

For God and Country

What Walt Whitman called the “volcanic upheaval of the nation, after that firing on the flag at Charleston” prompted a meeting in New York’s Scandinavian Society in April 1861.¹ The meeting helped organize the first Scandinavian company in the Civil War and incorporate it into the First New York Infantry Regiment.² Company recruits elected Norwegian-born Ole Balling as captain, Danish-born Christian Christensen as first lieutenant, and Swedish-born Alfred Fredberg as second lieutenant. Both Balling and Fredberg had experience from the First Schleswig War in 1848, and Christian Christensen, the Scandinavian Society’s president and the recruitment meeting organizer, seemed a natural selection, since he was “well-known among all Scandinavians in America” (see Figure 5.1).³

With the Scandinavian Society’s host J. A. Jansen “chosen as First Sergeant,” the company’s leadership, representing the three Scandinavian countries, reflected the general composition of the unit. “The company now consists of approximately 80 Scandinavians evenly divided between the

¹ Brooks D. Simpson, Stephen W. Sears, and Aaron Sheehan-Dean, eds., *The Civil War: The First Year Told by Those Who Lived It* (New York: Library of America, 2011), 336. Ole Balling, on the other hand, wrote of drums, trumpets, and “immense crowds” in New York City after the war’s outbreak. See O. P. Hansen Balling, *Erindringer Fra Et Langt Liv [Memories from a Long Life]* (Kristiania, S. & Jul Sørensens Bogtrykkeri, 1905), 66.

² “Skandinavisk Militær-Kompagni Fra New York [Scandinavian Military Company from New York],” *Emigranten*, August 12, 1861. Original article in “Skandinaverne i Nordamerika [The Scandinavians in North America],” *Dagbladet*, July 2, 1861.

³ “Skandinavisk Militær-Kompagni Fra New York [Scandinavian Military Company from New York].”



FIGURE 5.1 Christian Christensen, president of the Scandinavian Society in New York and Civil War officer, photographed in New York early in the war. Courtesy Sayre Family Private Collection.

three countries,” the unit’s librarian reported back to the Copenhagen paper *Dagbladet* (The Daily).⁴

Before embarking for Newport News in Virginia on May 26, 1861, the company received a battle flag from the Swedish ladies in New York and a drum from a local Danish-born attorney, while also participating in a parade down Broadway with the rest of the First New York Regiment.⁵ Shortly after arriving in camp by Fort Monroe, the First New York, along with several other New York regiments, saw action at the battle of Big

⁴ Ibid. ⁵ Ibid.

Bethel. The June 10 engagement ended in a Union defeat; it also prompted several letters to New York newspapers and family members back home.⁶ In a letter to his mom, Danish-born Wilhelm Wermuth stressed that he had thus far escaped unscathed, but he also admitted, “I have been near our Lord a few times, I was in a pitched battle on June 10 and a man fell close to me.”⁷ About the war’s larger implications, Wermuth added: “Now we await a big battle by Washington which will presumably settle the fate of the blacks.”⁸

The topic of slavery was also important in public statements about enlistment, though reality, perhaps not surprisingly, proved more complex. In a letter dated August 22, the Scandinavian company’s librarian recounted the battle of Big Bethel in *Dagbladet* and attempted to put the soldiers’ motivation into words. According to the Scandinavian-born letter writer, the men greatly desired to “meet the enemy in open battle,” since they had volunteered not out of “ambition or greed or other ignoble motives, but to defend and assert freedom and all human beings’ equal entitlement thereto, regardless of how the skin color varies.”⁹

With this statement, *Dagbladet*’s correspondent articulated support for equality and freedom as universal values worth risking one’s life for, values that Scandinavian immigrants had also equated with the essence of American citizenship, and Wermuth’s letter in addition demonstrated awareness that the war directly or indirectly revolved around the issue of slavery.

Though they privately expressed more pragmatic reasons for enlisting, these early Scandinavian volunteers *may* have been more idealistic in their motivations for war service than was the case for recruits who joined later in the war. According to James McPherson, this was the case for many Anglo-American soldiers, and it was certainly the way Scandinavian Civil

⁶ See also “News from Fortress Monroe: Additional Particulars of the Fight at Big Bethel,” *New York Herald*, June 14, 1861. Also John V. Quarstein, *Big Bethel: The First Battle* (Charleston, NC: History Press, 2011). On the minor role played by the First New York Regiment, see Colonel William H. Allen, “Official Report of Colonel Allen, First Regiment N. Y. V.,” *New York Herald*, June 16, 1861.

⁷ Wilhelm Wermuth, “Newport News 24 Sept 1861,” in *Håndskriftsafdelingen. Ny Kongelig Samling 2719. II. Folio. Karl Larsen’s Collection, Unused Material. Wilhelm Adolf Leopold Wermuth, USA (Soldat, guldgraver, mine-ejer)* (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Bibliotek, 1861).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ “Camp Butler, Newport News (Virginia) Den 22de August,” *Dagbladet*, September 13, 1861.

War soldiers wanted their service to be remembered.¹⁰ In several publications, Scandinavian immigrants later described themselves as having volunteered in greater proportion than did any other ethnic group in the United States.¹¹ The claim likely has some merit among Norwegian-Americans, who often came to America with less social and economic capital than their Swedish and Danish counterparts and settled in closer-knit rural ethnic enclaves where they likely experienced greater pressure to enlist.¹² There is, however, also ample evidence of contemporary

¹⁰ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5–6, 102–103.

¹¹ J. A. Johnson, ed., *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie [The Scandinavian Regiment's History]* (La Crosse: Fædrelandet og Emigrantens Trykkeri, 1869); Peter Sørensen Vig, *Danske i Krig i Og for Amerika [Danes Fighting in and for America]*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Minneapolis, MN: C. Rasmussen Company, 1907).

¹² According to the 1860 census, 5,624,065 men were of military age on the eve of the Civil War and close to 4.7 million military-age men were available for the Union Army outside of the Confederate States, but loyal Southerners, especially in the Upper South, also fought for the Union Army. According to James McPherson, it is “generally accepted” that 2.1 million men fought for the Union, and one might therefore approximate that close to 45 percent of all military-age men (2,100,000 out of 4,700,000) outside of the Confederacy served in the military. Based on census superintendent Joseph C. G. Kennedy’s observation that immigrants usually arrived at an age eligible for military service in the “newly settled States of the West,” and the “proportion of ‘fighting men’” was generally greater there “than in the Atlantic States,” one would expect close to 10,000 Norwegians, slightly more than 4,000 Swedes, and 2,000 Danes to have been eligible for military service. See Joseph C. G. Kennedy, ed., *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864), xvii; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 306–307. Extensive research by Norwegian-American volunteer researcher Jerry Rosholt has unearthed “at least 6,500 Civil War Union soldiers” born in Norway, which would mean that 65 percent of the military-age Norwegians residing in the United States in 1860 served in the army (based on no additional immigration between 1860 and 1865 and based on 22 percent military-age men, which is likely a low estimate as 56.4 percent of Norwegians emigrants were men). Yet, Rosholt at times counts soldiers born outside of Norway, and the census counts may be low given that some immigrants arrived in Canada before travelling to the Midwest. See Jerry Rosholt, *Ole Goes to War: Men from Norway Who Fought in America's Civil War* (Decorah: Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, 2003), 20. On the difficulty of using census counts and potential for miscalculations as well as a description of Scandinavian settlement patterns, see Torben Grøngaard Jeppesen, *Danske i USA 1850–2000. En Demografisk, Social Og Kulturgeografisk Undersøgelse Af De Danske Immigranter Og Deres Efterkommere [Danes in the United States 1850–2000: A Demographic, Social and Cultural Geographic Study of the Danish Immigrants and Their Descendants]*, Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2005), 43, 123–138; Torben Grøngaard Jeppesen, *Skandinaviske Efterkommere i USA [Scandinavian Descendants in America]* (Odense: Odense Bys Museer, 2010), 14–26. For Swedish soldiers, Roger Kvist arrives at slightly above 18 percent of Swedish immigrants living in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa serving in the Union Army (2,178 service-members out of 11,786

resistance to military service among Scandinavian-born immigrants. In other words, Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish immigrants entered the military based on a complex set of motivations that was often as much about economic and political opportunity (and social perceptions of honor) as it was about love for the adopted country or anti-slavery sentiment.¹³

In New York's Scandinavian company, the early Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish volunteers did indeed publicly claim to be fighting out of idealism, and part of the reason may well have been the fact that the soldiers quickly were exposed to concrete discussions of slavery and abolition. The Union forces at Fortress Monroe were commanded by Benjamin Butler, who since May 23, 1861, had afforded runaway slaves protection within Union lines (see Figure 5.2).¹⁴

As Eric Foner explains, Butler claimed to be drawing on international law when designating the runaways as "contrabands," and by May 27, 1861, at least fifty local runaways "including a three-month-old infant" had sought refuge "at what blacks now called the 'freedom fort.'"¹⁵ Thus, Scandinavian soldiers stationed around Fortress Monroe experienced first-hand the centrality of slavery to the Civil War, yet the company's two highest-ranking officers seemingly volunteered for less idealistic reasons than defending "all human beings' equal entitlement" to freedom.¹⁶ Captain Balling (see Figure 5.3) admitted in his memoirs that he had no interest in the political questions of the day and also indicated that First Lieutenant Christensen joined the military mainly for economic

Swedes listed in the 1860 census) and thereby slightly more than 50 percent of military-age men. Roger Kvist, *For Adoptivlandets Och Mänsklighetens Sak: Svenskarna i Illinois Och Det Amerikanska Inbördeskriget* [For Adopted Country and Humanity's Sake: The Swedes in Illinois and the American Civil War] (Umeå: Norrlands universitetsförlag, 2003), 101–102. No concrete studies of Danish Civil War enlistment have been published, but thorough research by writer Leif Ernst has uncovered at least 800 names, less than 10 percent of the 9,956 Danish immigrants counted in the 1860 census but approximately 40 percent of military-age men; see Leif Ernst, e-mail to author, May 25, 2011. For the importance of recruiting and pressure at the local level, see Steven E. Woodworth, ed., *The Loyal, True, and Brave: America's Civil War Soldiers* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2002), 16–23.

¹³ In an unpublished MA thesis, Petter Drevsland's reading of close to 100 letters from Norwegian-born soldiers also leads him to conclude that economic concerns often were among the primary factors in enlistment. See Petter Strøm Drevsland, "Norwegian Immigrants in the American Civil War: Reasons for Enlistment According to the America Letters" (MA thesis: Universitetet i Oslo, 2013), 53–54.

¹⁴ Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 169.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 170. ¹⁶ "Camp Butler, Newport News (Virginia) Den 22de August."



FIGURE 5.2 Drawing by Ole Balling depicting Federal troops engaging with a blockade runner near Fort Monroe in September 1861. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

reasons.¹⁷ Christensen never wrote concretely about his motivation for enlisting, noting only that “Company I of 1st New York Volunteers was formed in the Scandinavian Society of New York, of which I was then (in the spring of 1861) president.”¹⁸

Christensen’s brother-in-law, Ferdinand Winslów, however, in a private account written to his wife Wilhemina in the fall of 1861, suggested that the first lieutenant’s incentive for military service was mainly economic.¹⁹ “Christensen had to admit of all the debts that

¹⁷ Balling, *Erindringer Fra Et Langt Liv* [*Memories from a Long Life*], 65–67.

¹⁸ The famous Danish journalist Henrik Cavling later described Christian Christensen and other New York Scandinavians as having been carried along by “general enthusiasm for war.” See Henrik Cavling, *Fra Amerika*, vol. II (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1897), 106. Balling, *Erindringer Fra Et Langt Liv* [*Memories from a Long Life*], 67. See also McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, viii. Also Anders Bo Rasmussen, “‘I Long to Hear from You’: The Hardship of Civil War Soldiering on Danish Immigrant Families,” *The Bridge* 37, no. 1 (2014): 17–19.

¹⁹ Henrik Cavling, *Det Danske Vestindien* [*The Danish West Indies*] (Copenhagen: Det Reitzelske Forlag, 1894), 148. See also Ferdinand Sophus Winslów, “October 24 1861



FIGURE 5.3 A self-portrait of the colorful painter and officer Ole Balling after the Civil War. Courtesy of Marinemuseet in Norway.

bothered him,” wrote Winsl w in October 1861, and Balling years later wrote that Christensen had confided in him: “My house went bankrupt yesterday, I am in dire straits and I do not know what I tomorrow shall give my family to live off of.”²⁰

Balling’s reference to Christensen’s “house” probably had to do with the Danish immigrant’s position at a brokerage firm on Wall Street. According to Christensen’s personal papers, he worked for Pepoon, Nazro & Co. on 82 Wall Street until the Civil War’s outbreak in April 1861 but never afterward. Based on Winsl w’s letter to his wife, the company founders, Marshall Pepoon and John Nazro, may have been in financial trouble – or perhaps just been disinclined to help their former employee.²¹ “Papoon [sic] and Nazro promised Christensen to pay Emmy

Newtown: Christensen’s House,” in *Ferdinand Sophus Winslow Letters, September 1861–February 1862* (University of Iowa, Special Collections Department, 1861). Winsl w, “October 24 1861 Newtown: Christensen’s House.”

²⁰ Balling, *Erindringer Fra Et Langt Liv [Memories from a Long Life]*, 67.

²¹ General C. T. Christensen, “Nogle Blade Af Mit Levnet [Some Sheets of My Life]” (Sayre family archive, Seattle, WA). See also Residents of New York City, “Cleaning the City Streets; Memorial of the Tax-Payers in Behalf of Mr. Smith and His Machines,” *New York Times*, March 3, 1860.

\$100 a month during his absence, but cheats and rascals as they are they have never paid the first copper yet.”²² Christensen therefore probably enlisted as much for practical reasons as idealism, and the same could be said of his brother-in-law. Though Ferdinand Winsl w also belonged to the group of early volunteers, he made it clear in a letter dated September 22, 1861, that he served as quartermaster of the 9th Iowa Infantry Regiment to avoid being drafted later and having to “go with very bad grace,” thereby alluding to the importance of honor more than patriotic zeal.²³

As it turned out, the schism between idealism and pragmatism was a recurring theme as Scandinavians in other parts of the United States pondered whether to mobilize for the Civil War. Ivar Alexander Hviid (Weid), who had received Old World military training, organized a recruitment meeting in Chicago on July 29, 1861. Weid’s call in *Emigranten* was decorated by an eagle holding an “E Pluribus Unum” ribbon, under which the Danish-born immigrant wrote:

Countrymen Scandinavians!

Our adoptive fatherland is threatened by rebels who seek to overthrow the union that now for so many years has brought fortune and blessings to the country. It is every man’s duty to defend the country he resides and makes a living in, and as a result we Scandinavians also have an opportunity to show the new world that we have not yet forgotten the heroism that since olden times has personified the Norseman.²⁴

Weid thereby publicly appealed to a common Scandinavian ethnicity and greater American values such as the economic prosperity that Scandinavians associated with the Union and the United States’ ability to create unity out of diversity. Yet, at the individual level, it was clear that Weid did not necessarily fully embrace the creed of “E Pluribus Unum.” When Weid learned that his company would be incorporated into the German-led 82nd Illinois Infantry Regiment, the Danish-born captain felt such urgency to have the decision overturned that he wired the adjutant

²² Winsl w, “October 24 1861 Newtown: Christensen’s House.”

²³ “Camp Union. 22 September 1861,” in *Ferdinand Sophus Winslow letters, September 1861–February 1862* (University of Iowa, Special Collections Department, 1861).

²⁴ Ivar Alexander Weid, “Ivar Alexander Hviid,” *Middelfart Avis*, September 10, 1862. Also Ivar Alexander Weid, “Landsm nd! Skandinaver! [Countrymen! Scandinavians!],” *Emigranten*, July 28, 1862. Weid’s name was spelled Ivan in *Emigranten*, but his name, as evident from other records, was Ivar. See for example Otto Weid, “Los Angeles, Calif., August 7, 1930,” in *Weid, Otto + Ivar, 1930–1934. Undated* (Huntington Library, 1930–1934).

general of Illinois, Allen C. Fuller, on September 13, 1862, and argued that military and political strife originating from the Old World had been transplanted to the United States: “I think it wrong to order my Company into Hecker. Germans & Scandinavians never agree[.] They are national enemies,” Weid wrote.²⁵

Indicating Scandinavian-born immigrants’ limited political leverage, Weid’s complaint changed nothing: the Scandinavian company remained part of the 82nd Illinois Regiment.²⁶ Due to their larger share of the population, however, German immigrants had more opportunities to enlist in ethnically uniform units and at times even refused to “offer their Service into a Mixt Regiment [sic],” as evidenced by an August 27 letter to Wisconsin’s governor Alexander Randall a few months before the German-led 9th Wisconsin Regiment was mustered into service.²⁷ Some German soldiers, as Walter Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich have suggested, were therefore never part of a multiethnic Civil War crucible as “general fraternization across ethnic lines simply did not happen.”²⁸ Scandinavian soldiers, on the other hand, had little choice. The majority of Scandinavian soldiers in the Civil War served in ethnically mixed units, and – as the example of Ivar Weid demonstrates – even units at the company or regimental levels were part of brigades and corps that forced Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes to interact with their fellow soldiers and to an extent depend on them for survival.²⁹

²⁵ Ivar A. Weid, “Springfield 13, 1862,” in *Civil War Records. 82nd Infantry Regiment. Misc. Letters and Telegrams* (Illinois State Archives, 1862). Also William Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers: The Union’s Ethnic Regiments*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 206. In another example of Danish-German rivalry, Danish-born Anders Madsen Smith in his memoirs wrote about sailing across the Atlantic with a German crew: “The hatred that reigned among them and my countrymen caused my stay on the ship to be far from festive. Kicks, blows and terms of abuse were the order of the day.” See Anders Madsen Smith, *En Omvandrende Danskers Tildragelser Paa Jagt Efter Lykken [A Wandering Dane’s Pursuit of Happiness]* (Minneapolis, MN, 1891), 27.

²⁶ Eric Benjaminson, “A Regiment of Immigrants: The 82nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry and the Letters of Captain Rudolph Mueller,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 94, no. Summer (2001): 139–143; Ivar A. Weid, “The Deceased Corporal Peter F. Lund,” in *Civil War Records. 82nd Infantry Regiment. Orders & Reports* (Illinois State Archive, 1862).

²⁷ Charles Pauli, “Racine Augst 27th 1861,” in *Archives Division. Wisconsin. Executive Department. Military Correspondence. Series 49. Box 10.* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1861). See also E. B. Quiner, *Military History of Wisconsin* (Chicago, IL, 1866), 540–547.

²⁸ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 31–32.

²⁹ Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers: The Union’s Ethnic Regiments*, 232–233. Also “Oberst Hans C. Heg [Colonel Hans C. Heg],” *Fædrelandet*, August 25, 1864.

Yet in Wisconsin a concerted effort was made to raise a large-scale Nordic Civil War unit. As the summer of 1861 turned to fall and winter, community leaders constructed a pan-Scandinavian ethnic identity based on a common martial Viking past while also acknowledging the practical realities of a political spoils system tied to military service and an idealistic belief in – and duty toward defending – American values and the opportunities associated with American citizenship.³⁰

On September 2, 1861, *Emigranten's* editor Carl Fredrik Solberg reminded his readers that the Scandinavians “owe the country as much as our native-born fellow citizens do” and that since they “in every respect enjoy the same rights” they were obligated to defend the country.³¹ Additionally, *Emigranten* printed a text by the Norwegian-born community leader and politician John A. Johnson, who had recruited several Scandinavian volunteers around Wisconsin to “help suppress the slaveholders’ insurrection and uphold the country’s constitution and laws.”³² In the following weeks, several more letters arguing for Scandinavian volunteerism and idealism appeared in *Emigranten* and simultaneously revealed the connection between recruitment and politics.

In between the practical appeals to ethnicity and the more high-minded appeals to civic nationalism, Scandinavian leaders recognized the political need to field visible Scandinavian military units in order to have political influence in the future. Solberg later remembered an important exchange to that effect with Hans Heg, likely in the late summer of 1861:

One night after I had gone to bed and fallen asleep Mr. Heg came into my room and got in bed with me and woke me up. He said he had decided to enter the military service and had come to Madison for that purpose. We stayed awake the rest of the night talking over his plans of raising a Scandinavian regiment, concerning which he was very enthusiastic. I remember he said, “The men who

³⁰ James M. McPherson, “Two Irreconcilable Peoples? Ethnic Nationalism in the Confederacy,” in *The Civil War as Global Conflict: Transnational Meanings of the American Civil War*, edited by David T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 86–89.

³¹ Carl Fredrik Solberg, “Et Skandinavisk Kompagni Af Frivillige Foreslaaet Oprettet,” *Emigranten*, September 2, 1861. Also Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie [The Scandinavian Regiment’s History]*, 14–16.

³² J. A. Johnson, “Skandinavisk Kompagni,” *Emigranten*, September 2, 1861.

conduct this war are going to be the men who will conduct affairs after it is over and if we are going to have any influence then we must get into the war now." He was shrewd enough to see the trend of things.³³

Initially, Scandinavian leaders aimed even higher than a regiment. On the evening of September 15, prominent Norwegian-Americans gathered at the Capitol House hotel in the center of Madison with the goal of raising a Scandinavian brigade. Capitol House was by 1861 considered Wisconsin's finest hotel, with 120 fashionable rooms inspired by East Coast architecture, and the meeting's setting therefore indicated the Scandinavian elite's level of ambition.³⁴ Hans Heg was appointed the unit's commanding officer, and in the subsequent weeks the recruitment efforts were stepped up in earnest.³⁵ By September 25, leading Norwegians in Madison were so confident in their ability to enlist fellow Scandinavians in purely ethnic units that they wrote to the governor of Wisconsin, Alexander Randall, and informed him that "Scandinavians from different parts of this State" had resolved "to raise a Scandinavian Brigade for the war now pending in this our adopted Country."³⁶

Underscoring the pragmatic aspects of Civil War enlistments, Johnson received a letter from a countryman, Bernhard J. Madson, suggesting a relatively common quid pro quo for helping to raise the desired ethnic units. On September 27, 1861, Madson assured Johnson that he had enlisted two Norwegian men and soon after wrote that he was "hard to work for the Company" and devoting his "entire time" to recruitment.³⁷ Madson had read in *Emigranten* that John Johnson's brother, Ole, was "commissioned as recruiting Officer," and he followed his enlistment update with a specific request: "I wish to know, if I am working for the Company for a position or not, since your brother will without doubt be elected Capt."³⁸ In other words, would Johnson and his brother use their

³³ Albert O. Barton, "Reminiscences of a Pioneer Editor," *NAHA Studies and Records* 1 (1926).

³⁴ David V. Mollenhoff, *Madison: A History of the Formative Years* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 47–49.

³⁵ Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie [The Scandinavian Regiment's History]*, 15–17.

³⁶ J. A. Johnson et al., "Madison Wis Septbr 25th 1861," in *Archives Division. Wisconsin. Executive Department. Military Correspondence. Series 49. Box 11* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1861).

³⁷ B. I. [Bernt J.] Madson, "Cambridge 27 Sept '61," in *Johnson, John A., 1861–1866, Wis Mss 237s* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1861). Also B. I. [Bernt J.] Madson, "Cambridge Oct. 6th '61," in *ibid.*

³⁸ "Cambridge Oct. 6th '61."

“combined influence” on Madson’s behalf “for a Lieut. post?”³⁹ Johnson’s answer, if he ever wrote one, has not been preserved among his personal papers, but Madson, despite his best efforts, never managed to rise above the rank of “sergeant” with the 15th Wisconsin.⁴⁰ Madson’s lobbying did, however, underline the juxtaposition between the idealism of “upholding the country’s constitution” and the practicalities of securing financially attractive leadership positions privately.⁴¹ In another example, Hans Heg, on Monday, September 30, 1861, issued a call for Civil War service through *Emigranten* that revealed both the rhetorical idealism of citizenship duties and the political reality underlying ethnic Civil War units: “The authorities that be in this our new homeland have, as we all know, called the citizens of the country to arms to support the government in its attempt to preserve the Union and its constitution,” Heg wrote.⁴²

Scandinavians! Let us recognize our present position, our duties and our responsibility as we should understand them. We have still far from carried the part of the war’s burdens in respect to delivering personnel as the Scandinavian population’s great number here in the country oblige for us . . . While the adopted citizens of other nationalities such as the Germans and Irish have put whole regiments in the field, the Scandinavians of the West have not yet sent a single complete Company of infantry to the grand Army. Must the future ask: Where were the Scandinavians, when we saved the mother country?⁴³

The appeal was signed by ten prominent Scandinavian businessmen, editors, and opinion-leaders (in all, nine Norwegians and one Dane) and yielded clues to how the ethnic elite wanted Scandinavian identity to be understood in the public sphere.⁴⁴ On the one hand, Scandinavians were an exclusive group with a common language and culture competing with Germans and Irish immigrants in displays of loyalty (and by extension

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie [The Scandinavian Regiment’s History]*, 7; Waldemar Ager, *Oberst Heg Og Hans Gutter [Colonel Heg and His Boys]* (Eau Claire, WI: Fremad Publishing Company, 1916), 274.

⁴¹ Carl Fredrik Solberg, “Norske Militærkompagnier,” *Emigranten*, September 16, 1861.

⁴² Hans C. Heg et al., “Opraab [Call],” *ibid.*, September 30. The following pages in this chapter are partly based on Rasmussen, “‘Drawn Together in a Blood Brotherhood’: Civic Nationalism amongst Scandinavian Immigrants in the American Civil War Crucible,” *American Studies in Scandinavia* 48, no. 2 (2016): 9–26.

⁴³ Heg et al., “Opraab [Call].”

⁴⁴ Johnson et al., “Madison Wis Septbr 25th 1861.” See also Olof Nickolaus Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States*, vol. I (Minneapolis, MN: O. N. Nelson, 1900), 204–214. Hans Heg, for example, was the first Scandinavian elected to statewide office.

political power); on the other hand, they were part of a greater national project with values that had by now drawn them to become citizens in an adopted homeland.⁴⁵

As proof that these ethnic Scandinavian military units were exclusive in terms of language, *Emigranten's* editor on October 8, 1861, published a letter by Hans Heg, who emphasized that the "Regiment's officers would be men who speak the Scandinavian languages. Thereby also giving the Scandinavian, who does not yet speak the English language, opportunity to enter into service."⁴⁶ This reference to a common Scandinavian origin and identity was a practical construction to maximize recruitment – and perhaps also a necessary one, since Yankee-Americans often were not able to tell Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians apart.⁴⁷ Consequently, the exclusive ethnic identity promoted by the Scandinavian regiment's organizers afforded non-English-speaking immigrants the opportunity to fight in the war, to ensure a monthly income, and to contribute to their adopted country maintaining a certain territorial size and certain political ideals.

Secondly, the call for volunteers introduced a political ethnicity, in which Scandinavian unity, and subtle expectations of future political power, was defined in opposition to the "other nationalities such as the Germans and Irish" that had "put whole regiments in the field."⁴⁸ Based on the writings of Heg, Solberg, and other ethnic leaders, these exclusive and political perceptions of ethnicity – exclusive ethnicity serving as a foundation for political power – outweighed the more idealistic and universal values also introduced in Heg's petition.⁴⁹

Still, the rhetoric of universal ideals, calling attention to citizenship's duties and adherence to foundational American values of equality and liberty, echoed frequently through the pages of *Emigranten* and the

⁴⁵ Heg et al., "Opraab [Call]"; Rasmussen, "'Drawn Together in a Blood Brotherhood': Civic Nationalism amongst Scandinavian Immigrants in the American Civil War Crucible," 12–26; Milton J. Yinger, "Ethnicity," *Annual Review of Sociology* 11 (1985): 159.

⁴⁶ Heg, "Opraab [Call]." In the Scandinavian company formed in New York, "drill was conducted and commands were given in Danish," according to the unit's captain, Ole Balling. See Balling, *Erindringer Fra Et Langt Liv [Memories from a Long Life]*, 67.

⁴⁷ Jørn Brøndal and Dag Blanck, "The Concept of Being Scandinavian-American," *American Studies in Scandinavia* 34, no. 2 (2002): 3–5.

⁴⁸ Heg et al., "Opraab [Call]."

⁴⁹ McPherson, "'Two Irreconcilable Peoples'? Ethnic Nationalism in the Confederacy," 86–89. McPherson defines American civic nationalism as a concept identified with "ideas of liberty, republicanism, manhood suffrage, equality of opportunity, and the absence of rigid class lines."

Swedish-American *Hemlandet* during the Civil War, while less idealistic motivations appeared in private correspondence.⁵⁰

Emigranten's editor enthusiastically backed the idea of an exclusively Scandinavian military unit and frequently opened up his newspaper to contributions aiding the recruitment effort while personally lauding Hans Heg as “young, forceful and bold, proud, and unwaveringly trustworthy.”⁵¹ Hundreds of Norwegians, a few Swedes, and approximately fifty Danes eventually accepted the call to enlist in the Scandinavian regiment, but the pace of recruitment also made it clear that a Scandinavian Brigade was far from realistic.⁵² Despite initiating the recruitment process in September, the regiment did not fill its ranks until January 1862.⁵³ The 15th Wisconsin was eventually made up of ten alphabetized companies with nicknames such as “St. Olaf’s Rifles,” named after the Norwegian king Olav den Hellige (Olaf the Holy), and “Odin’s Rifles,” which tied Scandinavian-American recruits to a common Viking ancestry.⁵⁴

Similar calls for Scandinavian troops, touting a common ethnicity and defending universal values, with the implicit acknowledgement that there was political gain to be had from ethnic units, were published across the Midwest in the fall of 1861 though on a smaller scale. In Illinois and Minnesota, ethnic leaders who were not affiliated with the recruitment

⁵⁰ This complementary identity, meaning the ability to retain an “exclusive” Scandinavian ethnic identity while still maintaining loyalty to the founding principles of the United States, was part of the Midwest’s appeal to immigrants, as it, according to Jon Gjerde, “powerfully promoted an allegiance to American institutions” and thus stood in stark contrast to nativist politicians’ call for Anglo-American conformity based on Protestant American culture. See Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West 1830–1917* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 8, 12, 59–65. On expression of dual loyalty among Irish immigrants as well, see Susannah Ural Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861–1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 47.

⁵¹ Carl Fredrik Solberg, “Oberst Heg,” *Emigranten*, October 7, 1861.

⁵² Yet, by October 8, 1861, the idea of a “Scandinavian Brigade” was still used as a headline in *Emigranten*, with the story noting that Captain Andrew Torkildsen was forming a company for the brigade. See “Den Skandinaviske Brigade [the Scandinavian Brigade],” *Emigranten*, October 7, 1861.

⁵³ Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie [The Scandinavian Regiment’s History]*, 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* A third company was named “Wergeland’s Guard,” for the Norwegian writer Henrik Wergeland, and a fourth, after Claus Clausen accepted Hans Heg’s request to become regimental chaplain, called themselves “Clausen’s Guards,” while others were named “Heg’s Rifles,” “Norway Bear Hunters,” “Scandinavian Mountaineers,” and “Rock River Rangers.” See Theodore C. Blegen, “Colonel Hans Christian Heg,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 4, no. 2 (1920): 155.

effort in Madison, Wisconsin, simultaneously attempted to organize smaller ethnic companies.

Ivar Weid raised his Scandinavian company from a recruiting station in Chicago; a little further west, around Bishop Hill, Illinois, a Swedish company was organized by Captain Emil Forss, who had been an officer in the Old World, and the unit was named the “Swedish Union Guard.”⁵⁵ On October 2, 1861, Forss announced the company’s existence in *Hemlandet* and encouraged his countrymen to “join us” in knowing the duty that they owed to “our adopted country” and thereby “renew honor to the noble Scandinavian name.”⁵⁶ Swedish-born Hans Mattson organized yet another ethnic unit around the same themes and also likely with a view to turn Civil War service into a political career.⁵⁷

Mattson succeeded in organizing a Scandinavian company for the 3rd Minnesota Infantry Regiment, but in the end the most ambitious and influential Scandinavian ethnic turned out to be the 15th Wisconsin Regiment commanded by Colonel Hans Heg. In the fall of 1861, Heg asked Claus Clausen, his childhood pastor, to be the regiment’s chaplain. According to *Emigranten*, Clausen, now forty-one years old, replied that “he regarded it as a calling that it would be his duty to accept, if it could be arranged with his congregations” around St. Ansgar in Iowa.⁵⁸

The Danish-born chaplain’s idealism and sense of duty, in some respects, however, clashed with the more practical and immediate daily concerns of the regiment’s soldiers. Claus Clausen, who was commissioned on December 11, quickly realized that he faced a tall task regarding the “regiment’s moral condition,” where drinking and gambling were regular occurrences.⁵⁹ Underscoring the ethnic tension between

⁵⁵ Captain E. Forss, “Lista På Det Svenska Kompaniet Från Bishop Hill [Muster Roll of the Swedish Company From Bishop Hill],” *Hemlandet*, October 16, 1861. See also Ernst W. Olson, *The Swedish Element in Illinois: Survey of the Past Seven Decades* (Chicago, IL: Swedish-American Bibliographical Association, 1917), 56. According to Olson, “when the Civil War broke out a company of men at Bishop Hill had been drilling for some time under the command of Eric Forss, formerly of the Swedish Army. The Bishop Hill Company ultimately became part of Company D, of the Fifty-seventh Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry, which was mustered in Dec. 26, 1861.”

⁵⁶ Forss, “Lista På Det Svenska Kompaniet Från Bishop Hill [Muster Roll of the Swedish Company From Bishop Hill].”

⁵⁷ H. Mattson, “Til Skandinaverna i Minnesota [To the Scandinavians in Minnesota],” *ibid.*, September 11.

⁵⁸ “Det Skandinaviske Regiments Oprettelse [The Scandinavian Regiment’s Creation],” *Emigranten*, November 18, 1861.

⁵⁹ Ole A. Buslett, *Det Femtende Regiment Wisconsin Frivillige [The Fifteenth Regiment Wisconsin Volunteers]* (Decorah, IA, 1894), 196.

Scandinavians and Irish immigrants, an alcohol-induced fight broke out on December 24, 1861, between the 15th and 17th Wisconsin Regiments that left several of the participants with “sore noses and black eyes.”⁶⁰

The challenge Clausen initially faced in connecting with Scandinavian-born soldiers was in some ways surprising given the theological struggle centered on slavery that raged outside Madison’s Camp Randall among Scandinavian clergymen and congregations.⁶¹ In this conflict, Clausen, who for years had worked outside the official church structure, sided more with the worldly concerns of Scandinavian congregations than with transplanted Norwegian state-church-affiliated clergy and sparked the largest controversy in the Norwegian Synod’s history.⁶²

When the Civil War broke out in April of 1861, the Norwegian Synod shut down its educational activities at the German-led Concordia College in Missouri.⁶³ Professor Peter Lauritz (Laur.) Larsen, who was responsible for the Norwegian students at the educational institution in St. Louis, issued an “announcement” in *Emigranten* on May 6, 1861, explaining the decision. “[On] account of the political circumstances the faculty at Concordia College, in addition to the supervising committee, have been compelled to suspend instruction and send the students away,” Professor

⁶⁰ Ager, *Oberst Heg Og Hans Gutter* [Colonel Heg and His Boys], 228.

⁶¹ Karl Jakob Skarstein, *Til Våpen for Det Nye Land: Norske Innvandrere i Den Amerikanske Borgerkrig* [To Arms for the New Country: Norwegian Immigrants in the American Civil War] (Spydeberg: J. W. Cappelens Forlag, 2001), 75–77.

⁶² Brynjar Haraldso, *Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode: En Undersøkelse Av Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode i USA i 1860-Årene Med Særlig Vekt På Debattens Kirkelig-Teologiske Aspekter* [The Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod: A Study of the Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod in the United States During the 1860 Emphasizing the Debate’s Church-Theological Aspects] (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1988), 80, 410. See also Claus L. Clausen, “Et Par Ord Til Læserne [A Few Words to the Readers],” *Emigranten*, January 30, 1852.

⁶³ As early as October 24, 1858, Norwegian-born Caja Munch, who was married to Pastor Peter Storm Munch, had raised some concerns about the partnership with the Missouri Synod but believed that the collaboration would only be temporary “until the Norwegians get strong enough to establish their own university.” In the letter to her parents, Munch, however, articulated some uncertainty about project’s potential for success: “Several Norwegian boys have already been sent down there to be educated as ministers. God alone knows how this will go. There is some fear that these ministers raised in German will not be suitable for the Norwegian people.” See Caja Munch, *The Strange American Way: Letters of Caja Munch from Wiota, Wisconsin, 1855–1859. With an American Adventure Excerpts from “Vita Mea” an Autobiography Written in 1903 for His Children by Johan Storm Munch – Translated by Helene Munch and Peter A. Munch with an Essay Social Class and Acculturation by Peter A. Munch* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 149.

Larsen wrote and asked that his mail now be sent to Madison.⁶⁴ Larsen's announcement led *Emigranten's* editor to ask a simple, but loaded, question regarding the Norwegian pastors' position on slavery given the fact that it is "impossible for anyone at all to remain passive" at the current moment.⁶⁵

The question was important, Solberg argued, because rumors were circulating that the Norwegian pastors exhibited pro-Southern sympathies. Solberg expressed hope that the men "to whom our future pastors' upbringing and instruction is entrusted, is sincerely and unwaveringly devoted to the Union and its government."⁶⁶ Solberg extended his political arguments with a religious one by stating that "all authority was of God" and that rebellion against the authorities therefore had to be seen as "ungodly."⁶⁷ Norwegian Synod leaders such as Pastor A. C. Preus immediately sensed the question's explosive implications and in a private letter dated May 10 warned Professor Larsen, "For God's sake," against answering publicly.⁶⁸

Less than a month later, however, John A. Johnson revived the issue of loyalty among the Norwegian pastors when he published another piece on the topic in *Emigranten* and increased the pressure on Synod leaders. As Johnson revealed in a letter to his brother Ole on June 1, 1861, the newspaper piece and its content was no coincidence:

My leisure time has been occupied for two or three days in writing an article for the *Emigranten* concerning the union of our church with the Concordia College, St. Louis. I have been urged to do this and I must say also that it was strictly in accordance with my own inclinations. Perhaps you do not know that the faculty of that college are secessionists, Prof. Larson included, I think it is a great shame that the Norwegians should send their youth to such an institution to be educated. I wish to sever our connection with them, and intended to give som[e] pretty sharp

⁶⁴ Laur. Larsen, "Bekjendtgjørelse [Announcement]," *Emigranten*, May 6, 1861. See also Haraldsø, *Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode: En Undersøkelse Av Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode i USA i 1860-Årene Med Særlig Vekt På Debattens Kirkelig-Teologiske Aspekter* [The Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod: A Study of the Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod in the United States During the 1860s Emphasizing the Debate's Church-Theological Aspects], 72.

⁶⁵ Carl Fredrik Solberg, "Concordia College," *Emigranten*, May 6, 1861. ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* See Haraldsø, *Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode: En Undersøkelse Av Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode i USA i 1860-Årene Med Særlig Vekt På Debattens Kirkelig-Teologiske Aspekter* [The Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod: A Study of the Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod in the United States During the 1860s Emphasizing the Debate's Church-Theological Aspects], 72–73.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Haraldsø, *Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode: En Undersøkelse Av Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode i USA i 1860-Årene Med Særlig Vekt På Debattens Kirkelig-Teologiske Aspekter* [The Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod: A Study of the Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod in the United States During the 1860s Emphasizing the Debate's Church-Theological Aspects], 75, 409.

blows. How well I have succeeded others must judge. It is pretty hard work for me to write, especially in Norwegian, and I know not how the article will appear in print. The editor seems to be well satisfied with it, though he says is it most too severe in some places. I will send you a copy of the paper as soon as it is printed. I do not wish to be known as the author of the article until I am obliged to, so if anyone asks you, keep dark.⁶⁹

Based on Johnson's letter, his response was likely solicited by *Emigranten's* editor, and it thus provides a peek behind the scenes of the newspaper's editorial processes as well as its editor's conscious attempts to shape Scandinavian public opinion in favor of the Republican Party. J. A. Johnson's letter, signed "X" (but due to a typo published as "H."), appeared in *Emigranten* on June 3, 1861, and added fuel to a smoldering conflict.⁷⁰ The rumor that "the faculty at Concordia College was made up of Secessionists or at least men who sympathized with the Secessionists" could only be rebutted by "a denial from one of the Concordia educators themselves," the correspondent argued.⁷¹ "Professor Larsen has been asked by *Emigranten* to explain the issue as a whole and his silence can only be interpreted as a complete confirmation of the rumor's veracity."⁷²

To defend secession, Johnson continued, the rebels presented two main arguments: "1) that Slavery is not a sin; 2) that resisting the execution of the United States' legislation in the slave states is not a sin"; the Scandinavian clergy's position on those two assertions was important for the congregations and the ethnic community to know about, Johnson wrote.⁷³

Regarding the first argument, Johnson asserted that for centuries slavery had been considered sinful throughout the civilized world: "England, Denmark, and Holland have through great sacrifice and effort set free the slaves in their possessions," and in the North not "one in a hundred" would deny that slavery is a "boundless abomination."⁷⁴

Johnson invoked the founding fathers' idea that "all men are created equal"; regarding the second argument, the Norwegian-born immigrant noted that all government officials took the oath to uphold the Constitution and that the same was true for immigrants wishing to

⁶⁹ John A. Johnson, "Madison June 1st 1861," in *John A. Johnson Papers. P691. Box 1* (Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1861).

⁷⁰ H., "Concordia College Og Oprøret [Concordia College and the Rebellion]," *Emigranten*, June 3, 1861. See also the reply to Johnson the following week where the *Emigranten's* editor clarified the typo. Jacob Nielsen, *ibid.*, June 10.

⁷¹ H., "Concordia College Og Oprøret [Concordia College and the Rebellion]." ⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.* ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

become American citizens.⁷⁵ Consequently, Johnson argued, the Constitution and the officials elected to uphold it should supersede any authority claimed by local or state governments. Yet defenders of the Constitution in the South “were punished with the most outrageous and painful death.”⁷⁶

The idea that dissenters in the South were in grave danger found expression on several other occasions during the war’s early months and often with a certain narrative hyperbole.⁷⁷ If individual states within the Union were able to undermine the national government’s authority, contrary to the way societies had been organized in the Western world for ages, the consequences could be severe, Johnson warned. “What would the result be, in case a state had the right to secede at its pleasure? If South Carolina has this right then all other states has it and we could soon have 34 governments instead of 1,” Johnson wrote in language indicating threshold principle worries.⁷⁸

It was therefore apparent that the Scandinavian community’s position on such matters, not least the influential clergy’s, had to be clarified. “We have, in good faith, sent our youth down there to be trained as pastors without knowing that we exposed them to influence of the secessionists’ poisonous opinions,” Johnson charged and encouraged the Norwegian Synod leaders to sever their ties to the Missouri Synod and create their own institution of learning.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid. ⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ As early as January 7, 1861, *Emigranten* published a letter that connected the nation’s founding ideals, such as freedom of speech, to threats of violence in the South. “Mr Editor,” the letter writer began, “No matter how much I would like to read ‘Emigranten’ you will realize the reason for my cancellation. I have chosen Texas as my home and am well pleased with this. Concerning the important political question [slavery] I believe that ‘Emigranten’ has the moral law on its side, but you know how that resonates in a slave state and it often occurs that the Americans, through [different] individuals, learn of the newspaper’s political content and thereby one is subject to harassment that might otherwise have been avoided. I am, by the way, against the expansion of slavery and have always thought of it as a moral evil for all of society.” See “‘Emigranten’ i Texas,” *ibid.*, January 7. Also a Danish newspaper on July 4, 1861, published an account in which the correspondent alleged he had spoken to “a man, A Dane,” from Alabama, who said “that hangings and killings, were the order of the day; if one uttered at single word that indicated sympathy for the North, death was certain.” H. L. P., “Amerika [America],” *Lolland-Falsters Stiftstidende*, July 4, 1861.

⁷⁸ H., “Concordia College Og Oprøret [Concordia College and the Rebellion].”

⁷⁹ Ibid. Also Haraldso, *Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode: En Undersøkelse Av Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode i USA i 1860-Årene Med Særlig Vekt På Debattens Kirkelig-Teologiske Aspekter [The Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod: A Study of the Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod in the United*

The week after Johnson's piece was published in *Emigranten* a self-proclaimed Scandinavian Democratic voter, Jacob Nielsen of Janesville, Wisconsin, indicating the issue's importance to the Scandinavian immigrant community, took issue with "H"'s lack of precision regarding the concept of biblical "sin" and thereby foreshadowed a spiritual and political debate that would bedevil the Scandinavian religious community for the rest of the decade.⁸⁰

Johnson's piece and Nielsen's reply incited Professor Larsen to make a formal statement in *Emigranten* on June 17.⁸¹ Larsen started out by criticizing "a political paper" calling public attention to his political views on the rebellion instead of approaching him privately if it was believed that his position was detrimental to the students he was responsible for educating.⁸² Larsen then proceeded to lay out his position on the two main issues on which everything else depended: "1) Slavery and 2) Rebellion or the relation to the authorities altogether."⁸³

Countering Johnson's reading of the Bible passage "Do to others as you would have them do to you," Larsen argued that it was unreasonable for a beggar to expect the prosperous to share wealth in excess of alms and unreasonable for the slave to expect freedom from a master in excess of his "duty and conscience"⁸⁴ – in short, words far from ideals of equality and liberty to Scandinavian readers. Since slavery "existed among the Jews" and therefore was "allowed by God," Professor Larsen was unwilling to declare slavery sinful. "Of the numerous biblical passages proving that slavery is not a sin, I can just in all haste grasp a few out of many."⁸⁵ That slavery was not considered a sin by arguably the most prominent Scandinavian clergyman in America turned out to be a key point.⁸⁶

States During the 1860 Emphasizing the Debate's Church-Theological Aspects] 79–80.

⁸⁰ Nielsen, "Concordia College Og Oprøret [Concordia College and the Rebellion]."

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, June 17.

⁸² Lauritz Larsen, "Den Christne Og Politiken [The Christian and Politics]," *ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.* ⁸⁴ *Ibid.* ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Slavery, according to Larsen, was far more brutal among the heathen Romans and Greeks than was the case with "ancient Jewish" or "the current American" system of enslavement. Yet, even according to the New Testament it was clear to Larsen that the enslaved should "obey and honor" their masters while "slaveowners" were never compelled to "emancipate" the enslaved, only to "treat them mildly," which American slaveholders implicitly did. In relation to the current rebellions, Larsen's position was that "any rebellion is sinful," but he did not deem himself capable of judging whether secession should be deemed "rebellious." Additionally, underlining the importance of obeying one's authorities, the professor declared himself willing to go to war against the South if so ordered by the governor of Wisconsin.

To *Emigranten's* anti-slavery editor, Larsen came dangerously close to supporting pro-slavery paternalistic arguments for the institution's benignity in relations between master and slave, thereby ignoring the injustice and by extension the violence, or threat thereof, underlying the whole system of enslavement.⁸⁷ *Emigranten's* opinion, likely voiced by Solberg, disagreed with Professor Larsen on several points and let this be known in the same issue. Describing slavery as the greatest "civic evil" in America, "an absolute enemy of our republican institutions," the newspaper argued for "inherent human sympathy and the conviction" that slavery was "detrimental both to the slaves and the country," which left little room to interpret Larsen's statement as anything other than an expression of Southern sympathy.⁸⁸ It came down to a sense of duty coupled with a sense of common human sympathy for people held in bondage, Solberg argued.

We are driven by an instinctive, spirited patriotism, which awakens in all nations in the moment of danger, the same intense patriotism that manifested itself in Norway during the war of 1814 and in Denmark during the Schleswig-Holstein rebellion of 1848 which was far more than just following from the jurists' agreement that Norway and Denmark were right.⁸⁹

Here Solberg introduced a key difference between his text and Larsen's: the emotional and intangibly instinctive aspect of slavery's relationship to ideals of equality and its key role in the current military mobilization occurring both in both the South and the North to such an extent that the Norwegian Synod could no longer maintain its educational mission in Missouri. Where Larsen attempted to separate the issue of slavery from the recently written ordinances of secession – and to an extent succeeded

⁸⁷ "Concordia College Og Oprøret [Concordia College and the Rebellion]." On paternalism, see Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market*, 4th printing ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 20–30. Also Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 3–7. According to Genovese, "Southern paternalism, like every other paternalism, had little to do with Ole Massa's ostensible benevolence, kindness, and good cheer. It grew out of the necessity to discipline and morally justify a system of exploitation. It did encourage kindness and affection, but it simultaneously encouraged cruelty and hatred. The racial distinction between master and slave heightened the tension inherent in an unjust social order."

⁸⁸ "Despite the most sincere wish to infuse this declaration with its genuine meaning, we could not extrapolate anything other than the Concordia faculty being strongly inclined towards the rebellion and not at all in possession of the patriotism which should warrant them the name Union men," the *Emigranten* piece read. See "Concordia College Og Oprøret [Concordia College and the Rebellion]."

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

intellectually in making the case for slavery being biblically sanctioned – the professor failed in this particular public debate unfolding in Wisconsin at a time when Scandinavian leaders were recruiting hundreds of Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes to fight against the slaveholding states, run by landholding planters, in rebellion against American authorities.⁹⁰

In the Norwegian township of Perry, Wisconsin, the local pastor's position on the issue of slavery seemingly caused considerable tension. According to a later local account, Pastor Peter Marius Brodahl moved with his wife Johanne “into the Blue Valley parsonage in 1857,” but he “endured the hostility of parishioners who disagreed with his stance that holding of slaves was not a sin” during the Civil War.⁹¹ The account further suggested that Brodahl's elite Old World education and resulting “self-conscious” behavior set him apart from his parishioners.⁹²

The class-based differences between the Norwegian Synod's leadership and pastors and parishioners not educated in the Old World was also on display after the Norwegian Synod's annual meeting on June 26, 1861. After the meeting, held in Rock Prairie, Wisconsin, where Claus Clausen preached in the 1850s, the ministers issued a joint statement trying to clarify Larsen's theological position by stating that it was “in and of itself not sinful to hold slaves.”⁹³

The Norwegian Synod's clergymen, many of whom had been educated at Scandinavian universities and were affiliated with the Norwegian state

⁹⁰ As Brynjar Haraldsø has noted, “Johnson introduced the question of slavery into the debate and Laur. Larsen provided a theologically substantiated refutation of Johnson's view, but this question became immaterial in this first exchange.” See Haraldsø, *Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode: En Undersøkelse Av Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode i USA i 1860-Årene Med Særlig Vekt På Debattens Kirkelig-Teologiske Aspekter* [*The Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod: A Study of the Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod in the United States During the 1860s Emphasizing the Debate's Church-Theological Aspects*], 79.

⁹¹ Mary Yeater Rathbun, ed., *The Historic Perry Norwegian Settlement* (Daleyville, WI: Perry Historical Center, 1994), 191–192. I am grateful to Ordelle G. Hill, whose ancestors lived in Dane County, for bringing this account to my attention.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ See Larsen, “Den Christne Og Politiken [The Christian and Politics].” See also Rasmus Andersen, *Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen – Banebryder for Den Norske Og Danske Kirke i Amerika. Første Skandinavisk Feltpræst* [*Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen: Trailblazer for the Norwegian and Danish Church in America. First Scandinavian Chaplain*] (Blair, NE: Danish Lutheran Publishing House, 1921), 136. On the Norwegian Synod's annual meeting, see H. A. Preus, “Bekjendtgjørelse [Announcement],” *Emigranten*, May 27, 1861. “According to God's word” it was “in and of itself not sinful to hold slaves” even if it was “an evil and a punishment from God,” the Norwegian Synod pastors agreed.

church, generally rejected the Grundtvigian ideas that inspired Claus Clausen, and in late June 1861 they supported a conservative interpretation of slavery's sinfulness.⁹⁴ Clausen initially agreed with the joint statement's wording, as it was required in order to be reinstated in the Synod, and he also signed a document admitting to have sinned by resigning from the Synod in the first place. Yet, when Clausen, in his own recollection, had a little more time to consider the statement, he arrived at the conclusion that "slavery in its essence and nature runs counter to the spirit of Christianity generally and the love of God and humanity [*kærlighedsbudet*] specifically and therefore had to be a sin."⁹⁵

In this statement there were echoes of Grundtvig's Old World position on slavery. If Clausen had read Grundtvig's parliamentary debate comments made on December 14, 1848, which he conceivably could have, he would have known of Grundtvig's Old World abolitionism and his position of refuting the right "for one man to possess his fellow men with full right of property; against this I protest in my name, and in the name, I should think, of all friends of humanity."⁹⁶

Thus, after Clausen accepted the position of military chaplain in late 1861, he became even more closely tied to the regiment organizers' public anti-slavery position, which may have contributed to him writing a piece for *Emigranten* called "Tilbagekaldelse" (retraction) on the biblical aspects of the slavery issue, which was published on December 2, 1861.⁹⁷

In words that, to an extent, echoed Grundtvig's first 1839 statement on Danish slavery, Clausen declared "that one human being holds and uses another human being as his property forcefully under the law and that these human beings' position called slavery, is declared to be an evil in itself."⁹⁸ Moreover, Clausen, using a general argument that built on Grundtvig's 1843 Easter thoughts about a common Christian humanity

⁹⁴ See Larsen, "Den Christne Og Politiken [The Christian and Politics]." See also Andersen, *Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen – Banebryder for Den Norske Og Danske Kirke i Amerika. Første Skandinavisk Feltpræst [Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen: Trailblazer for the Norwegian and Danish Church in America. First Scandinavian Chaplain]*, 136.

⁹⁵ Claus Laurits Clausen, "Tilbagekaldelse [Retraction]," *Emigranten*, December 2, 1861; Claus L. Clausen, *Gjenmæle Mod Kirkeaaet for Den Norske Synode [Response to the Church Council for the Norwegian Synod]* (Chicago, IL, 1869), 20.

⁹⁶ Quoted in K. E. Bugge, "Grundtvig and the Abolition of Slavery," *Grundtvig-Studier* 56, no. 1 (2005): 183.

⁹⁷ On Clausen's offer to join the Scandinavian regiment, see "Det Skandinaviske Regiments Oprettelse [The Scandinavian Regiment's Creation]." Also Clausen, "Tilbagekaldelse [Retraction]."

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

between Black and white, added that slavery “violates the order of nature and all true Christianity.”⁹⁹ As a result, Clausen was once again thrown out of the Norwegian Synod when he insisted that “slavery was irrefutably sinful.”¹⁰⁰

Thus, by December 1861, when he published his retraction and joined the Scandinavian Regiment as chaplain, Claus Clausen was offering a religious, and somewhat revivalist, anti-slavery vision more in tune with the Scandinavian congregations where many parishioners had acquaintances, friends, or family members serving in the military to suppress the rebellion.¹⁰¹

In time this disagreement over slavery’s sinfulness, instigated by anti-slavery Norwegian-born leaders, contributed to a split within the Scandinavian-American church and revealed important fault lines between the Scandinavian-American clergy tied to the Old World state churches and pastors, like Claus Clausen, who were critical of state church positions. Additionally, there was a class component tied to the debate as well. To the university-educated synod leaders, the discussion about slavery’s sinfulness was primarily intellectual and secondarily political.¹⁰²

To community leaders such as Clausen, Solberg, and Heg, who had lived in small pioneer settlements among the Norwegian Synod’s laity (and seen rural hardship up close), it was clear that the issue of slavery’s sinfulness was political first and intellectual second. The issue of slavery and the

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ As biographer Rasmus Andersen has noted, “A bitter feud ensued, and some pastors lost their congregations as a result of the different opinions on slavery. For the Norwegian Synod the problem was that it aligned itself with the strongly conservative German Missouri Synod, and their official view was that slavery was not sinful.” See Andersen, *Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen – Banebryder for Den Norske Og Danske Kirke i Amerika. Første Skandinavisk Feltpræst [Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen: Trailblazer for the Norwegian and Danish Church in America. First Scandinavian Chaplain]*, 132–136.

¹⁰¹ This interpretation is supported by Jon Gjerde, who argues that the Concordia-trained Norwegian clergy “often accepted the conservative political stands that were consistent with those of their Missouri Synod counterparts and at odds with their parishioners.” According to Gjerde, parishioners during the Civil war “allied with a minority of the clergy to oppose the Norwegian Synod’s official neutrality on the slavery issue.” See Jon Gjerde, “Conflict and Community: A Case Study of the Immigrant Church in the United States,” *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 4 (1986): 689.

¹⁰² Take, for example, A. C. Preus’ argument in *Emigranten* on December 16 on behalf of the Norwegian Synod where he used the word “deduced” in arguing for the lack of connection between “God’s word” and slavery’s sinfulness. See A. C. Preus, “De Norsk-Lutherske Præsters Erklæring i Slaveri-Spørgsmaalet Nærmere Forklaret,” *Emigranten*, December 16, 1861.

Republican Party's deepening fight for emancipation also raised important questions about race relations within American borders as 1861 turned to 1862, and the connection became increasingly clear to the Scandinavian-born men as they went into the field with their respective military units.

Yet, despite the synod conflict's rhetorical and practical ferocity and Clausen's anti-slavery position, it was evident as the war progressed that many of the 15th Wisconsin's leadership were more concerned with liberty and equality as it pertained to opportunities for upward social mobility among Scandinavians than they were with ensuring freedpeople an equal place in an American free labor economy.

* * *

On a cold, rainy Sunday evening, March 1, 1862, the Scandinavian Ladies of Chicago presented Colonel Hans Heg of the 15th Wisconsin Regiment with a beautiful blue and gold silk banner (see Figure 5.4). "For Gud og Vort Land!" read the flag's inscription (For God and Our Country), an adaptation of the well-known Old World Scandinavian rallying cry "For Gud, Konge og Fædreland" – "For God, King, and Fatherland."¹⁰³ The inscription said much about the Scandinavian ethnic elite's public perceptions of Civil War service, as the importance of religion and adherence to "Our Country," a nation where citizenship – theoretically – was based on universal ideas about equality, were recognized by the flag-makers.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, even as it drew inspiration from Scandinavia, the flag also demarcated the Old and the New Worlds, monarchies and republican government, by erasing the word "King" from the Scandinavian-American battle flag.¹⁰⁵

Yet the Scandinavian regiment was, in part, created because of Scandinavian immigrant leaders' fear that Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes, despite the privilege afforded them due to their white skin and Protestant religion, were somewhat marginalized in relation to the American political and economic establishment, because of language barriers, lack of capital, and lack of access to a political spoils system. For example, the problem of getting Scandinavian-American officers appointed by Wisconsin's governor was described by Colonel Heg in a letter to J. A. Johnson in August 1862: "I have no particular pride of

¹⁰³ "Udlandet [Abroad]," *Aarhus Stiftstidende*, April 15, 1862.

¹⁰⁴ McPherson, "'Two Irreconcilable Peoples'? Ethnic Nationalism in the Confederacy," 86.

¹⁰⁵ The flag also alluded to a "complementary identity" as the Danish king Christian VIII, who passed away in January of 1848, had made "Gud og Fædrelandet" (God and Country) his official royal motto and a guiding light for his reign between 1839 and 1848.



FIGURE 5.4 The Scandinavian Regiment's battle flag with the inscription "For Gud og Vort Land" (For God and Our Country). Courtesy Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum Archives.

nationality in the matter, but I know we have men amongst the Norwegians, capable of being developed – and of becoming good military officers – when modesty prevents them from gaining any position.”¹⁰⁶

Yet modesty did not prevent Bernt J. Madson from receiving his coveted lieutenant position; rather, it was likely the inability of the Scandinavian ethnic elite to expand the pool of available officer slots outside the 15th Wisconsin, which by 1861 was the only regiment where a Scandinavian immigrant with no military experience could realistically hope to be appointed.

As we have seen, Madson wrote J. A. Johnson in early October 1861 petitioning him to throw his and his brother Ole C. Johnson's weight behind a lieutenant appointment; even by late 1862 he was still lobbying

¹⁰⁶ Hans C. Heg, "Private Camp Erickson Aug 12th 1862," in *John A. Johnson Papers*. P691. Box 16 (Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1862).

for a better position.¹⁰⁷ Writing from camp near Nashville, Tennessee, Madson implored J. A. Johnson to do him a favor by “seeing Gov. Solomon for me” to ask “if he could give me a Lt post in one of the new Reg’ts, Hoping you will do all you can in [sic] behalf.”¹⁰⁸ No officer position outside, or even inside, the Scandinavian regiment materialized for Madson, however, and the same was true for the vast majority of Norwegian immigrants, by far the most important voter demographic within the Scandinavian community in Wisconsin.¹⁰⁹ As Olof N. Nelson admitted in his otherwise hagiographic account of the Scandinavian imprint of America, “there were, undoubtedly, Scandinavians in all the fifty-three Wisconsin regiments. But while the Norwegians supplied a large number of common soldiers, they do not appear to have distinguished themselves as officers.”¹¹⁰

The Scandinavian immigrants who did receive an officer’s appointment generally did so because they had been part of Scandinavian ethnic units originally or because they had Old World military experience, which was badly needed in the United States in 1861 and early 1862.

The civic nationalism publicly expressed by Scandinavian leaders in their initial calls for ethnic Civil War units was, however, mirrored and reinforced in the songs the soldiers wrote when they did take the field in 1861 and 1862.¹¹¹ Swedish-born Nels Knutson, for example, on a cold and dreary night on picket guard in Missouri, conjured up a song about brotherhood, common humanity, courage, freedom, and religion. “Now brothers and comrades,” the song began, the time has come to fight for what is right and the cause of humanity in “God’s honor.”¹¹² To achieve

¹⁰⁷ Madson, “Cambridge Oct. 6th ’61.”

¹⁰⁸ B. I. Madson, “Camp near Nashville Tenn, Dec. 20th 1862,” in *John A. Johnson Papers*. P691. Box 3 (Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1862).

¹⁰⁹ J. A. Johnson, “Navnefortegnelse,” in *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie [The Scandinavian Regiment’s History]*, ed. J. A. Johnson (La Crosse: Fædrelandet og Emigrantens Trykkeri, 1869), 7.

¹¹⁰ Olof Nickolaus Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States*, vol. II (Minneapolis, MN: O. N. Nelson & Company, 1900), 121.

¹¹¹ The first song, titled “The Volunteer Soldier of the 15th Wisconsin,” emphasized the duty to protect the people held dear – “all girls of the North,” in fact, as they relied on the Scandinavian soldier. Yet the song also revealed the hesitation in the local community about the war service, articulated in the second verse: “Our folks at home, they thought – / The dear old folks at home – / That all their chaps, not ought to leave.” See Rosholt, *Ole Goes to War: Men from Norway Who Fought in America’s Civil War*, 43.

¹¹² Nels Knutson, “Upp Bröder Och Kamrater [Up Brothers and Comrades],” in *Copies of Letters written by Nels Knutson, Moline, IL, during the Civil War*. SSIRC. SAC P:315. (Augustana College, 1862).

this end, Knutson, admitted, hard battles would need to be fought – he invoked help from “the God of War” – but in the “land of the brave and the home of the free,” that was the price to pay “for honor, duty, and country.”¹¹³

By 1862, Scandinavian immigrants’ understanding of “God and Our Country” had important implications in relation to who they perceived as being worthy of inclusion.¹¹⁴ As such, the regimental flag, the public recruitment appeals, and the popular culture emanating from Scandinavian Civil War service all reinforced a sense of nationalism based on freedom expressed through commitment to a civic nationalism and often also Protestant religion. The motivations privately expressed, however, revolved around economic and political gain. Old World Scandinavian religion, Protestant and Lutheran as opposed to Irish or German Catholic, played a part in everyday demarcations of “us and them,” and, despite anti-slavery rhetoric in the public sphere, everyday practices revealed less than full support for racial equality.

While Grundtvig preached the importance of viewing “all of mankind” as “children of one blood” and army chaplain Claus Clausen called the Norwegian Synod’s statement on religiously sanctioned slavery “a web of sophistry,” it was clear that Old World ideas of racial

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ From a Scandinavian immigrant perspective, Catholics, Jews, Mormons, and to an extent such Protestants as Baptists and Seventh-Day Adventists were viewed with suspicion even while those same immigrants simultaneously lauded the freedom of religion found in America. Until 1851, the Norwegian Constitution of May 17, 1814, excluded Jewish people from settling in the kingdom, and Scandinavian immigrants thus arrived in the United States with such legislation as part of their cultural baggage. See, for example, Olof Nickolaus Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States*, vol. I (Minneapolis, MN: O. N. Nelson & Company, 1900), 129–130. Article II of the Norwegian Constitution read, in part, “Jews shall be kept excluded from the kingdom.” Also Julie Allen, *Danish, but Not Lutheran: The Impact of Mormonism on Danish Cultural Identity, 1850–1920* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2017), 184–185. Anders Madsen Smith, *En Omvandrende Danskers Tildragelser Paa Jagt Efter Lykken [A Wandering Dane’s Pursuit of Happiness]* (Minneapolis, 1891), 67. As nativist political appeal demonstrated, such exclusive views based on religion were not singular to Scandinavian immigrants. Both North and South stereotypes regarding Jewish immigrants and citizens existed and often persisted. The later famed general William T. Sherman wrote in 1862: “We have been annoyed by a crowd of Speculators and Jews who would sell our lives for 10 [percent] profit on a barrel of salt.” See W. T. Sherman, “Memphis Aug 4th 1862,” in *Samuel Ryan Curtis Papers, 1859–1863. Folder 4* (Manuscript Collections. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 1862). See also Jennifer A. Stollman, *Daughters of Israel, Daughters of the South: Southern Jewish Women and Identity in the Antebellum and Civil War South* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 20–23.

superiority, coupled with the allure of land acquisition at the expense of Native people, often influenced Scandinavian-born people's worldview both at the political and the grassroots community levels.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Holm and Glenthøj, *Grundtvig: Prædikener i Vartov, 1842–43* [*Grundtvig: Sermons in Vartov, 1842–43*], vol. 5 (Copenhagen: Forlaget Vartov, 2007), 170–178. Also Clausen, “Tilbagekaldelse [Retraction].”