

Dixieland in Brazil: Confederate Descendants in the American Diaspora

Jordan Robbins

Chapman University

Introduction

Every Spring, hundreds gather in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. Outside of a Baptist church, Brazilians donning 19th century hoop skirts and replicas of Confederate soldiers' uniforms mingle in both Portuguese and English over a meal of biscuits, gravy, and fried chicken. They line dance, listen to sermons, and sing Protestant revival hymns. To end the celebration, they adorn the gravesites of their ancestors with the "Stars and Bars" Confederate Flag, a symbol of the Confederacy in the American South. These predominantly red-haired, blue-eyed Brazilians descend from the over twenty-thousand Confederate soldiers who fled to Brazil following the American Civil War.¹ They gather annually to celebrate their ancestor's rebel heritage and cultural roots in Alabama, Texas, Louisiana, and South Carolina.²

Instead of living in the American South during the era of Reconstruction from the years 1865 to 1877, many Confederates fled the United States in search of a country that upheld Old Southern values and practices, most notably slavery. Colonies in Mexico, Argentina, and even Egypt began as early as 1865, immediately following the war's end.³ The largest and longest-standing colonies, however, emerged in Brazil.

Funded by former Alabama state senator William H. Norris, the town of Americana located in northwest São Paulo, Brazil became a place of refuge for southerners unwilling to submit to northern rule.⁴ Other Confederate communities developed including Santarém, Rio Doce, Campinas, Juquiá, New Texas, and Xiririca.⁵ Reasons for fleeing ranged from anger over the war's outcome to accounts of soil fertility and cheap acreage by Dr. Hugh A. Shaw and Maj.

¹ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), p. 13.

² Greenspan, Jesse. "The Confederacy Made Its Last Stand in Brazil." History.com. A&E Television Networks, July 25, 2018. <https://www.history.com/news/confederacy-in-brazil-civil-war>. [Accessed November 10, 2022].

³ Ibid, p. 18.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy* (College Station: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985) p. 20.

Robert Meriwether. Others responded to advertisements taken out in Southern papers by Brazilian Emperor Dom Pedro II to encourage Confederate immigration into a country that continued to sustain slavery.⁶ Although their motives varied, many Southern immigrants, or *Confederados*, fled the American South in record numbers.



Immediately upon their arrival, *Confederados* often physically, socially, and linguistically isolated themselves from the Portuguese-speaking, Catholic native population. While some communities struggled to understand the foreign terrain enough to travel to neighboring cities, others refused to learn Portuguese or practice Catholic Brazilian customs.⁷ Because of this, many *Confederados* ultimately immigrated back to the United States after a few years, especially after the abolition of slavery in 1888.⁸ The *Confederados* that stayed, however, established connections with local native communities, and in doing so, created a distinct culture that merged Brazilian and American values that has maintained relative independence from the greater Brazilian culture to this day.

⁶ Ibid, p. 15-18.

⁷ Griggs, William Clark. *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan's Confederate Colony in Brazil*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987, p. 78.

⁸ Ibid.

Although many factors affected the cultural exchange that took place between 1865 to 1900, the Protestant faith within Brazil plays a large role in the nature of *Confederado* outreach into native communities. Despite Methodist missionary efforts by Reverend R. Justin Spaulding in 1836, Protestant churches and religion had shallow roots within the country prior to *Confederado* immigration.⁹ Many sects of Protestantism, such as the Southern Baptists, avoided Brazil because its Catholic faith dominated the daily life and culture of their people. However, *Confederado* immigration incentivized missionary work among Protestant denominations. The initially isolated communities of Confederate refugees sought to “Americanize” the native population, thus initiating a cultural exchange in which language and Brazilian customs were both borrowed and altered.

The concept of culture is amorphous, loosely defined across different communities, individuals, and disciplines. To understand the *Confederado* experience, culture can be understood as “existing in more or less closed systems of values, norms, and world views that determine human action.”¹⁰ Even so, culture has many different lenses: linguistic, economic, ethnic, and gendered, to name a few. This research concentrates on the role that religion, particularly Methodism, played in bridging the cultures of Brazilian natives and American immigrants.

⁹ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998, p. 116.

¹⁰ Lentz, Carola. “Culture: The Making, Unmaking and Remaking of an Anthropological Concept.” *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie* 142, no. 2 (2017): 181–204. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26607020>.

Methodist Influence

The Methodist movement dates back to 1730, when Oxford graduate and ordained priest of the Church of England John Wesley developed his own theological position through his contact with the poor and underprivileged communities.¹¹ Wesley, disturbed by the economic and societal changes of the 18th century, centered Methodism around social activism and personal piety.¹² He had strong opinions on the use of money, charity, and ironically, slavery. This gave Methodism fertile grounds for social change. “For, let the world be as corrupt as it will, is gold or silver to blame? “The love of money,” we know, “is the root of all evil”; but not the thing itself. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. It may be used ill: and what may not? But it may likewise be used well: It is full as applicable to the best, as to the worst uses. It is of unspeakable service to all civilized nations, in all the common affairs of life: It is a most compendious instrument of transacting all manner of business, and (if we use it according to Christian wisdom) of doing all manner of good.”¹³ His teachings focused on social activism and Christian perfection with the belief that all who follow his teachings had the ability to reach spiritual perfection.¹⁴

Cultural issues plagued the early church in America. In 1836, The Methodist Church divided itself over the subject of slavery, ultimately establishing the United Methodist Church in the Northern United States, and the United Methodist Church, South in the Southern United States.¹⁵ Scriptural justifications undergirding slavery were few and far between. Because of this,

¹¹ Childs, James M. “John Wesley.” In *Christian Social Teachings: A Reader in Christian Social Ethics from the Bible to the Present, Second Edition*, edited by George W. Forell, 2nd ed., 181–94. 1517 Media, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt22nm868.25>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Wentz, David, and John Wesley. *John Wesley's the character of a Methodist*. United States. Doing Christianity, 2020.

¹⁵ Lewis M. Purifoy. “The Southern Methodist Church and the Proslavery Argument.” *The Journal of Southern History* 32, no. 3 (1966): 325–41. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2204792>.

Southern Methodists announced in a pastoral address that it had, “no right, wish, or intention to interfere in the civil and political relation as it exists between master and slave in the slaveholding states of this union.”¹⁶

The church’s affinity for Southern customs during this transitional period paired with the church’s insistence upon state’s rights led to its followers clinging to American Southern cultural practices. Author Lewis M. Purifoy writes in *The Journal of Southern History*, “In addition to defending slavery, the church found that it must also defend the state and Southern institutions and Southern society generally, for to admit the presence of evil anywhere, it appeared, might be to concede the corrupting nature of slavery. Thus, having begun with an insistence upon the strictest separation of ecclesiastical and political matters, the Southern Methodist church ended by subjecting itself completely to the state and by forcing its faith to conform to the ways and needs of Southern society. Indeed, it was to become truly a “Southern church”.¹⁷

After the Civil War, *Confederados* from the Southern United States flocked to Brazil in, what *Confederado* descendant and historian Judith MacKnight Jones argues is, “The largest and only real planned migration ever to take place from the United States.”¹⁸ Once in Brazil, they established colonies rooted in Southern Protestant culture. The Methodist church, although having few native converts, affected the cultural exchange that took place, which existed through the racial tensions during the time.

Other than the missionary work thirty years prior by the Reverend Justin R. Spaulding and the Reverend Daniel P. Kidder, the native Brazilian population almost exclusively practiced Roman Catholicism.¹⁹ From the year 1500 to 1889, when the First Republic made steps to

¹⁶ Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1796-1836 (New York, 1855), p. 447.

¹⁷ Lewis M. Purifoy. “The Southern Methodist Church and the Proslavery Argument.” *The Journal of Southern History* 32, no. 3 (1966): 325–41. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2204792>.

¹⁸ *The Last Confederates Live in Brazil*, Judith M. McKnight.

¹⁹ Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985.

secularize the population, Catholicism was the official state religion outside of native traditions transferred from Africa.²⁰ Prior to Confederate immigration, the native Brazilian population grew increasingly discontented with the Catholic church due to corruption and a lack of accessibility for the poor.²¹ Reverend J.E. Newman noted, “[Catholic priests] seldom or never visit the people of the country, only when sent for by the rich to baptize their children, “to confess them” before death; and for all such work they charge very dearly, so that the poor have to be carried to them for baptism, and have to die without the last rites of the Romish Church”²²

Through a religious lens, this research centers around two narratives within the *Confederado* Methodist experience: race-relations and missionary work. While both seem to have few ties, each contains underpinnings of Methodism embedded within the broader story of these immigrants. These topics both inform each other as well, with race-relations affecting missionary work and vice versa. This paper will focus on the arguments made surrounding the cultural exchange that took place between 1865 and 1900 between the *Confederados* and Brazilian natives. This period marks a wave of *Confederado* immigrants and Methodist missionaries eager to plant the seed of Protestantism within the Catholic community. Although most returned to their homeland, their impact in Brazil lives on.

²⁰ Griggs, William Clark. *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan's Confederate Colony in Brazil*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.

²¹ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998, p. 120.

²² Matthews, George G. *G.G. Matthews to Imo Letter*. From Special Collections Archive, Auburn University, *Confederados Collection*, October 4th, 1868. (accessed August 9, 2023).

Historiography

Scholarship surrounding *Confederados* began in the early 20th Century in the United States. Relying initially on primary sources written in English, many early researchers neglected accounts of *Confederados* past the first and second generation of immigrants who spoke English. Early historical research focused on the circumstances inspiring their flight as English language accounts focused on the affairs of *Confederados* before immigrating. As time progressed, scholars drew from accounts in the United States and Brazil, in both English and Portuguese. Thus, a clearer picture of the *Confederado* experience developed in research since the 1950s. In analyzing the historiography, one better understands what allowed for the cultural exchange and creation of a hybrid American/Brazilian culture can be reached.

Although no consensus exists in scholarly works regarding *Confederados*' decision to flee and subsequent disillusionment after immigration, the method and extent of cultural exchange between Brazilian natives and Confederate immigrants remains debated. While some scholars argue that religion played a crucial role in coalescing the two cultures, other scholars highlight the construction of railroads, the introduction of American farming techniques, and geographic proximity to Brazilian natives as creating the cultural exchange. Similarly, some scholars argue few cultural exchanges evolved, while others argue that there was a significant amount.

The following four scholarly works represent the various historiographical arguments focusing on the cultural exchange between *Confederados* and Brazilians. They appear chronologically, beginning with Lawrence F. Hill's article, "Confederate Exiles to Brazil," published in 1927, and ending with Cyrus B. Dawsey and James M. Dawsey's *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil* from 1995. While each agrees on the factors that

aided in Confederate immigration and a subsequent return for some, factors aiding in the creation of a hybrid culture that blends Brazilian and American Southern values remain debated.

“Confederate Exiles to Brazil” by Lawrence F. Hill appeared in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* in 1927, the first to highlight the *Confederados* in scholarly publications. Hill primarily utilized American newspapers such as the *New Orleans Times*, and the *Charleston Daily Courier* to highlight events leading to immigration. He cites the novel *Brazil, the Home for Southerners* by *Confederado* Ballard Dunn to narrate the plight of *Confederados* in Brazil, arguing: “Emigrants who went without means and without a willingness to ‘kiss the rod’ were soon disillusioned and ready to return home.”²³ Hill argued that the disillusionment resulted from a reluctance to adapt to greater Brazilian culture and customs and an unwillingness to establish roots in this new country.

However, Hill neglected the topic of cultural exchanges in the creation of a “hybrid culture.” His limited use of primary sources paired with his pioneering of the scholarly debate on *Confederados* left blind spots ultimately remedied in the decades of historical study that followed. Nonetheless, he described railways as a means of connectivity between *Confederados* and Brazilians. “The government pledged itself to connect each community with the railways by means of substantial wagon roads.”²⁴ His efforts laid the groundwork for future historians.

Although Hill sparked scholarly debate on *Confederados*, most works immediately following his publication relied on opinion, not primary research. It was not until 1952 that Blanche Henry Clark Weaver added substantially to the field with “Confederate Immigrants and Evangelical Churches in Brazil” in the *Journal of Southern History*. Weaver focused on the

²³ Hill, Lawrence F. “Confederate Exiles to Brazil.” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 7, no. 2 (1927): 192–210. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-7.2.192>, p. 201.

²⁴ Hill, Lawrence F. “Confederate Exiles to Brazil.” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 7, no. 2 (1927): 192–210. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-7.2.192>, p. 194.

history of Protestant churches and their missionary work in Brazil. He used primarily evangelical documents detailing missionary work in Brazil, as well as personal journals and correspondence from various religious leaders and missionaries. He argued that *Confederados* rarely fit the larger historical narrative since the “major portion of these people stayed in Brazil less than five years.”²⁵

Furthermore, he posited: “It cannot be said that the Southerner in Brazil affected the general course of history in that country,”²⁶ However, he noted that Protestantism is the exception. Despite the physical and linguistic isolation of *Confederados*, Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches bridged Brazilian and American cultures, leading to a rich cultural exchange.²⁷ Weaver portrayed Catholicism in Brazil in the late 19th century as corrupt, leading to atheism and agnosticism among many Brazilians. The introduction of Protestantism following *Confederado* immigration corresponded with changes in Brazilian history. He stressed, “Catholicism gave souls the need for faith, a fervent religious life, and morality, but . . . lacking priests, the Church could not always satisfy the need to nourish and educate Christian feeling.”²⁸ Many missionaries learned Portuguese to connect with Brazilian communities, which led to the hybridization of both cultures.

The 1960s and ‘70s marked a wave of Brazilian scholarship regarding *Confederados*. It began with *Confederado* descendant Judith MacKnight publishing *Soldado descansa! Uma epopéia norte americana sob os céus do Brasil (Rest Soldier! A North American Epic Under the Skies of Brazil)*. MacKnight, regarded as the first historian focusing strictly on *Confederado* descendants and their families, concentrated on tracing family lineages back to the United States

²⁵ Weaver, Blanche Henry. “Confederate Immigrants and Evangelical Churches in Brazil.” *The Journal of Southern History* 18, no. 4 (1952): 446.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 447.

²⁷ Weaver, Blanche Henry. “Confederate Immigrants and Evangelical Churches in Brazil.” *The Journal of Southern History* 18, no. 4 (1952): 446. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2955219>, p. 457.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 470.

to better understand migration patterns after the Civil War. MacKnight used a wider range of sources, including personal family documents and oral histories of the community.²⁹ She became the first historian to concentrate on writing for the Brazilian population. She wrote her book in Portuguese, despite speaking English as well. She also made the conscious decision to replace the word ‘South’ in her work with Confederate/Confederacy, to decenter the United States.³⁰

MacKnight focused her argument around cultural exchanges on the establishment of protestant education campaigns, created for both *Confederado* and Brazilian children. This, she argued, led to a generation of English-speaking Brazilians near *Confederado* towns. Her book led to more scholarship on the *Confederados* from the perspective of both descendants of *Confederados* and also Brazilians. Works such as *Os pioneiros americanos no Brasil (educadores, sacerdotes, covos e reis)* by Frank Goldman, *Confederados em santarém* by Norma de Azevedo, and *O protentantismo a maconaria e a questao religiosa no brasil* by David Guieros Vieiras represented a wave of the Brazilian perspective regarding American immigration into Brazil. This work not only created a new area of study among Brazilians, but also opened up new avenues of research previously unavailable to American scholars.

Research on *Confederados* in the United States began citing Brazilian scholars after the wave of Brazilian works on the subject. *Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil* by Cyrus B. Dawsey, published in 1995, synthesized aforementioned books. To date, this is the most comprehensive book on the topic of *Confederados*. Dawsey started by outlining the interacting “push” and “pull” conditions that led to the exodus of American Southerners. This included

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

disappointment of the war's outcome, the decline of Confederate currency, bands of criminals ravaging the South, and reservations about leaving the "old way of life."³¹

When examining the blending of Brazilian and American culture, Dawsey identified religion as the driving force behind the blending of Brazilian and American culture. He separated Baptist and Methodist into their own chapters, arguing that they used different means to assimilate. Baptists, he argued, took a more passive approach, avoiding directly becoming missionaries in Brazil.³² Instead, they converted locals already wary of Catholicism through public works projects such as building of schools, hospitals, and dental offices.³³

Some Methodists, Dawsey argues, immigrated with the purpose of becoming missionaries in Brazil. Methodists had missions in Brazil prior to the Civil War, making Confederate immigration easier.³⁴ Because of the nature of Methodist missions in Brazil, cultural exchange occurred long before the arrival of Methodist *Confederados*. They entered a hybrid culture from the beginning, instead of creating their own.

These four scholarly works reviewed the nature of cultural exchange among American Southern immigrants and Brazilians highlights the differing and diverse opinions among writers on the *Confederados* and their cultural interchanges. The debate as to whether religion, railways, or American agricultural techniques created a hybrid culture remains disputed. Some scholars believe that introducing Protestantism into a culture that questioned their Catholic identity helped create common ground, and others argue that introducing American farming techniques and building railways that intersect with Brazilian cities caused the change. They all converge

³¹ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998, p. 12.

³² *Ibid*, p. 108.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 110.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 116.

regarding the circumstances that led to their immigration, and the subsequent circumstances that led to their reentry into the United States in the following years.

Race

In 2017, 152 years after the end of the Civil War, members of the Klu Klux Klan gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia. Around a statue of Robert E. Lee, torch-wielding Klan members shouted obscenities, repeating the chant, “Blood and soil.”³⁵ As night turned to morning, counter-protesters and local *Black Lives Matter* activists rallied against these white nationalists. Verbal barbs quickly became violent. As local police pushed both protesters and counter-protesters from the statue, violence escalated throughout the city. The conflict came to a head around midday, when self-proclaimed Klansman James Fields crashed his car through a crowd of counter-protesters, injuring dozens and killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer.³⁶ This bloody scene was decorated with Scharze Sonne flags, Roman Legion flags, Iron Crosses, and other symbols adopted by the far-right and white supremacist groups.³⁷ Arguably the most recognizable symbol, however, was the “Stars and Bars” flag.



³⁵ Debbie Elliott, “The Charlottesville Rally 5 Years Later: ‘It’s What You’re Still Trying to Forget,’” NPR, August 12, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/08/12/1116942725/the-charlottesville-rally-5-years-later-its-what-youre-still-trying-to-for-get>.

³⁶ Andrew Katz, “Charlottesville: ‘unite the Right’ Rally, State of Emergency,” CLASHES OVER A SHOW OF WHITE NATIONALISM IN CHARLOTTESVILLE TURN DEADLY, accessed May 16, 2024, <https://time.com/charlottesville-white-nationalist-rally-clashes/>.

³⁷ Hatewatch Staff, “Flags and Other Symbols Used by Far-Right Groups in Charlottesville,” Southern Poverty Law Center, August 12, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/08/12/flags-and-other-symbols-used-far-right-groups-charlottesville>.

The Confederate “Stars and Bars” flags stood out among the sea of hate symbols. To many white Southerners and Confederate descendants, this flag represents their ancestry - a symbol of their Southern heritage and cultural roots.³⁸ However, to many citizens of the United States, and 69% of Black Americans, this flag symbolizes chattel slavery and racial subjugation.³⁹



The debate over the symbolism of the Confederate Flag made its way to Americana, Brazil. In 1972, President Jimmy Carter, a distant relative of members of the *Confederado* community, visited Americana.⁴⁰ After his visit, citizens of Americana unveiled their coat of arms: two U.S. soldiers in military uniforms framing the “Stars and Bars”. Underneath these soldiers, a banner read, “Ex Labore Dulcedo,” Latin for, “From work comes sweetness.”

³⁸ Heller, Ansley. “Breaking Down the Symbols: Reading The Events At Charlottesville Through A Postcolonial Lens.” *Southeastern Geographer* 58, no. 1 (2018): 35–38. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26409156>.

³⁹ Lippard, Cameron D. “Heritage or Hate?: A Pedagogical Guide to the Confederate Flag in Post-Race America.” *Learning and Teaching: The International Journal of Higher Education in the Social Sciences* 10, no. 3 (2017): 56–78. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48561577>.

⁴⁰ Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985. p. 128.



While the “Stars and Bars” ultimately disappeared from Americana’s coat of arms in the 1990s, the Confederate Flag has remained a popular symbol throughout the colony, especially during their annual *Festa Confederada* that commemorates the early immigration of *Confederado* immigrants.⁴¹ They held similar rationalizations for the “Stars and Bars” flag as U.S. counterparts to their Brazilian colonies. *Confederado* descendant Allison Jones argued: “I know about the outlaws and the racists [in America] who go around with the flag flying on their trucks. I’m not one of those. That flag to me means the good memories and good habits cultivated and inherited from my ancestors. It’s got nothing to do with racism and outlawness.”⁴² Author Cyrus B. Dawsey echoes this sentiment, “The Confederate flag gave descendants in Brazil an exclusive symbol... As a way of demarcating boundaries in respect to these ‘outsiders’ the Confederate flag served descendants well.”⁴³ Accounts of *Confederado* descendants reveal their reliance on the Confederate flag as a symbol connecting them to heritage and. Despite its

⁴¹ Blanche Henry Clark Weaver. “Confederate Immigrants and Evangelical Churches in Brazil.” *The Journal of Southern History* 18, no. 4 (1952): 446–68. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2955219>.

⁴² Stephen Buckley, “A Taste of Dixie in Brazil - The Washington Post,” *The Washington Post*, August 21, 1999, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1999/08/22/a-taste-of-dixie-in-brazil/d044539a-c92e-4c38-ab77-1236a9e3117f/>.

⁴³ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998. p. 174.

controversy in the US, *Confederado* descendants revere it as a symbol tying them to their history in the states.

The use of the “Stars and Bars” Confederate flag is not the only controversy in *Confederado* communities, which many have accused of holding racist ideologies towards Black Brazilians and other native Brazilian populations.⁴⁴ In both scholarship and personal accounts of *Confederados*, their Protestant faith served as a divisive factor in their racial biases. Specifically, Methodists saw their culture and faith as tools to save their, “little brown brothers.”⁴⁵ This paternalistic racism catalyzed cultural exchange, as Methodists found religious justifications for entering the predominantly Catholic Brazilian community to save them from Catholicism and themselves.

Unlike many denominations of the time, original Methodist teachings by founder John Wesley staunchly opposed slavery.⁴⁶ In one pamphlet, Wesley asserted: “The grand plea is, ‘They are authorized by law.’ But can law, human law, change the nature of things?... Who can reconcile this treatment of the Negroes, first and last, with either mercy or justice?”⁴⁷

However, many in the Methodist Episcopal Church in America abandoned efforts to end slavery at the turn of the century. Then, in 1836, announced in a “Pastoral Address” that the church had, “no right, wish, or intention to interfere in the civil and political relation as it exists between master and slave in the slaveholding states of this union.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Lowe, John. “Reconstruction Revisited: Plantation School Writers, Postcolonial Theory, and Confederates in Brazil.” *The Mississippi Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2003): 5–26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26466941>.

⁴⁵ Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985. p. 418.

⁴⁶ Childs, James M. “John Wesley.” In *Christian Social Teachings: A Reader in Christian Social Ethics from the Bible to the Present, Second Edition*, edited by George W. Forell, 2nd ed., 181–94. 1517 Media, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt22nm868.25>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1796-1836 (New York, 1855), p. 447.

This caused a significant rift in the Church, as Northern members of the Methodist Episcopal Church called for a strict interpretation of earlier Wesleyan teachings.⁴⁹ In response, Southern Methodists withdrew from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844 and created the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.⁵⁰

Despite attempts by Southern members such as Samuel Dunwody of South Carolina and William A. Smith of Virginia to defend the Church's legitimacy beyond slavery, the defining difference between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was the South's support of slavery.⁵¹ One member wrote in the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, "The first slavery church which was ever organized since Jesus came from heaven to the cross is to be organized now, in the middle of the Nineteenth Century, and in the republic of the United States of America, and by a secession from a church gathered under the counsels of John Wesley."⁵² John Wesley's anti-slavery teachings fell on deaf ears when founding the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Liturgical support of this peculiar institution framed Southern race-relations, which followed ex-Confederates to their Brazilian colonies.

In addition to supporting the institution of slavery, many Southern Methodists supported the "Know-Nothing Party," a Nativist political party that centered around Protestant exclusivity and encouraged political hostility.⁵³ "Know-Nothing" members argued for protecting the civil liberties of American citizens through resisting political encroachment by immigrants and, most

⁴⁹ Lewis M. Purifoy. "The Southern Methodist Church and the Proslavery Argument." *The Journal of Southern History* 32, no. 3 (1966): 325–41. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2204792>.

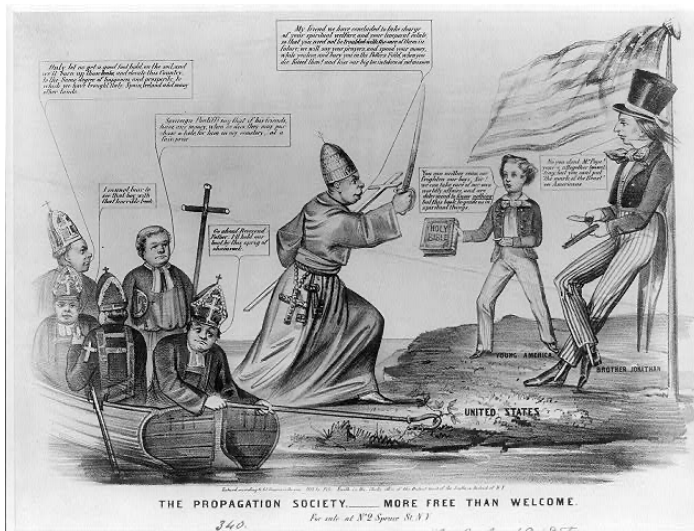
⁵⁰ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998. p. 117.

⁵¹ Lewis M. Purifoy. "The Southern Methodist Church and the Proslavery Argument." *The Journal of Southern History* 32, no. 3 (1966): 325–41. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2204792>.

⁵² *Nashville Southwestern Christian Advocate*. December 6, 1844.

⁵³ "Know Nothing Party," Falvey library exhibits :: Know nothings, accessed May 16, 2024, <https://exhibits.library.villanova.edu/chaos-in-the-streets-the-philadelphia-riots-of-1844/know-nothings>.

importantly, the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁴ “Know-Nothings” were Protestant in faith, raised by Protestant parents, barred from marrying Catholics.⁵⁵



Methodist *Confederados* were exclusively members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and many were also former “Know-Nothings”.⁵⁶ While the “Know-Nothing” party lost prominence and eventually merged with the pro-slavery Democratic party in the years preceding the Civil War, the racial and religious ideologies adopted by the Church transferred to Brazil during their initial contact and subsequent missionary efforts. These Methodists did not view the predominantly Catholic, Black and brown native Brazilian population as equals upon their arrival.⁵⁷ This perceived hierarchy between Methodist immigrants and Brazilian natives framed how *Confederado* missionaries interacted with their new neighbors.

Armed with their Bible and racially divisive politics, *Confederados* began to lay the foundation for Methodist missionary efforts in the country. In both personal correspondence and open letters published in the *Nashville Christian Advocate*, *Confederados* spoke of native

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985. p. 418.

Brazilians as inferior, going so far as to refer to them as pagans and even children in some cases.⁵⁸ One *Confederado* observed in a letter to a loved one in the United States: “Here, superstition is almost as prevalent as in pagan countries. Here, the worship of Mary and the saints has almost banished the worship of God.”⁵⁹ *Confederado* George Barnsley echoes these racist sentiments in a letter to his father, “Some of the people here are intelligent, but the mass are a mongrel set, unhealthy of appearance and of all shades from pure white with blue eyes to inky inkiness of black negro... [Brazil] could be made a delightful country to live in provided enough white people came here to settle it and make society.”⁶⁰ Lastly, Reverend J.E. Newman observes, “All around me is one grand missionary field... Could I only preach Christ to this kind of people, in their own tongue, I should make it the work of my future life.”⁶¹

Ex-Confederates in the United States held similar beliefs of the native Brazilian population, one noting: “I don’t see what in the thunder you want to stay down there for among those old Spanish people, for I bet your head is a piece of cotton now.”⁶² In a letter to her *Confederado* brother, Alabama native Annie wrote, “Merry Christmas to you. I wish you were here to spend it with us. It would be so much more pleasant than that heathenish country.”⁶³

Despite such views, many American Southerners supported missionary efforts in Brazil as a means to evangelize the native population.⁶⁴ Ex-Confederates in Brazil and the United States

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Auburn University Special Collections & Archives, Auburn, AL. File 1, Correspondence to John R. Buford, 1866-1869.

⁶⁰ John H. McLean, *Reminiscences of Rev. Jno. H. McLean*, p. 77.

⁶¹ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998. p. 121.

⁶² Norris, Annie to John. Letter. From Special Collections Archive, Auburn University, *Confederados Collection*, February 6 1886. (accessed August 9, 2023).

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998. p. 89.

both viewed the native Brazilian population as an underdeveloped society ripe for missionary work.⁶⁵

While many Americans supported the *Confederado* Methodists' evangelization process, some held negatively viewed such work. A member of the Norris colony of *Americana* wrote to a family member: "[Methodist missionaries] come boldly proclaiming their object to convert the inhabitants of this country from heathenism, ignorance, and idolatry to Christianity. Presumptuous beings they must be, and you will find that ignorance and presumption generally go together."⁶⁶ Methodists opposing missionary efforts were few, however even in this smaller population, they observed the hierarchical nature of their brothers and sisters' work.

While some debated over the ethics of missionary work, Methodist missionaries worked under the presumption of racial superiority while initiating outreach into the native Brazilian community. In correspondence, both public and private, paternalistic sentiment existed in nearly everything written to and from the colonies in Brazil. Viewing the native population as, "little brown brothers," in need of evangelizing defined the nature of their missionary work, pushing *Confederados* into shared culture, faith, and community. Author Cyrus B. Dawsey echoes this idea: "Southern evangelicals had earlier thought of Brazil primarily as a dark and heathen land, a worthy object of the missionary impulse."⁶⁷

Historians such as William Clark Griggs, Charles Willis Simmons, and José Artur Rios argue that race and anti-Catholic sentiments cultural exchanges among *Confederado* missionaries.⁶⁸ *Confederados*, they argue, were more eager to enter into a community in which

⁶⁵ Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985. p. 424.

⁶⁶ William H. Norris, Sitio New Alabama Province, São Paulo, March 24, 1887.

⁶⁷ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998. p. 97.

⁶⁸ Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985; Griggs, William Clark. *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan's Confederate Colony in Brazil*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.

they perceived as inferior. In viewing the native community as child-like, their evangelization work went from non-consensual salvation to a necessary evangelization effort. Had these race-relations not been in place in the United States and adopted by *Confederados*, it is likely that missionary outreach would have lessened substantially.

Missionary Work

On the third Sunday of August 1871, Alabama native Junius Eastham Newman readied himself alongside his wife and two daughters. Inside his home in Saltinho, nine *Confederados* donning their Sunday best anxiously awaited to hear the word of God for the first time since they fled the states. Condensation clung to the walls of Newman's living room as he delivered his first sermon as an official resident of Brazil. These nine Methodists, severely overdressed for the Brazilian heat, had traveled upwards of 10 miles to listen to Newman speak that Sunday.

Despite these unfortunate conditions, Newman recounted his initial outreach into the Methodist *Confederado* community as, "the holiest and the happiest memories."⁶⁹ The nine initial followers strongly agreed, calling for a more frequent, traveling ministry that would reach the 500 *Confederados* unable to make the trek. Newman notes, "The Americans in this country generally manifest a strong desire to hear preaching, and I have been very cordially received among them."⁷⁰

Newman frequently wrote to the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South asking for support in establishing a permanent network of missions in and around the state of São Paulo for the ever-increasing number of American Southern Immigrants.⁷¹ For the following four years after delivering his first sermon, his pleas to the Board of Missions fell on deaf ears. He was forced to establish a circuit of five preaching stations and began his ministry full-time to meet the growing demand of *Confederado* Methodists.⁷² His work paid off by the year 1875 when the Board of Missions recognized Newman as an official missionary to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South of the United States.

⁶⁹ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998. p. 89.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Nashville Christian Advocate, December 11, 1869.

⁷² Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998. p. 210.

Newman's support from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South garnered attention from both the *Confederados* and the Southern Methodists living in the United States. He would frequently write to *The Nashville Christian Advocate*, a weekly newspaper sponsored by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, outlining his experiences while living abroad.⁷³ His correspondence in the form of open letters became more thoroughly followed by those in the United States as he established a thriving Methodist community in Brazil. He wrote, "I preach twice a month now, and will preach oftener soon, as I am now confined at home with clearing and planting land for a crop. I have written to one of my sisters to send me a few Sunday-school books, etc. We need books and papers badly."⁷⁴

Newman would use these letters both to inform as well as to plead with the Church to assist the budding new colony. He soon caught the attention of the Secretary of the Board of Missions, David C. Kelley, who, after reading one of Newman's open letters, wrote an open request alongside him in the *Nashville Christian Advocate* to send two young men, "thoroughly educated, who are competent to teach."⁷⁵ This was in response to Newman's assertion that he was much too old to learn Portuguese, the official language of Brazil.⁷⁶ "But perhaps you are ready to ask, 'Why do not you, and the other American ministers in Brazil preach to the Brazilians?' Alas! We have found by hard experience, that when a man has reached his 50th year, it is too late for him ever to become so familiar with a foreign language as to preach it with fluency."⁷⁷

⁷³ Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Pr., 1970). p. 68.

⁷⁴ *Nashville Christian Advocate*. December 11, 1869.

⁷⁵ *Nashville Christian Advocate*. June 12, 1875.

⁷⁶ Griggs, William Clark. *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan's Confederate Colony in Brazil*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.

⁷⁷ *Nashville Christian Advocate*. December 11, 1869.

In response, many young, college-educated Southern men rushed to volunteer as missionaries to Brazil. Older families in the American South unable to make the trek pledged donations of 5 dollars every month to the cause. Others sent books, clothing, school supplies, and other items essential to missionary work.⁷⁸ This marked a turning point in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in Brazil. Newman shifted his focus from preserving Methodist values and practices within the *Confederado* community to reaching beyond the scattered colonies and into the greater Brazilian population.

Southern sects of Protestantism such as Baptists and Presbyterian garnered enough domestic support from the United States to establish themselves within *Confederado* communities. Methodists, however, viewed their expedition to this new frontier from the onset as a missionary effort geared toward outreach into the native community. Southern Baptists, for example, largely viewed their immigration as a political and economic proposition, and later saw the opportunity to establish a foreign mission. In 1873, Church Secretary Maj. Robert Meriwether wrote to the Baptist Foreign Mission Board, “Five or six years experience and intercourse with citizens of this country enables us to state that now is a propitious time to set forth the religion taught in God’s word to this people.”⁷⁹

Reverend Justin R. Spaulding and Reverend Daniel P. Kidder’s missionary expedition into Brazil in the 1830s laid the groundwork for successful missionary efforts following the Civil War. Earlier outreach and conversion efforts provided Methodist *Confederados* with an arsenal of material goods and local connections to catalyze their missionary work. Kidder writes in his book *Sketches of Residence and Travel in Brazil: Embracing Historical and Geographical*

⁷⁸ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998. p. 108.

⁷⁹ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998. p. 108.

Notices of the Empire and its Several Provinces that “[Chaplain Fernando de Noronha’s] opinion was, that the silent distribution of tracts and Scriptures among those persons and families disposed to read and prize them, was the best method of doing good in the country at present. And most faithfully did he pursue that method, calling on me every few days for a fresh supply of evangelical publications.”⁸⁰ While disadvantaged by a lack of domestic support, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was at an advantage while fostering a longstanding colony in Brazil due to prior missionary efforts.

Southern Protestants entered the scene during a period of discontentment among the Catholic Brazilian population. While some families chose to practice their religion privately, others fought for religious freedom, opened Protestant churches and schools, and even began missionary work throughout the country.⁸¹ To do so, *Confederados* first had to establish themselves within the country, many starting to farm crops native to both the United States and Brazil.⁸² They began to trade with the native population and establish interconnected routes to other nearby *Confederado* communities.⁸³ They also began making efforts to learn Portuguese to expand their markets and establish themselves as missionaries.⁸⁴

This served as yet another distinguishing factor that played into the Methodist missionary efforts in Brazil. Because its founder emphasized social activism and had such a democratic outlook on salvation, Methodism served as the perfect medium for cultural exchange between native Brazilians and *Confederados*. The corruption existing within Brazil mirrored that of the

⁸⁰ Daniel P. Kidder, *Sketches of Residence and Travel in Brazil, Embracing Historical and Geographical Notices of the Empire and Its Several Provinces* (Phil.: Soren & Ball, 1845).

⁸¹ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998, p. 120.

⁸² Norris, William H. *W.H. Norris to J.W. Shomo*. Letter. From Special Collections Archive, Auburn University, *Confederados Collection*, April 9th, 1873. (accessed August 9, 2023).

⁸³ Gaston, James M. *J.M. Gaston to Buford*. Letter. From Special Collections Archive, Auburn University, *Confederados Collection*, October 27, 1868. (accessed August 9, 2023).

⁸⁴ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998, p. 125.

Anglican church in the 18th century, reminding displaced Methodists of Wesleyan teachings against clerical corruption. One Methodist missionary noted in an open letter to the *Nashville Christian Advocate*, “I do not now wonder that/how/why a corrupt priesthood cried out so vehemently against Luther, and his favorite doctrine of justification by faith.”⁸⁵ Methodists had a great deal of sympathy for Brazilian Catholics, which quickened their outreach.

The main source of long-lasting missionary work among the Methodists in Brazil came in the form of schooling. A cornerstone of social activism, according to John Wesley, was education. “The book of Ezekiel describes David’s calling. Twenty-five hundred years ago God called Ezekiel to teach God’s ways. He instructed Ezekiel to proclaim the Holy Spirit- the one who revives dry bones and forms them into a dwelling for God and a source of living water that heals nations. Bones are still dry today. God still wants to dwell among his people. Nations still need healing. And people still need to be taught God’s way and be moved by God’s Spirit.”⁸⁶ In his teachings, Wesley often referred to the world as his parish, a sentiment to his devotion to education and outreach with the hope of saving those not yet converted.

Education was important among the Methodists, especially those in a new land. *Confederado* and Methodist father Robert Cisnerro Norris asserted in a letter to his family in Alabama, “My Mary is teaching in my house. Has students enough to keep her employed, besides she makes enough money to buy everything she needs. Of one thing you may be sure, and that is if I live my children shall have an education.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Auburn University Special Collections & Archives, Auburn, AL. File 18, Printed Materials viz. Methodist-Episcopal Church, South, Mission in Brazil.

⁸⁶ Wentz, David, and John Wesley. *John Wesley’s the character of a Methodist*. United States. Doing Christianity, 2020. p. 579.

⁸⁷ Estação Santa Bárbara, estado de São Paulo E. U. de Brasil, March 11, 1892, Robert C. Norris.

Methodist and friend of J.E. Newman John James Ransom immigrated to Newman's home in Brazil in 1876.⁸⁸ He studied Portuguese at the Colégio Internacional in Campinas upon his arrival, a school founded by Presbyterian *Confederados*.⁸⁹ Although historians credit Ransom with starting Methodist education in Brazil, it was actually J.E. Newman's daughter, Annie Newman, that had translated key Methodist teachings and even taught Ransom Portuguese at the Colégio Internacional.⁹⁰ She became integral to Methodist outreach into the Brazilian community through her understanding of the Brazilian language and customs.

Annie Newman began the process of Methodist-Brazilian coeducation when she began her teaching career, teaching Brazilian students at the Colégio Rangel Pestana, and in 1879 aiding her father in opening Collegio Newman in Piracicaba.⁹¹ By the 1920s Methodism could boast one school for every three churches in Brazil.

While *Confederado* Methodists may have been a small blip on the historical radar, their impact rippled through Brazilian society. In education, Methodists alone established forty-one schools in Brazil that are open to this day, sixteen of which are schools of higher education. Notable institutions founded by Methodists include the University of São Paulo, Escola Americana, O Colégio Internacional, and the Gammon Institute.⁹² Junius Eastham Newman and John Jay Ransom's missionary and educational efforts have yielded 149 Methodist churches within Brazil. Brazilian researcher Fernando de Azevedo writes, "Cultural work of Protestantism is not less important. Passionately interested in liberty and making the reading of a book a means of spiritual development, Protestantism tended to accompany the movement of the propagation

⁸⁸ Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998, p. 126.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 127.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

⁹¹ *Ibid* p. 128.

⁹² Blanche Henry Clark Weaver. "Confederate Immigrants and Evangelical Churches in Brazil." *The Journal of Southern History* 18, no. 4 (1952): 446–68. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2955219>.

of the faith and Christian ideas by an intellectual movement.” He continues, “The American schools introduced into the country in the early days of the Republic at a time when public instruction was very retarded, made a notable contribution in São Paulo, not only in changes in method but also to intensify teaching.”⁹³

Even today on Facebook, a small Methodist church named *Igreja Metodista na Rocinha* live streams their services. A band consisting of a keyboard player, an electric guitarist, a drummer, and several singers play hymns praising the grace of God, some that might even be familiar to an American Methodist today.⁹⁴ This seemingly insignificant series of live streams encompass the missionary spirit that Newman, Ransom, and so many others devoted their lives to. As a pastor prays over the Brazilian crowd behind the cross and flame, one can imagine the *Confederado* impact of such an image. As author and *Confederado* descendant Eugene C. Harter wrote, “The experience is something like staring into a mirror and seeing your own image, slightly askew.”⁹⁵ While the *Confederado* experience is not a perfect reflection of the American South today, there is much to glean from both its past and present. In staring directly at our relatives in Brazil, we can begin to create a more complete image of the Confederacy, its long standing traditions in the American South, and its place in the broader historical narrative.

⁹³ Fernando de Azevedo, *Brazilian Culture: An Introduction to the Study of Culture in Brazil* (New York: Hafner Pub. Co, 1971). p. 157, 399, 419-20.

⁹⁴ Facebook, accessed May 16, 2024, https://www.facebook.com/igrejametodistanarocinha/videos/1482772025786125?locale=ga_IE.

⁹⁵ Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985.



Conclusion

On November 15th, 1889, Brazilian republicans and military officials overthrew the monarchy that had been in place for over half a century.⁹⁶ Incentivized by debates over the economy and religious freedom, the new liberal regime was declared through a military coup, and supported by the majority of the Brazilian population.⁹⁷ The Republican Revolution ushered in a new era of political and social norms in the country, one of which was the institution of slavery.⁹⁸ While Princess Isabel issued the *Lei Áurea*, or “Golden Law” abolishing slavery while her father was out of the country, many wealthy landowners initially opposed this ruling.⁹⁹ It was not until the military coup when Brazil’s first president Manuel Deodoro da Fonseca proposed a gradual abolition of slavery to preserve the fragile Brazilian economy that the general population approved of this change.¹⁰⁰ By the 1890s Brazil’s slave economy ended completely.¹⁰¹

There was, however, a small population of Brazilian citizens who vehemently disapproved of this new order. These citizens with last names such as McMullan, Jones, and Newman, had put their lives on the line decades prior to protect their right to own slaves. Having fled their home country in search of a country that supported this peculiar institution, one can imagine the *déjà vu* these ex-Confederates felt when confronted with the abolition of slavery yet again.

Despite their successes in the first decade following their immigration, roughly 80% of *Confederado* immigrants had left Brazil by 1900, disenchanted by the abolishment of the

⁹⁶ Topik, Steven. “State Interventionism in a Liberal Regime: Brazil, 1889-1930.” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 60, no. 4 (1980): 593–616. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2513668>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ George C. A. Boehrer. “The Church and the Overthrow of the Brazilian Monarchy.” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 48, no. 3 (1968): 380–401. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2511234>.

⁹⁹ “Brazil: Five Centuries of Change.” Brazil Five Centuries of Change. Accessed May 16, 2024. [https://library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-4/abolition/#:~:text=The%20Lei%20Aurea%20\(Golden%20Law,a%20wave%20of%20popular%20support](https://library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-4/abolition/#:~:text=The%20Lei%20Aurea%20(Golden%20Law,a%20wave%20of%20popular%20support).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

institution that brought them to the country in the first place.¹⁰² “The government is unstable, and unsettled. We are in the midst of anarchy, no execution of laws, a wholesale plunder rule, open and shameless robbery. An extravagance rarely equalled, trusts betrayed, the people robbed, plundered and oppressed... This is the gloomiest period of my life. I am nearly 88 years of age and not able to perform any labor and by the laws of Brazil all our Negroes are free, and I have no labor to make or attend to my farm.”¹⁰³

There was a glimmer of hope for *Confederados*, as correspondence from the states became, in their eyes, more optimistic. “There is a Godsend known as the Ku Klux Klan, it is reported to be doing a great deal of good. There is no doubt about it keeping in check the audacious proceedings of white + black radicals. It is a secret society which is spreading rapidly throughout the States. They are very mysterious in their proceeding, are said to be the departed spirits of the confederate dead. They appear at night in ghostly array on white horses, can leave their heads in your hands if you are brave enough to receive it and feel no inconvenience from the absence of that of the body.”¹⁰⁴ As racially motivated intimidation and violence gained popularity in the American South after the experiment of reconstruction ultimately failed, *Confederados* were eager to return to their homeland.

Upon their return to the United States, the story of *Confederados* slipped into the shadows of both Brazilian and American history. Most Americans do not know the stories of these 20,000 men, women, and children who fled the United States in search of their old way of

¹⁰² Simmons, Charles Willis. “Racist Americans in a Multi-Racial Society: Confederate Exiles in Brazil.” *The Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 1 (1982): 34–39. Goldman, *Os Pioneiros Americanos No Brasil (Educadores, Sacerdotes, Covos e Reis)*.

¹⁰³ Norris, William H. *W.H. Norris to Francis*. Letter. From Special Collections Archive, Auburn University, *Confederados Collection*, May 25, 1888. (accessed August 9, 2023).; Norris, William H. *W.H. Norris to Francis*. Letter. From Special Collections Archive, Auburn University, *Confederados Collection*, March 11, 1892. (accessed August 9, 2023).

¹⁰⁴ *Mary to Brother*. Letter. From Special Collections Archive, Auburn University, *Confederados Collection*, Undated. (accessed August 9, 2023).

life.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Brazilians, especially those living outside of São Paulo, pass down the story of *Confederados* as a distant memory.¹⁰⁶ Both countries, it seems, have made an effort to cleanse themselves of the historical narrative of the *Confederado* immigration.

Historians such as Eugene C. Harter argue that learning about this period of U.S. history forces Americans to confront the harsh realities embedded within their own history and culture. For one, it shatters the image of the United States as an immigrant safe haven. “The United States was a country welcoming huddled immigrant masses to eastern ports while proud Confederates sailed south.”¹⁰⁷ *Confederado* descendant Judith McKnight Jones echoes this sentiment, “The United States is a country that people immigrate to, not from.”¹⁰⁸

American historian Peter S. Onuf canvasses American exceptionalist discourse, arguing that it, “Illuminates an ongoing process of identity formation as Americans have sought to determine the place of their nation in the larger world.”¹⁰⁹ Many Americans subscribe to the patriotic sentiment of national superiority that typically lends itself to social cohesion within the country.¹¹⁰ This belief of superiority among other nations has, over the years, created an air of global paternalism in which the United States serves as a caretaker for the less fortunate. The tale of *Confederados* does not easily fit into the American exceptionalist narrative and thus is largely ignored and rejected by many.

Another facet of American exceptionalism in Civil War discourse is the cause of the war and the ideals that Civil War symbols represent. The events in Charlottesville, Virginia illuminate

¹⁰⁵ Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985. p. 130.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 196.

¹⁰⁸ Buckey, Stephen. “A Taste of Dixie in Brazil - The Washington Post.” *The Washington Post*, August 21, 1999. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1999/08/22/a-taste-of-dixie-in-brazil/d044539a-c92e-4c38-ab77-1236a9e3117f/>.

¹⁰⁹ Onuf, Peter S. “American Exceptionalism and National Identity.” *American Political Thought* 1, no. 1 (2012): 77–100. <https://doi.org/10.1086/664594>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

this discussion, as many Ku Klux-Klan members wielded Confederate flags in an attempt to protect a statue of Robert E. Lee, a Confederate war general. As glaring as the causes of the Civil War are to many, there are ongoing debates over the role that racism played in the Confederate States of America. Particularly in the South, the Confederacy is almost revered- the Civil War is oftentimes labeled as, “The war of Northern aggression.”¹¹¹

Many Confederate descendants and Antebellum historians reject the notion of race playing a major role in the secession of the South. Instead, they argue that voting power, state’s rights, and a poor economy incentivized Confederate founders to declare independence from the United States.¹¹² The *Confederado* narrative disproves much of this argument, however. In nearly all newspaper advertisements encouraging Confederate immigration to Brazil, the legality of slavery in the country is mentioned in bold lettering.¹¹³

In private correspondence, the plight of slaves and former slaves is a popular topic of discussion. One American Southerner observed in a letter to a *Confederado* family member, “Negroes are the popular element now in the government and they become yearly more worthless with the exception of a very few.”¹¹⁴ A *Confederado* echoes this racist sentiment in a letter to a family member in the United States, “I am weary of the excessive freedom we enjoy here- total exemption from taxation, military duty, no election riots, no free negro excitement, no epidemics, but little sickness, no freeze cold spells.”¹¹⁵ Acknowledging the chapter of *Confederados* in the Civil War narrative forces Americans to confront potential biases on the role

¹¹¹ George, Mark M. “Southern Discomfort,” YouTube video, 1:18:13. January 4, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u9GMrYOydw>.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ *Alexandria Gazette*, “General News.” Alexandria, D.C: Edgar Snowden Sb. August 8, 1865. From Library of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025007/1865-08-08/ed-1/seq-1/> (accessed November 28, 2022).

¹¹⁴ Harb, R.S. *R.S. Harb to friend*. Letter. From Special Collections Archive, Auburn University, *Confederados Collection*, June 16, 1869. (accessed August 9, 2023).

¹¹⁵ Matthews, George G. *George G. Matthews to Imo*. Letter. From Special Collections Archive, Auburn University, *Confederados Collection*, October 4, 1868. (accessed August 9, 2023).

of racism and slavery in the creation, maintenance, and ultimate failure of the Confederacy.

Harter asserts, “Unless the record of postwar emigration is added to the mix of history, the story will remain incomplete, a gilded picture of events in the South then and now and another triumph of “public relations” over truth.”¹¹⁶

The role that Methodism played in shaping the encounter between Brazilian and American reflects yet another rift in the American exceptionalist narrative. There is a dark side to missionary work that is largely neglected in discourse surrounding this expedition into a new land. *Confederado* missionary efforts illuminate the racial inequities of such work, including the disrespect of native individuals, the disregard for traditional practices, and the vilification of non-Christian religions and deities. For example, foreign missionary Mary Fullerton recounts her experiences serving in India, “Yet who shall say that the patient, self-sacrificing sower of such seed, who planted the vital messages of Truth in the dark furrows of superstition and ignorance supplied by the homes of India, has not done her part in raising the ideals and awakening the aspirations for a saving knowledge of God, which are so manifest throughout this great land today.”¹¹⁷ The paternalistic sentiment shared by many missionaries throughout antiquity reflects the nature of cultural exchange between American missionaries and native individuals, a side of American missionary work that is largely neglected.

While their impact can be felt throughout Brazilian society, the history of *Confederados* has slipped into Brazilian subconscious as the years go on. Their legacy is dependent on the few descendants who remain committed to stoking their flame. One such group is the *Fraternidade Descendencia Americana*, or American Descendancy Fraternity.¹¹⁸ This group meets multiple

¹¹⁶ Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985. p. 25.

¹¹⁷ Onuf, Peter S. “American Exceptionalism and National Identity.” *American Political Thought* 1, no. 1 (2012): 77-100. <https://doi.org/10.1086/664594>.

¹¹⁸ Auburn University Special Collections & Archives, Auburn, AL.

times a year outside of the Campo cemetery in São Paulo to rekindle old friendships, tell tales of their ancestors, review historical records, and share in their hybrid culture.¹¹⁹ Although much of the English language is being lost to time, a distinct Texan accent can be heard amongst the older generations.¹²⁰ Their meetings typically begin with a sermon in the chapel. In this little chapel in the little town of Americana, thousands of miles away from the American South, three flags fly over the chapel: United States, Confederate, and Brazilian.



¹¹⁹ Griggs, William Clark. *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan's Confederate Colony in Brazil*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

Bibliography

Archives

Auburn University Special Collections & Archives, Auburn, AL.

- File 1, Correspondence to John R. Buford, 1866-1869
- File 2, Correspondence to John R. Buford, 1873-1892
- File 3, Diary of John R. Buford, 1862-1870
- File 4, Miscellaneous papers of John R. Buford, 1860-1890
- File 5, Correspondence of Charles & Mary Elizabeth Norris, 1890-1896
- File 6, Correspondence of Robert C. Norris to his wife, July to September, 1890
- File 7, Correspondence of Robert C. Norris to his wife, October to December, 1890
- File 8, Correspondence of Robert C. Norris to his wife, 1891
- File 9, Correspondence of Robert Clay Norris, 1892-1902
- File 10, Correspondence of Robert Clay Norris, 1903-1909
- File 11, Correspondence of Robert Clay Norris, No exact dates listed
- File 18, Printed Materials viz. Methodist-Episcopal Church, South, Mission in Brazil
- File 19, Newspaper & Magazine Clippings, 1960-1990
- File 20, History of the Taylor-Hall families, 1684-1966
- File 21, Confederados Genealogy: Auburn Conference July, 1992
- Oversized Materials, Letters from Patti Steagall to relatives in Texas and Alabama
- Annual reports, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1877-78

Newspapers and Periodicals

Alexandria Gazette, "General News." Alexandria, D.C: Edgar Snowden Sb. August 8, 1865.

From Library of Congress.

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025007/1865-08-08/ed-1/seq-1/> (accessed November 28, 2022).

“Brazil: Five Centuries of Change.” Brazil Five Centuries of Change. Accessed May 16, 2024.

[https://library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-4/abolition/#:~:text=The%20Lei%20Aurea%20\(Golden%20Law,a%20wave%20of%20popular%20support](https://library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-4/abolition/#:~:text=The%20Lei%20Aurea%20(Golden%20Law,a%20wave%20of%20popular%20support)
t.

Buckey, Stephen. “A Taste of Dixie in Brazil - The Washington Post.” The Washington Post, August 21, 1999.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1999/08/22/a-taste-of-dixie-in-brazil/d044539a-c92e-4c38-ab77-1236a9e3117f/>.

“Cincoenta Anos de Atividades Apostólicas Dos Capuchinhos No Rio Grande Do Sul, 1896-1946.” *History of Religiosity in Latin America Online, c. 1830–1970*, n.d.

https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004412569_hrla-c00407.

Elliott, Debbie. “The Charlottesville Rally 5 Years Later: ‘It’s What You’re Still Trying to Forget.’” NPR, August 12, 2022.

<https://www.npr.org/2022/08/12/1116942725/the-charlottesville-rally-5-years-later-its-wh>
at-youre-still-trying-to-forget.

George, Mark M. “Southern Discomfort,” YouTube video, 1:18:13. January 4, 2019.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u9GMrYOydw>.

Greenspan, Jesse. "The Confederacy Made Its Last Stand in Brazil." History.com. A&E Television Networks, July 25, 2018.

<https://www.history.com/news/confederacy-in-brazil-civil-war>.

"Hist." Igreja Metodista - Sede Nacional. Accessed November 15, 2023.

<https://www.metodista.org.br/historico-metodismo-no-brasil>.

Katz, Andrew. "Charlottesville: 'unite the Right' Rally, State of Emergency." CLASHES OVER A SHOW OF WHITE NATIONALISM IN CHARLOTTESVILLE TURN DEADLY.

Accessed May 16, 2024. <https://time.com/charlottesville-white-nationalist-rally-clashes/>.

Lowe, John. "Reconstruction Revisited: Plantation School Writers, Postcolonial Theory, and Confederates in Brazil." *The Mississippi Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2003): 5–26.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/26466941>.

McCornack, Richard Blaine. "Los Estados Confederados y México." *Historia Mexicana* 4, no. 3 (1955): 337–52. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25134382>.

Memphis Daily Appeal, "The Glaciers: Lecture by Prof Aggasiz on the Ancient Glaciers of the Tropics." Memphis: John S.C Hogan & Co. February 22, 1867. From Library of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/1867-02-22/ed-1/seq-1/> (accessed November 28, 2022).

Memphis Daily Appeal, "What the People Want." Memphis: John S.C Hogan & Co. October 3, 1875. From Library of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/1875-10-03/ed-1/seq-2/#date1=1777&sort=date&rows=20&words=Dom+Pedro&searchType=basic&sequence=0&index=2&>

state=Alabama&date2=1920&proxtext=Dom+pedro&y=12&x=17&dateFilterType=year
Range&page=1 (accessed November 28, 2022).

Simmons, Charles Willis. "Racist Americans in a Multi-Racial Society: Confederate Exiles in Brazil." *The Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 1 (1982): 34–39.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2717759>.

Staff, Hatewatch. "Flags and Other Symbols Used by Far-Right Groups in Charlottesville." Southern Poverty Law Center, August 12, 2017.
<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/08/12/flags-and-other-symbols-used-far-right-groups-charlottesville>.

The Opelousas Courier, "Brazilian Immigration!" Opelousas. July 8, 1865. From Library of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83026389/1865-07-08/ed-2/seq-1/> (accessed November 28, 2022).

Misc Primary Sources

Buford, John R. *Buford, John Miscellaneous*. Letter. Auburn University: Auburn University Libraries, *Confederados Collection*.
<https://content.lib.auburn.edu/digital/collection/confederado/id/2655/rec/1> (accessed November 25, 2022).

Buford, John R. *Buford, John Miscellaneous*. Speech. Auburn University: Auburn University Libraries, *Confederados Collection*.
<https://content.lib.auburn.edu/digital/collection/confederado/id/2652/rec/1> (accessed November 25, 2022).

Cannon, James. *History of Southern Methodist missions*. Nashville, TN: Cokesbury Press, 1926.

Norris, Mary Elizabeth. *Mary to Mother [undated]*. Letter. Auburn University: Auburn University Libraries, *Confederados Collection*.

<https://content.lib.auburn.edu/digital/collection/confederado/id/2738/rec/5> (accessed November 25, 2022).

Southern Baptist Convention 1879. Manuscript. Atlanta, GA: Jas. P. Harrison & Co., State Printers and Publishers, 1879. From Southern Baptist Historical Library & Archives. http://media2.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/annuals/SBC_Annual_1879.pdf (accessed November 30, 2022).

Published Sources

Azevedo, Fernando de. *Brazilian culture: An introduction to the study of culture in Brazil*. New York: Hafner Pub. Co, 1971.

Dawsey, Cyrus B., and James M. Dawsey. *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998

Griggs, William Clark. *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan's Confederate Colony in Brazil*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.

Hill, Lawrence F. "Confederate Exiles to Brazil." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 7, no. 2 (1927): 192–210. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-7.2.192>

Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Tex: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985.

Kidder, Daniel P. *Sketches of residence and travel in Brazil, embracing historical and geographical notices of the Empire and its several provinces*. Phil.: Soren & Ball, 1845.

Mott, Frank Luther. *A history of American magazines*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Pr., 1970.

Pérez Gómez, Ricardo *Emigración e identidad en el siglo XIX: el caso de los inmigrantes confederados en Brasil** Trashumante. *Revista Americana de Historia Social*, núm. 20, 2022, Julio-Diciembre, pp. 194-214. Universidad de Antioquia

Sutherland, Daniel E. "Looking for a Home: Louisiana Emigrants during the Civil War and Reconstruction." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 21, no. 4 (1980).

Townsend, W. J., Herbert B. Workman, and George Eays. *A new history of Methodism*. New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909.

Tupper, H.A. *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1880.

Weaver, Blanche Henry. "Confederate Immigrants and Evangelical Churches in Brazil." *The Journal of Southern History* 18, no. 4 (1952): 446. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2955219>

Images

Auburn University Special Collections & Archives, Auburn, AL. Oversized Materials, Letters from Patti Steagall to relatives in Texas and Alabama.

Mario Tama, Photograph, History.com,
<https://www.history.com/news/confederacy-in-brazil-civil-war>.

Joshua Roberts, "Unite the Right" Rally Attendees Gather Near Robert E. Lee Statue in Lee Park, Time.com, <https://time.com/charlottesville-white-nationalist-rally-clashes/>

Alabama Pioneers, *President Carter at Americana Brazil*,

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.alabamapioneers.com/alabama-to-brazil/&ved=2ahUKEwjPwo63upiGAXWq5ckDHYrxAc0Qh-wKegQITRAC&usg=AOvVaw2oCRFpE7xRrXaKEmdedyLn>.

N. Currier. *The Propagation Society. More free than welcome.* , ca. 1855. [N.Y.: For sale by Nathaniel Currier at no. 2 Spruce St] Photograph.

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2003656589/>.

Henrique Moraes, *secretary of the College of Bishops, during the 20th General Council, World Churches of Brazil*,

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/brazilian-methodists-reaffirm-commitment-to-mission-and-discipleship>.