (14 m.) and went on to Jesse O'neil (9 m.) staying all night. From there we came to br. Abraham Miller 4 miles South of the Potomac, in the lower end of Hampshire, Va. (39 m.) In the morning we came to some friends (13 m) and then to another friend 18 miles. That afternoon we passes through a very great storm and rain, yet all safe. The following morning we traveled up North and Lost River until we reached br. James Fitzwater (39 m.) much relieved and rejoiced to

> meet our brother and family well. Next morning we came to br. Michael Wine, and then crossed the mountain paths until we came to the Dayton road where we parted, br. John to stop at br. B. Bowman and Jacob Miller, and I to go to my own house.[54]

This letter offers additional and interesting information on the route than that recorded in the diary. The inclusion of the miles between stops and specifics on locations, with names of the people who offered lodging, offers a clearly articulated set of directions on how to cross the Alleghany Mountains of West Virginia into southcentral Pennsylvania. The publication of John Kline's letter placed the route that he was using through the mountains in the hands of all the Brethren operating the U. U. R. Any man seeking a safe route through Union lines could potentially have used this published letter as directions through the South Branch Valley, across the Potomac River, and into Pennsylvania.

John Kline was cautious about risking the lives of the men being moved on the U.U.R. due to the heightened surveillance on his movements by Confederate scouts. There has been no mention of Kline acting as a pilot for groups being moved. While he crossed lines on occasion throughout the war he refused to carry any letter or communication which might be found if he was searched. George Toppin was a young man, of conscription age, during the war in Rockingham County. His parents were able to send him alone the U.U.R. early in the war where he remained in Ohio with relatives. When Toppin encountered John Kline unexpectedly at a love feast in Ohio during the war the two were overjoyed. Toppin immediately asked Kline to carry a letter back to his family. Kline refused to carry to carry the letter stating the likelihood of

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[54] John Kline to Henry Kurtz, *The Gospel Visitor*, 1863. 320

his being detained during the trip. Rather, Kline delivered a verbal message to the parents of the young man, assuring them of their sons' safety in Ohio.[55]

The increase in desertion from the Confederate Armies beginning in 1863 placed additional traffic on the U.U.R. The Brethren offered the resources of their network to the men who deserted with the same hospitality as that offered to Brethren evading conscription. Josiah Whitmore had served in the Confederate Army and refused to muster back into his company in 1863, instead deserting and relying on the Brethren of Rockingham County to guide him across Union lines. Having been raised in the community, and therefore known to the Brethren, he as able to access the network with little difficulty. Henry Early was a Brethren congregant living near Cooks Creek near the Dayton Road, this placed the farm on a primary route to the Briery Creep Gap depot. Whitmore's testimony offers insight into the willingness to help deserters from the Confederate Army as a means of undermining the Confederate War effort. "I know of his having helped soldiers, confederates I mean to escape from the service, besides others who were trying to avoid service – He helped me thru in 1863. I had been in the service & did not want to go in again. I had been conscripted – He kept me & a companion a rebel soldier for about a week & then helped us off to the Union lines."[56] This willingness to support non-Brethren men seeking to evade service placed the men involved in the network at considerably increased risk. Membership in either a Brethren or Mennonite Church, with a shared worldview concerning warfare and the Christian mission to support those evading service, helped to assure silence from members not actively engaged. Speaking or acting in support of the Confederacy could lead to censor or even

[55] Reverend Charles B. Nair, *John Kline Among His Brethren or How He Filled His Place.* Narrative History recorded by Linville Creek Church. 2014 (52) Although no date or year was given by George Toppin in his discussion of encountering John Kline in Ohio, based on his diary this Love Feast must have occurred while John Kline was in Ohio for the Annual Meeting in 1864.

[56] S.C.C. RG 233, CN 8937. Josiah Whitmore for Henry Early.

excommunication from the Brethren Church and therefore helped to keep the identities of those involved safe. However, offering aid to deserters with no direct connection with an Anabaptist congregation, and therefore no spiritual consequence, created the risk for a captured deserter to reveal the identities of those aiding him—especially if the revealing of such information might help the deserter avoid capital punishment for desertion and disloyalty to the Confederacy. However, the Brethren mission demanded that aid be given to any who asked, therefor, no deserter was turned away from the network.

John Kline remained focused on his Christian mission throughout 1863 and the spring of 1864 while the conditions faced by the farming communities of the Shenandoah Valley continued to deteriorate. The Anabaptists of the Valley were farmers who produced prolific amounts of essential food crops for personal consumption and as cash crops. The identification of the Shenandoah Valley as the 'bread basket' of the Confederacy was not an exaggeration with both wheat and corn being produced in large quantity. The desire of the Brethren and Mennonite to live separatist, agrarian lives in the rich farmland of the Valley became impossible as armies of the North and South sought to control and utilize the food surpluses housed in the large Anabaptist farms. The exemption status and non-violence principles of the Brethren and Mennonite garnered frustration and distrust from the Southern armies—making the farms of these populations particularly targeted for confiscation of both grains and livestock for the Confederacy. The Union Army, while very aware of the unionist inclinations of the Anabaptist churches, became increasingly focused on undermining the role of the Shenandoah Valley as the primary source for feeding Confederacy's starving armies.

Movement between communities, and certainly west into the counties of Hardy and Pendleton in West Virginia became increasingly dangerous as the gaps were continually monitored by Confederate scouts and militia for both deserters and the flow of unionists in and out of the Valley. John Kline continued to travel into West Virginia but even north into Pennsylvania on several occasions during 1863.[57] As the flow of deserters through these mountain routes increased, John Kline became increasingly suspected of being engaged in far more than traditional pastoral duties on this trips west and north. Often accompanied by Elder John Wine and/or Jacob Miller, both of whom used their homes as depots for the U.U.R., Kline traveled openly but keeping his meticulous records of movements, stops, distances between homes, and identities of friends with whom he stayed.

John Kline was arrested by Confederate authorities twice in the late summer and fall of 1863. Charges of aiding deserters, undermining the Confederacy, unionism, and subsequently treason against the Confederacy were dismissed following intensive interrogation. However, lack of evidence did not gain him reprieve from suspicion and his movements continued to be monitored and threats against his life increased throughout the winter and spring of 1864.

John Kline reported the increasingly dire conditions faced by families in the Valley in a letter to his friend Daniel Sayler in March of 1864. This letter was conveyed, in part, to the editors of the Gospel Visitor for publication. "I received a letter from Elder John Kline. He requests the prayers of the Brethren on our side of the lines. He says, 'starvation and nakedness

[57]John Kline, 1863. Funk, *Life of John Kline*. During the spring, summer, and fall of 1863 John Kline passed through the mountain gaps into West Virginia often on his ministerial rounds. These rounds took him into the homes of key men identified with the U.U.R. on recurring basis.

stare us in the face.' Our once Elder brother John A. Bowman of East Tennessee is dead; he was shot by a soldier. No further particulars."[58]

During the spring of 1864 the Brethren community of the Shenandoah came under increasing attention from Confederate authorities. John Kline did not make a secret of the death threats which he received for aiding deserters and conscription evaders. While returning from the Annual Meeting, held in Ohio, in 1864, Kline crossed lines then stopped in Pendleton County, West Virginia at the home of George Cowger. Over the evening meal he stated that he had received new threats on his life. Steadfast in his dedication to the Christian mission in which he was engaged he concluded, "but I do not fear them; they can only kill my body."[59] On June 15, 1864 John Kline was returning home along his usual route from a day of errands. While stopped at the home of a fellow Brethren several Confederate scouts stopped to ask Kline his business and the route he planned to take home. Without hesitation, Kline told them his intended route. He was ambushed and shot on that route a short time later.[60]

John Kline was a household name for members of the Brethren Church across the nation. He was a prolific writer of theological treatises, a respected leader at the Annual Meetings, and held in the highest regard by both Brethren and Mennonite congregants and by local civil authority. His death was met with shock and grief among the Brethren across the nation. The Brethren monthly periodical published extensive accounts of his death, his obituary, and praised his theological and leadership contributions to the church.

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[58] The Gospel Visitor, 1864.123. Further details later emerged concerning the death of John A. Bowman. Bowman had been implicated in the aiding of deserters and of having Unionist sympathies. The circumstances of his death resulted when a Confederate soldier was impressing Bowman's horse. Bowman approached the soldier in the barn where the man was preparing to take the horse. When Bowman approached the soldier to plea that the horse not be taken the soldier shot and killed him. Bowman, *Brethren and War.*

[59] John Kline. Funk, John Kline, 479.

[60] Nair, *John Kline*, 54.

> Sad News From The South. Last night a reliable brother came to my house from near Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, Va., who informed me that the news was amongst the brethren and others of that part of country, that brother Elder JOHN KLINE was found dead, lying in a road not far from his house, shot with four balls. A rebel soldier said, that he was shot for traveling West carrying news and helping people to get out of the S. Confederacy. We understand, the rebels shot him intentionally. I have given this as I received it, and I think this time his death is only too true. If not, we will let you know immediately.
>
> -Your weak brother[61]

Despite the known threats against the life of John Kline, the Brethren of both the Northern and Southern states responded in shock and grief at the martyrdom of their renowned, and highly respected church leader.

> …and what is more grievous still, his sudden, violent and cruel death, being shot down without a moment's warning by the hands of murderous rebels. —But wo hope and trust, he was ready to depart with the prayer of the first martyr, Stephen: "Lord, lay not this sin to their (his murderers') charge!" In our own memorandum- book we find that brother Kline was born on the 17th of June A.D. 1797, and according to information he died June 15th last, and consequently was aged sixty, seven years, less 2 days, leaving a widow, well provided with worldly goods, but poor in spirit, having been suffering for years with prostration of mind,--but no children.[62]

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[61] *The Gospel Visitor*, 1864.

[62] Editors, "Brother John Kline Dead", *The Gospel Visitor*, 1864. 228

The details surrounding the purpose for his errands on the morning of June 15th have been reported as both an errand to have his horse shod at the blacksmith and providing the favor of cleaning the clock of a Brethren sister. His obituary, published in the fall edition of the Gospel Visitor provides additional details on the events leading up to his death. A private letter submitted clarified that he had been to the blacksmith shop followed by stopping at the home of the Brethren lady for the favor of cleaning her clock. "He had come about a mile from last place, and was about 3 miles from home, when he was killed by two soldiers of the South, who were watching for him, and shot him four times through the body; one ball passing through his heart, made a sudden end of pain and suffering as well as of his life." [63]

All reports on the death collaborate the murder having been planned by either Confederate soldiers or scouts as retribution for his involvement in aiding unionists and deserters in their escape from the Confederate army. Although several men from Rockingham County were directly implicated in the crime no charges were ever filed.

The martyrdom of John Kline failed to terrorize or end the work of the U. U. R. in the Shenandoah Valley. The movement of men continued, particularly as high losses on the battlefields during the summer of 1864 led to the revocation of all religious exemptions. The work continued throughout the fall as Lee's armies melted from the ranks and made their way north and west. The increasing persecution of the Brethren in the Valley increased during late 1863 into 1864 leading to a rise in the numbers of men utilizing the U.U.R. Levi Wenger of Augusta County did not join a group on the U.U.R. until January, 1864. Wenger records the safe-houses he was taken to on his trip to meet the pilot, John Riley. Wenger stayed at the home of Mennonite Jacob Shank then was taken to Hopkins Gap where a Brethren minister named

[63] Obituary of John Kline, *The Gospel Visitor*, 1864. 248

Swank collected groups waiting their pilot. John Riley piloted the group about twenty miles before passing them to another pilot named Leonard Mitchel who took them to Petersburg, WV. At Petersburg they reached the safety of Union lines and were supplied and secure for the difficult trek north to New Creek.[64]

The Brethren, operating under a Christian mission of mercy, offered protection and access to the U.U.R. to all deserters, regardless of religious belief. The risks remained high but the network continued to function through, at least, October of 1864 when General Sheridan offered Anabaptist in the Valley the protection of the Union Army for any who wished to escape the Confederacy. Several thousand Brethren and Mennonite families accepted Sheridan's offer of military protection and crossed Union lines with the 400 wagon refugee train. Nearly every Anabaptist man under the age of 55 in the Shenandoah Valley had either utilized the U.U.R. or taken Sheridan's offer of safe passage.

[64] Levi Wenger, "Incidents on the Way". In Sanger and Hays, *The Olive Branch.* 76-78.

Chapter 5

The Not-So-Secret Unionist Underground Railroad

The peace-church principles and refusal to muster into either army gained the Brethren a certain amount of freedom to cross the lines early in the war. On traveling to the Annual Meeting in 1861 the Brethren from Northern states traveled through Harper's Ferry on the way to Rockingham County where they found ease of travel through Confederate lines. "Some of the soldiers at Harper's Ferry said that they looked with eager eyes to see the Brethren go through. They said they should not be molested. Talked with a captain while there, he said that such people as we could travel in the South where we please."[1] The Brethren were not yet connected to any activity which might threaten their safety or freedom of movement in Virginia.

The warm welcome offered at Harper's Ferry in 1861 was soon revoked. During the late spring of 1862 John Kline openly requested a pass to travel north to the Annual Meeting in Ohio and was able to cross lines easily, his role as clergy of a peace-church offering additional security. However, the Confederate government and military authorities were already alerted to the Brethren unwillingness to muster into either regular army or Home Guard units. The arrest of 70 men near Petersburg, comprised primarily of Brethren and Mennonite conscription evaders, in April 1862 gave alert that these congregations would not be willing to send their sons to the Confederate army. The arrest of at least three additional large groups during 1862, combined with the unpopular public opinion regarding the granting of exemption status to the

[1] *The Gospel Visitor*, 1861.

peace churches functioned to effectively shut down the granting of passes to Brethren clergy by late 1862.

There is evidence that the Confederate government, Confederate scouts, and Home Guards were fully aware of the presence of the U.U.R. and the fact that the Brethren and Mennonite men of their local communities were the primary organizers of the network. As the war progressed the Brethren found their movements increasingly scrutinized, particularly as the Southern congregations came under suspicion of aiding deserters and conscription evaders. Brethren farms suspected of aiding deserters came under close watch by scouts and Home Guards while impressment teams collected more foodstuffs, horses, and livestock from Brethren and Mennonite farms based on both the exemption status and suspicion of Unionism.[2]

The targeted arrest of Elders John Kline and John Miller on charges of Unionism and aiding the Union, clearly demonstrate that the Confederate authorities were aware that the peace-church principles of the Brethren did not preclude them from being a people of action. The tremendous risk in moving men along the highly contested corridors of both the Shenandoah Valley and through the rugged Alleghany Mountain routes placed those involved risk of arrest or death. The Confederate forces, particularly irregular forces, tasked with stopping the flow of men north were fully enlightened as to the key groups involved in the network, yet, relatively few of these piloted groups were captured.

[2] The Southern Claims Commission claims hold a significant number of references to the Confederacy impressing greater quantities of supplies from the farms of conscientious objectors and men suspected of being active in the Unionist Underground Railroad. The testimonies concerning targeting by impressment units came in response to question 21 under 'Questions to be Asked of Claimants Under Oath: 1874 List: "Was any of your property ever confiscated by rebel authority, on the ground that you were an enemy to the rebel cause? If so, give all the particulars, and state if the property was subsequently released or compensation made therefor." See, Southern Claims Commission Questions to be Asked under oath in Appendix A.

The non-combatant status granted to the Brethren, along with the Mennonite and Quakers, of Virginia stand as clear evidence that the Confederate government understood that the peace-church members would refuse to fight if conscripted. The Confederacy, from the highest to the local level understood the position taken by the Brethren. At the local level this firm stance against military service and the perception of Unionist sentiments led to persecution and increased harassment and the impressment of larger amounts of grains and livestock for the use of the army. At the higher levels of government the productive Brethren farms were deemed to be of more value than the conscription of men who would not fight. Therefore, leaving the Brethren and Mennonite to their agrarian pursuits posed the greatest benefit to the Confederate war effort. General Jackson once remarked that the peace church people of the Valley were respectful and well-disciplined when conscripted but that no amount of force could make them take accurate aim in a battle. Jackson concluded that the refusal to take a human life meant that these peace-church peoples were of more use to the Confederate War effort if left to their farms.[3] The inadvertent result was the increased number of able bodied men to serve as pilots, postal messengers, and food suppliers to the U.U.R.

The first arrests of Anabaptist groups moving north in 1862 occurred only days prior to the passing of the Virginia Exemption Act. The large group of 76 men arrested on March 15, 1862, was taken to Richmond and subsequently questioned by S.S. Baxter in the War Department. Baxter demonstrated both an understanding of and respect for the peace principles of the detainees.

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[3]Report of S. S. Baxter of prisoners examined by him." March 31, 1862 OR, Serial 116:835 . Also, Bowman, *Brethren in War*. 137.

> These men are all regular members in good standing in the Tunker [Dunkard] and Mennonite Churches. One of the tenets of those churches is that the law of God forbids shedding human blood in battle and this doctrine is uniformly taught to all their people. As all these persons are members in good standing in these churches and bear good characters as citizens and Christians I cannot doubt the sincerity of their declaration that they left home to avoid the draft of the militia and under the belief that by the draft they would be placed in a situation in which they would be compelled to violate their consciences. [4]

Two days later Baxter submitted a supplemental report recommending the release of the prisoners under the new Virginia exemption law.[5] A list of men recommended for release under the exemption law was also released. The report made by Baxter reflects the general agreement in the Confederate government that the peace-principle church members should be exempt from military service if for no other reason than the fact that they made poor soldiers.

The acknowledgment of Brethren peace-church principles in the North was established with the draft laws in the individual states was well as Abraham Lincoln's refusal to conscript members of any peace-church members into the Union Army. Lincoln's stance established that as excellent farmers and firmly opposed to military duty, the Brethren and Mennonite were of far more use when left peacefully on their farms. Lincoln also acknowledged the anti-slavery stance of these churches, suggesting that had more citizens of the nation opposed slavery and warfare the entire situation would have been avoided. The recognition of Brethren opposition to warfare

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[4] "Report of S. S. Baxter of prisoners examined by him." March 31, 1862 OR, Serial 116:835

[5] Ibid, Serial 116:837.

and legal exemption status provides a foundation for the Union Army respect and support for the Brethren in the Shenandoah Valley. As the lines shifted, Brethren and Mennonite men would present themselves to pickets and subsequently petition for passes to cross lines and find asylum in the North.

The high command of the Union Army was fully aware of Brethren and Mennonite activity in aiding Confederate deserters and conscription evaders. Throughout the Valley Campaigns Union soldiers reported the warm welcome and meals provided by the Brethren and Mennonite farms. Feeding the hungry, regardless of sympathies, was proscribed by Brethren belief, however, the Union soldiers were generously feed and treated by the peace-church peoples.[6]

Perhaps the most significant evidence concerning the Union Army's perception of the peace-church congregations was the support given to these communities by General Sheridan during the Valley Campaign of 1864. The continued agricultural production of the northern Shenandoah Valley contributed significantly to the Confederacy's ability to feed its army. Under Grant's strategy to destroy the Confederacy's ability to sustain the war effort the 'bread basket' had to be eliminated as an easily accessible and highly prolific food source. This work was undertaken in the first week of October. There are several aspects of 'the Burning' of the northern Shenandoah Valley which reveal that Union military leaders understood the Anabaptist groups of the Valley, (including Brethren, Mennonite, and Quakers), to be not only pacifist but also largely Unionist in their sympathies.

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[6] Bittinger, *Unionist and the Civil War Experience*. Numerous testimonies to the Southern Claims Commission report the Brethren offering meals and lodging to Union soldiers beyond the requisitions of the Union Army.

Sheridan ordered the burning of the town of Dayton, in Rockingham County near the mountain gaps into West Virginia, as retaliation for the murder of Lt. Miegs by Confederate guerrillas. However, upon receiving an appeal that the majority of the town were Brethren and Mennonite, pacifists and Union sympathizers and on evidence that the Meigs had been shot by Confederate soldiers and not guerrillas, Sheridan rescinded the order. However, the surrounding farms were all burned. One of the mills burned was that of devout Brethren Daniel Miller. Daniel Miller was a known unionist and wealthy owner of both a grist and sawmills near Dayton. Miller's daughter, Annie Kerlin, swore under oath that her father had been initially granted clemency from General Sheridan due to the fact that he was a known unionist. The testimony recorded offers insight into Sheridan's planned treatment of the Brethren prior to the order from Grant to destroy all food supplies in the Valley.

> The affiant further says that her father, Daniel Bowman, had certain papers from General Sheridan that protected his milling property from being destroyed, that said mill was left for grinding for the citizens, but finally, when the Union army was withdrawing from the Valley of Virginia, as affiant was informed, the orders came from General Grant to General Sheridan to burn this property and General Custer under General Sheridan's orders came and burned the aforesaid property, and at the time, the said property was burned Daniel Bowman was told that the Government would pay him for same as he was a Union man.[7]

[7] The referenced papers have not been uncovered and there is no record of the orders to either protect or burn the property. The testimony reveals Sheridan's trust in the loyalty of the Brethren of the Valley. S.C.C. RG 217, CN 14961. Annie Kerlin for Daniel Miller estate.

Sheridan's initial attempt to protect this mill was based both on his intention to leave the population of the county will some milling capability for the upcoming winter and his belief that the Brethren elder, Daniel Bowman, had demonstrated absolute loyalty to the Union throughout the war. Grant's instructions to leave no grain or livestock in the Valley which might contribute to the Confederate war effort superseded Sheridan's attempt to provide some level of subsistence for the loyal Brethren and Mennonite.

Leannah Miller, wife of Brethren minister William J. Miller, noted that when Sheridan's army was moving through the Valley burning farms, barns, mills, and storehouses that a number of properties owned by Brethren, and known Unionists, were left untouched by order of the Union officers. Her testimony is significant in the revelation of a clear effort by the officer to protect the property.

> They were a large number of troops. An officer came to the house and set on the porch and talked with my husband. He ordered the men to pass on the road, (sic.) up to our house very fast and called out to my husband to not be afraid, that his property would not be destroyed. He said he had to ride very fast to get here on time to save our property. There were a good many union men in our neighborhood, mostly Dunkards, and the barns were not burnt hereabouts.[8]

William Miller's connection to the U.U.R. has been well documented and the community in which he lived had been a central point from which men were moved west through the mountain gaps into West Virginia. The Union intelligence and officers were appraised the unionism in the community and the connection of Brethren to the movement of men north.

[8] S.C.C. RG 233, CM 16524. Leannah Miller for William Miller.

On October 3, as the burning continued, Sheridan ordered that Brethren and Mennonite be offered use of Union military wagons and teams to evacuate the Valley. On October 5 the wagons began to organize and military personnel were assigned to assist women and children in the loading of personal items. In a report to General Grant on October 9 Sheridan reported, "From the vicinity of Harrisonburg over 400 wagon loads of refugees have been sent back to Martinsburg; most of these Dunkers, and had been conscripted."[9] This large wagon train of refugees included Brethren and Mennonite families, some of whom had been in hiding from conscription parties.

Peter Hartman was the son of Mennonite farmer David Hartman whose large farm served as a depot on the U.U.R. The unionist activities of the Hartman family was well known by both Confederate and Union army officers. The Hartman's had experienced repeated, and costly, impressments by Confederate units throughout the war. However, the Union army did not impress supplies or animals from the Hartman farm until Sheridan's campaign in the fall of 1864.[10] Having been not yet a member of the church when the exemption laws passed he became eligible for the draft during the war. He had managed to evade the attention of conscription agents, however, when Sheridan offered passes to the Mennonite and Brethren to cross lines with the Union Army in the fall of 1864 he took the opportunity. Explaining to his father the growing risk of conscription, he and several other Mennonite young men presented themselves to the Union pickets of Sheridan's army. Hartman and his companions were taken to Sheridan and questioned, finding them to be Mennonite and Unionist, they were granted passes and told they could reclaim their horses from the army for the trip north. The amicable nature of Hartman's

[9] Sheridan to Grant. October 7, 1864. O.R. Serial 63, 308.

[10] S.C.C. RG 233, CM 18423 & 21852. David Hartman.

interview was reflected against the treatment of two young Confederate bushwhackers brought in during the interview with the Mennonite boys. The two bushwhackers, observed to be about the same age, were brought in under guard and presented to Sheridan. While Sheridan was seeing to the writing of passes for the Mennonite boys the bushwhackers were taken to be bound while awaiting their fate.[11]

The continued targeting of Brethren and Mennonite farms throughout the war, combined with death threats, arrests, and being closely watched by Confederate authorities and scouts gives evidence that the unionist sympathies of these groups had been directly connected to their clandestine engagement with the U.U.R. The Union armies, when shifting lines brought them south of Winchester, also had a clear pattern of extending protection to both Brethren and Mennonite populations. Specific individuals, later identified as being key figures in the U.U.R., were accorded additional protections to farms and livestock due to their known unionist sympathies and activities. The men involved with the U.U.R. were very successful at keeping the exact times and routes of movement secret from Confederate authorities, however, the network was identified by both armies and the leadership of Brethren and Mennonite men was in no way a clandestine affair.

[11] Ibid.

Conclusion

The German Baptist Brethren entered the Civil War period with a deeply rooted belief system concerning war, non-violence, non-resistance, and the obligation of the Christian to live a law-abiding life. The laws of man must be respected and adhered up until the point where the laws of man contradict the laws of scripture. At that point the laws of God must be honored and rigorously followed, even if the consequence was retribution under the laws of man. If a man must be a lawbreaker it could only be due to Christian duty.

The Brethren had faced persecution throughout the history of the church for this resolute stance against military service, particularly during the American Revolution, yet had not shifted the doctrinal stance at any point. As the group sought to develop separatist farming communities they migrated down the Great Wagon Road into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Here the Brethren established large, and prosperous farming communities and lived in close association with the Mennonite settling the region under the same impetus.

As the nation descended into war the Brethren were overwhelmingly disposed to support the Union and unanimously opposed secession. The support for the Union was grounded primarily in the dispute over slavery. The Brethren had a long established opposition to the institution of slavery and had prohibited members from owning, selling, or even utilizing slave labor on their farms or businesses. The Brethren held no misconception that the secession of the Southern states was based on anything other than the right to perpetuate the institution, therefore, when forced to place allegiance between home states or Union the overwhelming support went to the North. The Brethren had a strong doctrine that the church must honor the government under which providence placed them, so when Virginia seceded they made every attempt to adhere to

the laws of the Confederate government. This included a readiness to pay fines for the exemption status approved for the peace-churches.

The peace-church principles proscribed non-violence, (and therefore prevented participation in militia or active military duty), and non-resistance, (refusal to practice self-defense even in the face of mortal threat). This did not translate into a non-activist stance when presented with humanitarian need or the aiding of men seeking to evade combatant status. The Brethren were a people of action. When any person appeared at the door of a Brethren church member seeking a meal or aid in evading military service, these peace-church peoples felt obligated by their vows to serve God, to feed and aid deserters and conscription evaders.

The Unionist Underground Railroad which developed in the Shenandoah Valley, then extended through the highlands of Southwest Virginia, was initially focused on the aiding of peace-church men of military age who sought to evade conscription laws. As the war progressed the Mountain South experienced high levels of war fatigue and desertion rates. The system of safe-houses, depots, pilots, and routes developed during the first year of the war so that by the fall of 1862 a sophisticated network allowed men to be moved along the Shenandoah Valley, through the Alleghany Mountain gaps and into the Northern states.

The Brethren and Mennonites, while living semi-separatist farming lives, were keenly aware of the events surrounding the war and actively engaged in supporting those who chose not to fight with either army. The Brethren were also fully cognizant that their aiding of men seeking to move north would contribute to the weakening of the Confederate war effort. Bringing an end to the war was certainly an expression of the peace-church principles, therefore, beyond the Christian imperative to aid and feed those in need, the very real political and military

impacts of their actions was certainly not lost on the men involved in the Unionist Underground Railroad.

The network developed quickly over the first two years of the war, becoming increasing sophisticated as need dictated. The organization of messengers, referenced as being a postal system, pilots to guide men through the mountains and to the next safe-house, depots to function as collecting places for groups being prepared for the next leg of the journey, the entire peace-church community functioning to track the movement of Confederate units, and contributors of the tremendous food stores needed to feed the men utilizing the network made this a complex and far-reaching enterprise. The ability of this network to efficiently move thousands of deserters with relatively few large scale arrests speaks to the logistical success of the network.

Key to this success was the high level of communication between the Brethren elders who orchestrated the movement of men. Elders John Kline, Benjamin Moomaw, John Miller, and Elder John Wine, Christian Bowman, and numerous others, organized the safe-houses, pilots, message system, and managed the logistics of food procurement, medical attention, and other essential items needed by men moving on the network. The freedom of movement accorded to clergy allowed these elders to travel with less suspicion and under the mantel of protection which society accorded clergy of all denominations. John Kline traveled along the entire length of the Shenandoah Valley, through Southwest Virginia, and then north through the western counties which had seceded from Virginia to form West Virginia on a regular basis. These routes placed him in continuous contact with the Brethren congregations actively engaged in protecting and moving men north along the U.U.R.

The logistical orchestration accomplished by the traveling and prolific letter writing elders kept the far reaches of the Shenandoah Valley and Southwest Virginia in continuous

communication. The postal system of messengers further alerted safe-houses and depots of the impending arrival of groups and maintained contact with the pilots. Men were housed in smaller groups at safe-houses spread within 10 or 15 miles of a depot until a group large enough to risk moving was accumulated. The key to group size being large enough to take the risk but small enough to reduce risk of notice by scouts and Home Guards.

The Shenandoah Valley experienced nearly continual military presence throughout the war due to both strategical value and the rich food supply produced by the fertile farmland. The armies placed tremendous pressure on the food supply—leaving families long accustomed to producing significant surpluses of livestock and grain to face shortages and hunger. The burden of feeding additional mouths, when the impressment parties seldom left enough food to scarcely sustain the farm family, became an additional mission of mercy. The logistics of food supply for the U. U. R. required Brethren and Mennonite families to share any meager grain supplies they could spare. The families functioning as safe-houses seemed to have carried much of the burden for feeding the men they housed. By the fall of 1864, when Sheridan's burning of the Valley left scarcely any sustenance remaining for the civilian population, the process of feeding increasing numbers of deserters heading north through the mountains became a monumental task.

Although the Alleghany Mountains offered some degree of screening from active units the region between Petersburg and New Creek, (Keyser), West Virginia saw shifting lines, a highly contested Confederate hold, and regular skirmishes throughout the war. Being captured while engaged in moving deserters and conscription evaders across lines could lead to charges of treason. For this reason the communications arms of the U.U.R. network had to be on continual alert and wide reaching across the breadth of the network.

The Brethren men and women who actively assisted men moving north on the U.U.R. undertook the task with a full understanding that they may face criminal charges of treason and sedition for undermining the Confederate war effort. There was a full acceptance from those involved that any penalty imposed by temporal government, even capital punishment, was a price they were willing to pay if the alternative was the breaking of God's law. The mission to aid fellow man, to support any man who wished not to fight in the war, and, most importantly, the dedication to the foundational peace-principles of the German Church of the Brethren meant that any punishment delivered by mankind was but a small cost when weighed against man's eternal salvation.

The Unionist Underground Railroad was not a haphazard system of disconnected but likeminded individuals but rather a logistically advanced, highly connected, and far reaching network which was developed with the specific purpose of aiding men who did not wish to fight in the Civil War. The network was able to function across the Shenandoah Valley and through Southwest Virginia based on the dedicated roles and routes which were developed during the early years of the war. The system was comprised of safe-houses, larger depots, dedicated pilots who were expert in navigating the local terrain, a postal and messenger system, and a far reaching community of believers willing to share increasingly precious food stores to feed men seeking aid. The Brethren were not the sole peace-church involved in the U.U.R., the Mennonite and Quaker were also prone to active participation in aiding men seeking to evade the battlefield and equally dedicated to the peace-church principles of non-violence. However, the German Church of the Brethren were often the leaders of the network and engaged in moving large groups. The identified depots and most of the identified pilots in the U.U.R. were active Brethren Church members. The Brethren elders were particularly identified by Confederate

authorities as being active in aiding deserters and conscription evaders and as Unionists, and therefore, traitors to the Confederacy.

The Unionist Underground Railroad, particularly in the northern counties of the Shenandoah Valley, seems to have operated with little connection to Unionist organizations which formed in the mountains of Western North Carolina, Eastern Tennessee, and Southwest Virginia. Although several Brethren congregations and specific individuals in Southwest Virginia, particularly Floyd and Botetourt Counties, have been connected with the Red Strings this seems to have been a local association based on mutual goals. The Brethren and Mennonite roles in the Unionist Underground Railroad remained founded on the peace-church principles and did not take on the seditious attributes of openly Unionist organizations. The peace principles also prevented the Brethren and Mennonite from having any relationship at all with guerrilla groups or irregular armed combatants operating in the mountains of North Carolina, Eastern Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, and West Virginia. Although undermining the Confederate war effort was deemed a positive impact of assisting deserters and conscription evaders, the Brethren primary motive was always aiding men who were seeking non-combatant status.

Brethren historian Rufus David Bowman posited that, "They did not want the war to come, but after it came, as an antislavery people, they favored the Union cause."[12] Defining shades of grey is a daunting and never ending task, defining levels of partisan loyalties among the populations of Appalachia, including the Shenandoah Valley, during the Civil War is no less a futile task. Blanket statements which attempt to portray entire counties, congregations, communities, or ethnic groups as wholly supporting either the Union or Confederacy are bound

[12] Bowman p 121

to present incomplete and misleading conclusions. Bowman defined the Brethren as 'favoring' the Union cause and this allows for the necessary 'shades of grey' in the analysis. The key to understanding Brethren actions in the Civil War is the foundational understanding that the only profound loyalty of the Brethren church, as a community of believers, was to God. Their actions were driven, first and foremost, by an application of scripture to the crisis of the Civil War. The doctrinal belief system drove the Brethren to advocate peace and non-violence. As a people of action, the Christian mission demanded that men seeking to evade violence in war should be aided in evading military service. The question of slavery certainly considered into the Brethren 'favoring' of the Union but the driving principle behind the Brethren involvement in the Unionist Underground Railroad was that of non-violence as believed by this peace-church people.

Can the Brethren be defined as Unionist? If the premise is based upon engagement in activities which undermined the Confederate war effort then significant numbers of Brethren must be defined as Unionist, or as Bowman phrases the answer, "they favored the Union cause". However, if the definition seeks to understand to whom the Brethren were foundationally loyal, then the answer becomes much more complex. The loyalty of the Brethren was to God alone but the actions of many led them to engage in activities which they understood would hinder the Confederacy and aid the Union. Many Brethren claimed to be 'Union men', maintaining that they favored the Union and contributed to the success of the Union when able. However, the prayers of the Brethren were directed toward a speedy end to the war. The peace-principles of the Brethren drove their clandestine activities which gives final evidence of the true loyalty of the German Baptist Brethren.

Research Note:

The purpose of this dissertation has been to illuminate the role and doctrinal motivations for the German Church of the Brethren involvement in the Unionist Underground Railroad. As such, only the surface of this topic has here been explored. To develop a fuller understanding of the scope of Brethren involvement in the U.U.R. a county by county exploration of the Shenandoah Valley, Southwest Virginia, Northwestern North Carolina, Eastern Tennessee and West Virginia will need to be undertaken. Local research, at the county level, will offer insight into the individuals involved and structure of the network in each location. What has here been presented offers a rough sketch of a far reaching, and doctrinally driven, effort to aid men seeking to evade military service in the Confederate Army. Further research will offer significant new insight into the relationship between the peace-church people in the south and the Civil War.

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