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**“For the Hope of Humanity:
Gov. Andrew G. Curtin & the Union’s Civil War”**

Jared Frederick

**Thesis submitted to the
Eberly College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

**Master of Arts
in
History**

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ABSTRACT

“For the Hope of Humanity: Gov. Andrew G. Curtin & the Union’s Civil War”

Jared Frederick

This thesis examines the ideology and politics of Andrew Gregg Curtin throughout his entire career, specifically during his time as the governor of Pennsylvania in the American Civil War. As a self-described liberal, Curtin’s vision for his state and nation was emblematic of broader Whig and Republican mentalities before and during the Civil War. Central to his ideas were notions of contractual theory, a harmony of interests between workers and industrialists, free labor, the right to property, and the rights of the individual to seek autonomy and agency in a democratic society. The outbreak of war expanded his sense of liberalism to include factors dealing not solely with economics but nationalism, emancipation, military welfare, and state-sponsored education. In all these areas, Curtin’s emphasis on contract is evident. He demanded loyalty to the Union but rewarded that behavior as well. In Curtin’s view, the staunch defense of Union and emancipation were humanitarian endeavors to protect the liberties of the free citizen as well as tactics to defeat the Confederacy.

The Loyal War Governor’s Conference coordinated by Curtin in 1862 supported emancipation, Federal troops, and the constitutional and military policies of Abraham Lincoln. The governor’s efforts in creating the Soldiers’ National Cemetery following the Battle of Gettysburg in addition to his establishment of veterans’ welfare and state-sponsored orphans’ homes reinforced the sense of partnership between a people and their nation. In the later days of Reconstruction, Curtin became a moderate Democrat and continued to express concerns over the protection of free labor and ideas of contract and loyalty. Andrew Curtin’s ideology reflected classical liberal tendencies but also demonstrated the broader social changes brought about by the Civil War. Curtin’s ideological journey emphasized the importance of individual liberty and also reflected the transformation of the Union into a nationalist state grounded in humanitarian sensibilities.

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Introduction

Lincoln's Shadow

Standing vigilantly over the fields of Gettysburg National Military Park is an impressive memorial that dominates all others in scale and design. The bronze tablets and majestic features of the Pennsylvania Memorial include the names of over 30,000 Keystone State men who fought in the Civil War's largest and costliest battle. On its massive white pedestals stand the statues of multiple Pennsylvania generals and Abraham Lincoln—mostly well-known personalities to Civil War aficionados who frequent the site. But to the Great Emancipator's left stands the sculpture of another political leader who is neither well known nor often memorialized—at least in contemporary society. “Who is *Curtin*?” inquisitive visitors ask periodically. The concise answer to satisfy the rushed tourist denotes Andrew Gregg Curtin as the diligent wartime governor of Pennsylvania and a staunch supporter of the sixteenth president. To properly answer this question, however, requires further elaboration.

Pennsylvanians commemorated their war heroes with great vigor, but few of Andrew Curtin's early attributes suggested he would become a military notable. He was the son of a rural industrialist, he was a lawyer, an educator, and a state secretary. Simply put—he was a bureaucrat. But a distinct and compelling ideology propelled his gubernatorial policies that ultimately warranted his veneration as a wartime leader. The governor's philosophy envisioned a social order in which the people and their state protected each other—especially economically and militarily. At the beginning of his gubernatorial career in January 1861, Curtin described his own state policies and aspirations as “liberal in spirit,” embedded in a dual sense of devotion to the common citizen and the government that presided over all manners of domestic growth. The ensuing Civil War, launched only three month later, did not shatter this civic marriage between

the northern people and their Union, but further consolidated and strengthened it to new and unforeseen levels.

Curtin's advocacy of a "harmony of interests" between people, business, and the state eventually surpassed economic motives of labor protection and expanded to reward and safeguard the renewed rights of loyal citizenry borne through war.¹ While he expanded the limits of his convictions throughout the conflict, he nevertheless remained constant to his liberal-Whig notion of contractual theory: the integral ties between individuals, economy, and government. While Curtin initially wished to avoid bloodshed, the Civil War ultimately served as the means through which to defend and enhance liberal principles he and many Republicans already held dear. Through the lens of his perspectives on secession, emancipation, and soldier welfare—one can see how his own sense of liberalism personified the widespread ambitions of many in the North. At the conflict's outset, Curtin's liberalism was rooted in the wish to protect people's self-making capacity and their private property—even slave property. But as the Civil War escalated, Curtin thought the state had no option but to assist its most worthy citizens and soldiers deserving of recognition, care, and defense. These deeds helped transform government into an activist state invested in promoting humanitarian endeavors. Inclusion in this system required devotion. An expanded state demanded loyalty but rewarded it as well.

Curtin's views on secession, discussed in Chapter One, reveal how disunion could destroy the republic and imperil its citizens. The governor's creed touted the supremacy of national government as a cherished keepsake bestowed by the Founders. During the war, Curtin supported expanding federal authority, including military honors, care for casualties, and state-sponsored education. Ultimately, Curtin advocated a new dynamic relationship of shared

¹ Martin J. Burke, *The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Social Order in America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), xi.

interests the people possessed with their government, and vice versa. Curtin's responsibility for the people deemed that government expanded out of necessity to ensure the promises of equality. One's loyalty to the nation was in part conveyed through these perceptions of patriotism in which interdependence was among the highest ideals of Union's national pact. Dedication was "a liberal understanding of patriotism" grounded in dual self-interests and sacrifice for the greater good.² Politicians' liberal policies sought to shield the individual citizen, his family, his manhood, and his society through the protection of his property. Liberal thought protected and rewarded what individual soldiers had gained through their successful defense of these rights.

Such convictions assisted in the construction of the nation state and helped foster security at multiples levels of society.³ Northerners were emboldened by the dreams of a country moving forward thanks to the virtues of free labor, enterprise, and good fortune found in few other nations or empires. Therefore, America was a "democratic beacon" for fellow man; and liberal thought of the time encouraged such discourse.⁴ This principle fostered active representative government, sponsored educational initiatives, and protected loyalists' assets.⁵ In its most simplistic definition, liberalism championed the individual freedoms and capacity of citizens so they could be afforded a level playing field in life but, in return, it required support (and death if necessary) of its citizens.

Born of a well-to-do industrial family in 1817 and thriving off the manual work of others, Curtin nevertheless believed in individual liberty—the right to determine one's own destiny in an economically fair and developed system. National harmony promoted by shared interests had

² Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North*. (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2002), 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 6.

⁵ Earl J. Hess, *Liberty, Virtue, and Progress: Northerners and Their War for the Union*. (New York: New York University Press, 1988), viii.

the power to unite a people willing to labor hard for themselves.⁶ Curtin believed liberty required the protection of the republic that endowed these rights. Citizens provided this protection by supporting the institutions that fostered public growth both morally and financially. As he stated in an address welcoming President-elect Lincoln to Harrisburg on February 22, 1861, “Our great law-giver and founder established this government of a free people in deeds of peace. We are a peaceful and laborious people. We believe that civilization, progress, and Christianity are advanced by the protection of free and paid labor.”⁷

Slavery was the antithesis of this dream but, like most Republicans of the day, Curtin was at first unwilling to engage in warfare to end it. Slavery was an evil contrary to nearly all his principles, yet he felt the status quo needed to be maintained in the interests of political harmony—especially when the hopes of reconciliation with seceded states was still considered a possibility. An imperfect Union was better than no Union at all. Optimists prayed that an olive branch could be extended to avert war. Still, Curtin believed secession and disunion contradicted the practice of democracy and majority rule. In his view, these threats posed grave dangers not only to commerce and national strength, but to the ability of the citizen to determine his own prospects. Secession jeopardized the Union, posing ominous threats to the political and economic frameworks free citizens relied on to attain autonomy and social identity. The rights bestowed by government could not be granted if the nation was forever fractured by war. For this reason, one Curtin aide referred to “sectionalism and disunionism” as “the twin relics of

⁶ Burke, 162.

⁷ “The Twenty-Second of February at the Capital of the Keystone State,” *Huntingdon Globe*, February 27, 1861, accessed February 8, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

prostituted power.”⁸ Without democratic principle and the rights of the people, the nation faced anarchy.

Curtin appeared willing to appease southerners during the secession crisis to thwart civil war. However, when tens of thousands began to fall on battlefields, he like many of his contemporaries came to the realization that to strike at slavery was to dismantle the foundations of the South’s war machine. Ending chattel bondage decreased the likelihood of future civil wars and sectional animosity. As Chapter Two explains, Curtin regarded emancipation as a moral measure in safeguarding the rights and well-being of Federal troops and their families. He modified his sense of liberalism from the protection of economic opportunity and advocated a powerful federal military and political authority for the benefit of steadfast countrymen. Prior notions of personal liberty and equality were further highlighted as key virtues of Curtin’s Union cause—and he proposed wartime policies to reflect this ambitious agenda.

Active liberal policies supplemented Curtin’s existing democratic political styles of moderation and compromise. He maintained this axiom even as the war pressed him toward more aggressive strategies. This vein of his politicking was best demonstrated at the Loyal War Governors’ Conference in September 1862. Established in the wake of Union defeat at Second Bull Run, Curtin spearheaded the conference as an initiative to promote war aims and politically buttress the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. The collective rhetoric of the thirteen governors signaled resounding support for the President’s policies. Lending additional backing to the Proclamation, the state executives heralded the decision to strike at the heart of the rebellion in the name of all generations and civilizations, present and future. Addressing the rebellion, human costs, and rights of individuals, the document is an ideological predecessor to

⁸ “Col. [Alexander] McClure at the Wigwam Again,” *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, October 20, 1860, accessed February 29, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

the Gettysburg Address. The declaration further illustrates how Curtin was part of a political revolution that no longer could or would tolerate slavery on the national scale. The conference's interstate coalition of dual interests helped solidify how liberalism manifested itself in American politics.

Historian Harry S. Stout contends that the Emancipation Proclamation was released “in response not to moral imperatives . . . but the exigencies of war.”⁹ Through their written response to emancipation, Curtin and his fellow governors reveal this statement to be a half-truth. Both proclamations were founded in moral convictions, not entirely for slaves in bondage, but for the combatants waging war on behalf of the national life. From Curtin's perspective, emancipation was an act of necessity for the nation's soldiers and families, consciously calibrated by military measures implemented to defeat the Confederacy.

Curtin's liberalism was in part a contract, a mutually reinforcing system in which the people and their government shared responsibility for each other's welfare and advancement. In one public statement supporting Pennsylvania soldiers and allowing the remittance of their pay to kin, Curtin and his commissioners noted that “[d]eprivation from home” combined with the daily toils of soldiering was a “curse.” Yet, hardship endured for “the ability of man for self-government” was to be praised. “In the same spirit, too,” Curtin reflected, “the Government and the laws seek to protect and preserve you—for in your safety and success we are all saved.”¹⁰ The ability of the laborer (and later the soldier) to attain the rights of contract and protection in domestic and military life was in itself was a form of emancipation that spoke to the rights of

⁹ Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War*. (New York, NY: Penguin, 2007), 183-4.

¹⁰ “The Pennsylvania Soldiers,” *Altoona Tribune*, November 7, 1861, accessed February 12, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

free citizens as much as it did slaves.¹¹ The Emancipation Proclamation and the governors' declaration were ethical documents, for they helped voice the salvation through force northerners earnestly desired.

The governor's moral measures went beyond those dealing with emancipation, as is discussed in Chapter Three. Following the Battle of Gettysburg, a fight which claimed over 50,000 casualties, Curtin was aghast at the conditions on the battlefield. In response, Curtin himself visited the ravaged town and immediately helped coordinate relief efforts. He oversaw the shipment of much-needed supplies and appointed Republican attorney David Wills as his agent for disinterring the dead, identifying their remains, and laying them to rest in a newly established Soldiers' National Cemetery—a monument that teaches a compelling lesson for posterity.

As these actions demonstrated, Curtin's invoked reverence and reward in the care of those casualties who survived and proper burials for those who did not. The president and governor foresaw this time as a pivotal moment for the Union war effort. Both leaders attended the dedication ceremonies on November 19, 1863 and paid homage to the dead in two distinct ways. Lincoln's words in the Gettysburg Address embodied the righteous essence of the northern cause by interpreting the key themes of equality, sacrifice, and the "unfinished work" of war and substantiating national ideals. Meanwhile, Curtin's actions embodied the themes vital to national healing, commemoration, rebuilding, and merit. By helping to spearhead the efforts in creating such a burial ground—by noting that the Union dead were deserving of honor—Curtin helped set the stage for the Gettysburg Address and what it came to represent in American consciousness. In organizing these efforts of recovery and remembrance, Curtin also ensured

¹¹ Derived from the writings of Frederic J. Stimson as is described in Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 74.

that the dead had not died in vain. Failing to memorialize the fallen on behalf of the living would not speak well of a democracy dedicated to the collective sacrifices of individuals.

Although viewed as cautious by some in his own party, Curtin was widely known as the “Soldier’s Friend” by combatants and their families due to his willingness to support them on and off the battlefield. In doing so, he again built upon his liberal ideology by fusing state initiatives with broad policies for social betterment. The same month the Soldiers’ National Cemetery was dedicated, Curtin set out to establish a state-funded school for war orphans following an encounter with two unfortunate children on the steps of the governor’s mansion on Thanksgiving 1863. In the coming months, a sum of \$50,000 was acquired to create the desired establishment for the displaced youth of Pennsylvania. The genesis of the school system initiated a nationwide effort to help mend the many domestic woes resulting from war.

Curtin’s motives behind creating war orphanages were spurred by ideals beyond common decency or political calculation. Their establishment was a partial repayment of the debt the state owed the orphans’ fathers. The act was a measure to avert child poverty and subsequent lives of crime. In the governor’s mind, these children were worthy of education and personal prospects. Curtin considered the orphanage system the ideal method of nurturing Pennsylvania’s youth to become well-versed and engaged citizens. The governor’s philosophy was propelled by the continued belief in mutual defense between a nation and its citizens. The most fitting way of paying tribute to Pennsylvania’s dead was to offer their children the democratic dreams their fathers died to protect. The military efforts of the soldier dead and educations of their children emerged as two distinct forms of advancing the state and nation through forward-looking liberal thought.

In the generations since his passing, the prominence of Andrew Curtin's role in Republican politics, the Union war effort, and the care of Federal troops has faded from the rich historiography of the four year conflict. Although it is not my intention to revive or glorify his career, I will offer a comprehensive understanding of his convictions within the larger frameworks of Civil War society and politics—especially in the nation's quest to seek a moral understanding of the carnage inflicted in the name of humanity. By examining his life through his views on secession, emancipation, and Union troops, one can attain new insights into the transitions and growth of the Union's Civil War—and why it resonates to this day.

Chapter 1
“The madness that now rules the hour . . .”
Andrew Curtin, Secession, and the Coming of War

Pennsylvania’s Republicans knew what caliber of leader they desired. Their February 1860 convention in Harrisburg chose a candidate with a familiar record and an impressive list of professional achievements. Forty-three year old lawyer Andrew Gregg Curtin was a Free Soil advocate, ex-Whig, and staunch nationalist. His supporters made the case for his electability clear from the outset: he “proved devotion to the protection of American Industry, involving the dearest and most material welfare of the people of this Commonwealth, and his earnest fidelity to the interests of the white man, and opposition to the extension of slavery over our Territories.” As “a representative of the principle of reform” Curtin was the ideal candidate to lead the “central” commonwealth and helping uphold “the maintenance of the Union.”¹ In their most basic forms, these phrases capture the essence of Curtin’s gubernatorial career amidst the nation’s darkest days. He remained constant to these tenets, yet also elaborated them in the name of Union.

Eleven months later, his hopes of sectional reconciliation were fleeting. The tumultuous January of 1861 was a month filled with uncertainty, fear, and political zealotry. In the previous weeks, the fire-eaters of South Carolina seceded as a result of Abraham Lincoln’s election. The previous fall also marked the political ascension of Republican candidates elected to posts as senators, congressmen, and governors of northern states. Curtin was one such Republican who rode this wave, winning his state with a 32,000 vote majority. The Keystone State leader was sworn into office on January 15, 1861 before a crowd of thousands in Harrisburg. Despite the

¹ “The People’s State Convention,” *Lehigh Register*, February 29, 1860, accessed February 27, 2012, p. 2. Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers. Penn State University.

festive atmosphere, the times were fraught with tension. Curtin's inauguration fell in the middle of a two-week period that witnessed the secession of five additional southern states.

For Curtin, divisive rhetoric regarding disunion and secession threatened key civic virtues that many ex-Whigs thought imperative for the country's success: notions of majority rule, the ideals of self-advancement (in both business and politics), and the sanctity of the Union. Curtin's perspectives on the roots and remedies of the coming Civil War evolved over time. In 1861, he perceived the conflict as a struggle to determine the fate of the common man's potential and the American system that provided for advancement. The approaching war of ideals determined whether such prospects of political and economic freedom could endure. With this mindset, Curtin embraced liberal principles—the belief that freedom and the path to prosperity was built upon individual autonomy and agency.² Sensing the social currents that elected him, Curtin recognized that citizens “were demanding justice for themselves.”³ Justice was eventually delivered, but at a price higher than most thought possible.

The governor's inaugural address was characteristic of his Whig traits as political division hastened the nation closer to fratricidal warfare. His Unionist ideology conveyed the thought that politicians should be bound by interconnectivity with the nation rather than divided by a separation of state borders. As the *Arkansas Whig* wrote years earlier, Whigs (and later Republicans) had “an abiding faith in the power and strength of law, and of the moral and intelligent functions of the government.” They believed that the politician “qualifiedly impersonates a moral power, representing not the aggregate, but the unity, the one-mindedness, in a moral sense of the whole American people.” In this sense, “[d]eliberation and compromise

² François Furstenberg, “Beyond Freedom and Slavery: Autonomy, Virtue, and Resistance in Early American Political Discourse,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (Mar., 2003), pp. 1298.

³ Curtin inaugural quoted in Egle. All following quotations from the address are from this source.

were thus essential,” and Curtin ascribed to this ideal with great vigor.⁴ The Union was a national family, prone to bickering, but kin nevertheless. The ideology foreshadowed his willingness to compromise as an alternative to war—but not at the expense of surrendering Pennsylvania’s productivity. His precise and carefully-crafted inaugural oration treads with moderation and caution in light of the political situation. However, the address also alludes to the ideological schism between North and South that originated in the wake of the Mexican War. By the 1850s, new commercial patterns and increasing sectional acrimony exhausted unities and ties of decades past—setting the stage for disunion.⁵ As tension escalated, Curtin feared the common man’s rights to self-determination would be threatened if the menaces of slavery and secession broke the sacred covenant of Union.

Alarming, dissolution had the potential to damage the byproducts of enfranchisement by destroying businesses, property, and credit on a nationwide scale. A majority of Pennsylvanians thought Curtin would help remedy the situation. The previous October, Curtin was greeted with “enthusiastic cheers” at an “immense” torch rally in Germantown. A reporter conveyed the audience’s mentality: “It was of little importance what man they elected but by the election the political sentiment of the people was demonstrated. The safety of the Government, the integrity of the Union, depended upon the issues. The cry of disunion was of no avail; the people of Pennsylvania demanded protection and freedom.”⁶ But as Curtin announced two months earlier, freedom and government went hand-in-hand: “To produce perfect harmony between the interests of the State and the country, and that kindness of feeling which should exist between the people of the State and their metropolis,” Curtin exclaimed, “you need but one

⁴ John Ashworth, *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic, Volume 1: Commerce and Compromise, 1820 – 1850*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 299.

⁵ Mark Egnal, *Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009), 9.

⁶ “Immense Curtin and Lincoln Meeting at Germantown,” Philadelphia Press, October 5, 1860, accessed February 27, 2012, p. 2. Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers. Penn State University.

thing, and that is protection to your labor.” The only sure way of protecting labor was by developing power, increasing wealth, and expanding the state’s resources. He warned: “Let no miscreant cry of disunion turn freemen from the path to their first duty to their State and themselves. Ever loyal to the Union, let the People’s Party of Pennsylvania strong in their might resolve most determinedly to have protection to their labor.”⁷

Although most southerners believed liberalism guaranteed property and citizenship rights only for the upper crust of white male society, Curtin’s perspective was more proactive. In the antebellum era, “liberal Republicans valued an economy which did not sustain a monopoly of the wealthy but which rewarded the common person.” Furthermore, the free labor mantle heralded by Republicans defended the right of opportunity for all citizens, especially the middle class.⁸ The protection of free labor and wages for larger portions of white society, coupled with an active government that nurtured such growth was a genuine articulation of freedom.⁹ But could that freedom persevere under trying circumstances? Curtin’s judicious speech attempted to answer that all important question. The governor asked for the guidance of President-elect Lincoln regarding this topic one month before his inauguration, hoping to “harmonize” their collective inaugural messages.¹⁰ Lincoln replied: “I think of nothing proper for me to suggest except a word about this secession and disunion movement—On that subject, I think you would

⁷ “Serenade to Col. Curtin,” *Lehigh Register*, August 1, 1860, accessed February 27, 2012, p. 2. Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers. Penn State University.

⁸ Garry M. Patrick, *Liberalism and American Identity*. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1992), 58.

⁹ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: the Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), xvi.

¹⁰ “Andrew G. Curtin to Abraham Lincoln, Friday, December 14, 1860 (Support),” accessed November 15, 2011. American Memory Collections. The Library of Congress. <<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mal&fileName=mal3/434/4342000/malpage.db&recNum=0>>.

do well to express, without passion, threat, or appearance of boasting, but nevertheless, with firmness, the purpose of yourself, and your state to maintain the Union at all hazards.”¹¹

Curtin’s inauguration took place on a brisk January 15, 1861. Following a thirty-three (the number of “united” states) gun salute and benediction, the governor-elect arose from the wood planked platform on the capitol steps, kissed the bible following his oath, and commenced with his inaugural in the crisp, frigid air.¹² Throughout Curtin’s oration, he articulated visions of the country’s past as well as those of its future in the effort to determine the nation’s identity and aspirations. Eighty-five years had passed since the country’s founding and national ideals remained strongly linked to those of its creation. In response, the new governor urged his country to live up to “the expectations of its founders” by preserving their most significant legacy: the country itself. Curtin perceived this inheritance to be a “liberal capacity for self-government, and . . . the importance of preserving [the Union], pure and unsullied as it came from the hands of the Apostles of Liberty.”¹³ The rights of nationhood and the promises of autonomy were goals of the Revolution and thus heirlooms of the Founders themselves.

Such capacity measured freedom’s scope and determined the guarantees of citizenship. Liberal ideology was, as historian François Furstenberg has argued, rooted “in property, focused on individual rights, legitimized by consent [majority rule], and buttressed by contractual theory.”¹⁴ Slavery and so-called “wage slavery” instigated class conflict, economic disparity, and challenged the contract theory vital to the harmony of interests.¹⁵ Economic (as well as political) kinship conformed “free choice” with “social order” while also depending upon

¹¹ “Abraham Lincoln to Andrew G. Curtin, Friday, December 21, 1860 (Reply to Curtin’s letter of Dec. 14 regarding Curtin’s inaugural message),” accessed November 15, 2011. Ibid.

<<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mal&fileName=mal3/434/4342000/malpage.db&recNum=0>>.

¹² Ibid., Detailed report on weather conditions of the week available in the above issue.

¹³ Egle, 114.

¹⁴ Furstenberg, pp. 1298.

¹⁵ Foner, xviii-xx.

compliance rather than constraint.¹⁶ The powers of balance and choice were key to free individuals. But arguments over secession and slavery questioned whether the idea of *national* contract could long abide.

As Curtin's rhetoric suggests, the unity of the states was vital for the success of individuals and their country. Efforts of protection through these notions of partnership and dual-interest underscored fundamental principles of the governor's liberalism. As Civil War era liberal E. L. Godkin noted, "A contract, both in law and in political economy, is an agreement entered into by two perfectly free agents, with full knowledge of its nature, and under no compulsion either to refuse or accept it." Contract denoted the assets of freedom and the limits of coercion. Under ideal circumstances, the rights supplied by this principle offered individual liberty, prompted exchange, and bolstered mutual consent.¹⁷ The sectional and ideological divergence concerning governmental power, secession, and slavery fueled arguments over whether such principles could endure amidst disunion.¹⁸

Amid this fight Democrats were unwilling to abide by their supposed "cardinal doctrine" of majority rule, Republicans argued.¹⁹ *The Presbyterian Banner and Advocate* of Pittsburgh demanded, "Let the law be executed with promptitude and impartiality, and, under the Constitution and in accordance with law, let the majority rule. Such is Republicanism, and such is Democracy; such is the right reason and such is holy Scripture."²⁰ The national compact intended to bind the nation's states together as a cohesive Union was nothing less than a holy alliance in Curtin's opinion. To allow southern states to shatter this alliance on a whim was "to

¹⁶ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 164.

¹⁷ Stanley, 2.

¹⁸ Richard B. Bernstein, *The Founding Fathers Reconsidered*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 72-3.

¹⁹ "Untitled," *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, Tuesday, January 15, 1861, accessed November 8, 2011, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

²⁰ "Submission to the Majority," *Presbyterian Banner and Advocate*, Saturday, December 8, 1860, accessed November 6, 2011, p. 2. Ibid.

confess that our government is a failure,” Curtin contended. No state could voluntarily retract itself from the bond of Union as was ordained by the Constitution. Referring to the United States as the greatest of all political institutions in human history, Curtin warned southerners not “to alter any of the fundamental principles of the great charter of our liberties.” Both sides of the ensuing war claimed the mantle of the Founders, insisting their respective cause absorbed founding ideals, while simultaneously casting their enemies as traitors to the historical legacy of the past.²¹

Curtin’s historical references to framers, apostles, and charters reveal the considerable relevance of the republic’s creators. Even though he longed for a peaceful solution to the secession crisis, the governor was disgusted by the “attempt to wrest from the federal government the powers which the people conferred on it when they adopted the constitution.” Scores of his political brethren agreed. Undermining the federal system the Founders conceived was a gross injustice as well as a poor display of civic integrity in the minds of most northerners. Curtin aide Alexander K. McClure boasted to the electorate: Lincoln and Curtin “will stand man to man with us in securing and enjoying the crowning national triumph of the age, that will restore us to the policy of our fathers—our Government to dignity, and our people to prosperity.”²² Success came with cooperation, and this accord (especially between states) was a key facet of Unionism.

The legacy of the Founders surpassed sheer notions of sentimentality or ideological convictions. Their efforts served as the foundation for the stability and growth of the future. This sense of national pride and potential afforded by the creators were central in the formation

²¹Bernstein, 128-9.

²² “Col. McClure at the Wigwam Again,” *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, October 20, 1860, accessed February 27, 2012, p. 2. Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers. Penn State University.

of citizens' national honor, character, and discourse.²³ The framers of the Constitution, William H. Seward noted, "regarded the Union as no mere national or American interest"—it was representative of a grand ideal to humanity on a worldwide scale. Thus, both the Founders and the citizens of 1861 feared "that their failure to continue and perfect the Union would be a misfortune to the nations," and perhaps all mankind, Seward concluded.²⁴

Curtin did not hesitate to invoke the names of the revolutionaries who inspired him to pursue public office. The America that Republicans envisioned was endowed by the power and supremacy of the Constitution, a document that promoted "persuasion, not coercion."²⁵ Curtin fully agreed with the new president's views of the Founders' ideas, noting that thanks to the "Apostles of Liberty . . . [our land is] fraternal in its aims, liberal in its spirit, and patriotic in its progress." Lincoln's own liberal nature demonstrated a desire to construct democracy by showing empathy toward individuals and striking at oppression.²⁶ The aristocratic system of the South morally weakened the nation as a whole. Therefore, Curtin promoted liberalism because he felt it patriotically and economically superior to the South's chattel system and political bullying. For the governor, the wealth seen throughout Pennsylvania was thanks to the "profuse liberality" that sustained his state. Many rallied to his cry. Commonwealth Judge William Dock, for example, abandoned the Democratic Party because he could no longer belong to an

²³ Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2008), 8.

²⁴ "The National Crisis. Speech of Senator Seward. Delivered in the United States Senate Saturday, January 12, 1860, *Daily Patriot and Union*, Monday, January 14, 1861, accessed November 8, 2011, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

²⁵ Lincoln quoted in Susan-Mary Grant and Brian Holden Reid, *Themes of the American Civil War: The War Between the States*. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 125.

²⁶ J. G. Randall, *Lincoln, the Liberal Statesman*. (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead, 1947), 199.

organization supportive of “an institution inconsistent with the principles upon which our government is based, and destructive of the interests of free white labor.”²⁷

Facing the reality of secession, the Jeffersonian ideal that citizens could adapt or annul their government when it became too overreaching was one that Curtin and Lincoln refused to recognize.²⁸ The latter argued the Union was perpetual and secession was a subversion of democratic principles. The Constitution did not advocate its own termination.²⁹ For Republicans, southern advocacy for secession proved their inability to abide by the results of a completely free and democratic election.³⁰ While Curtin’s ideological opponents in the South embraced the notion that the Confederate cause was the living legacy of the Revolution, he felt strongly otherwise. Although Confederates used “revolution” as a symbolic term to connect to the Spirit of ‘76, they saw their world “dedicated to the proposition that men were not created equal, a beacon of true liberty and a tribune of racial truth against the corruptions of modern democracy and equality.”³¹ Their idea of nationhood was a direct contradiction to those of Lincoln and his allies.

Whereas Curtin and fellow Republicans believed citizens had no right to secede, they did have the right to voice displeasure and debate democratically. “The freedom of speech and of the press, the right of conscience and of private judgment in civil and religious faith, are the high prerogatives to which the American citizen is born,” Curtin argued in his address. The right to express one’s opinion in public was a liberty handed from the forefathers but also allowed for debates regarding secession to permeate throughout the nation. Northerners, especially

²⁷ “A Great Demonstration for Lincoln, Hamlin and Curtin,” *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, accessed February 27, 2012, p. 2. Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers. Penn State University.

²⁸ Grant and Reid, 156.

²⁹ Thomas L. Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln: Defending the Politics of Our Greatest President*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 150.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

³¹ Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 81.

abolitionists, easily thrust blame upon the South for “mob violence,” the censoring of free speech via gag rules, and limits on the right of petition. Many had little doubt that the slave states were out to subvert the liberties northern citizens cherished.³² At the same time, staunch abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison openly welcomed secession, claiming disunion was a better option than having to co-exist with the purge of slavery. Curtin intently disagreed.

Despite his dislike of abolitionist rhetoric, the principle of “free speech” was vital in the creation of Curtin’s Republican Party. The phrase embodied an upward-thinking society in which law, dialogue, and individual liberty were respected and promoted. The social and economic nature of the South in which slavery thrived was antithetical to this understanding. Republicans such as Curtin believed free speech concerned the freedom of the press, encouraging healthy debate, and maintaining domestic ties. Most southern leaders no longer wished to play this game.³³ All the while, northerners were angered by the South repetitively winning the contentious debates shaping national policy—especially those regarding slavery and the settlement of the American West. This pattern proved tiring for Yankee politicians.

As one Pennsylvania editorialist complained, “if the Union does not preserve our liberties, if it does not protect us in the enjoyment of free speech, free labor, free soil and freedom of the press . . . if the Union is intended only to protect the slave-holding aristocrat in the enjoyment of *his* rights . . . who cares how soon” the Union is dissolved?³⁴ Citizens expressing such anxieties found a friend in the new Republican Party. But while rights to free speech were true in their legal and philosophical sense, the factors of race and politics determined whether one could practice the luxuries of citizenship. Shortly after Curtin’s election

³² Foner, 90.

³³ David Hackett Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 296.

³⁴ “Who Cares?” *The Agitator*, Wednesday, December 19, 1860, accessed November 8, 2011, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

and shortly before Lincoln's, "A Jefferson Democrat" wrote to Pennsylvania's *Central Press*: "We claim to live in a land of liberty, a land where the right of conscientiously worshiping God, where freedom of speech and of the press are constitutionally guaranteed to all; and is this truly the case? No! The degradation of the slave of the South is as deep and great as that to which their masters would subjugate the freemen of the North," he argued. "I voted for the Hon. A. G. Curtin, because he was a fair exponent of the doctrines and principles which I adhere to, and . . . because I knew him to be opposed to the extension of slavery."³⁵

Northerners' freedom of speech was under siege by the forces of pro-slavery activists who countermanded the Free Soil ideology of Republicans. This political creed of the rising party was mocked by a Democratic paper reporting a Curtin speech: "The Black Republican Invincibles will doubtless do their whole duty in shouting for 'freedom of speech,' . . . 'free niggers' and 'free love.'"³⁶ Heated rhetoric as such was implemented by Democrats to incite racial fears against Republican adversaries in attempts to connect them with radical abolitionists and delegitimize their political platform.

Vitriolic outbursts were rooted in a long line of events that altered the political and social discourse of antebellum America. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, a growing number of constituents became concerned with labor and how it might be affected by slavery and government. Curtin and Lincoln shared these apprehensions. The former's anxiety in wanting to implement liberal state policy that provided "ample protection to capital and labor, and to the community at large" became evident in his inaugural. But to fully comprehend the ideological

³⁵ "A Jefferson Democrat," "A Communication." *Central Press*, November 2, 1860, accessed November 8, 2011, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

³⁶ "City and County Affairs," *Lancaster Intelligencer*, September 18, 1860, accessed November 8, 2011, p. 2. Ibid.

thoughts and evolution in the minds of such individuals, one must reexamine the Whig and Free Soil political culture from which they rose to power.

“Momentous Consequences”

In a lifespan of two decades, the Whig Party had advocated industrialization, protectionism, better education, and largely opposed the Jacksonian policies to decentralize government’s authority in the private sphere. Curtin argued that the “vast resources of Pennsylvania and the variety of her mechanical and other industrial pursuits invite capital and enterprise from abroad, which, on every sound principle of political economy, should be encouraged.” The government, whether local or national, should play an active part in this endeavor, he believed. All the layers of the governmental structure should converge to assist commoners “economically, socially, and morally” via civic and business institutions and initiatives. In promoting this agenda, Whigs (and later Republicans) hoped economic diversity and freedom could heighten one’s personal headway in the public sphere.³⁷ The platform helped citizens help themselves. Would this not allow people to more successfully follow “the pursuit of happiness” and nurture “public good?”³⁸ Curtin believed so.

The *Pennsylvania Daily Telegram* urged its readers to contemplate this fact on the eve of Lincoln’s election by noting that the state’s “resources depend for success on protection. Her labor cannot rise to that strength and power necessary to compete with a foreign trade, unless fostered and protected by special legislative enactment, which would not only shield and encourage the industry of this Commonwealth, but also extend its influence to the labor of other

³⁷ Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 951-2.

³⁸ Quotations from the Declaration of Independence regarding rights and potential.

States” and therefore aid “all nations and communities.”³⁹ Given the rhetoric in his opening address, Curtin was aware that the national compact of Union was bound by name and collective identity as well as monetary ties. State and national governments were thought as foundations of economic protection and stability to protect manufacturers and their employees from the lethal elements of the market economy. This feature of American liberty, Curtin stated in a hometown speech, “seems to have been established by divine mission. Here [liberty] is exhibited in its growth, by the power of its influence, when the minds of those who are to receive it, have been properly prepared in advance.”⁴⁰

Pennsylvania’s “power of influence” ushered in an era of economic sustainability and commercial enterprise, especially in heavy industry and transportation. Under such circumstances, many businesses within the state embraced federally-supported protection. Like fellow Whigs-turned-Republicans, Curtin argued for this model of business during his terms. “The association of capital and labor,” he contended, “under acts of incorporation, where the purposes to be accomplished are beyond the reach of individual enterprise, has long been the policy of the State, and has done much to advance the prosperity of the people.”⁴¹

In order to help Pennsylvanians attain this entrepreneurial success, “aid to the Farmers’ High School” (now the Pennsylvania State University) and support for “scientific culture” was necessary. To “reward labor” and fostering ingenuity were high priorities of officials seeking to grow prospects in multiple tiers of society. “Education is as essential to liberty as religion is to virtue,” Curtin said in an 1859 lecture. With “educational refinement, the man becomes free, and

³⁹ “What Pennsylvania Will Lose or Gain To-Morrow,” *Pennsylvania Daily Telegram*, Monday, November 5, 1860, accessed November 8, 2011, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁴⁰ “The Growth of Liberty,” *Central Press*, March 10, 1859, accessed February 27, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁴¹ Egle, 116.

nations and races are formed for glory and usefulness.”⁴² The governor later extolled this belief as war’s costs threatened to inhibit America’s youngest generations. For Curtin, beneficent institutions and businesses were not independent bodies, but complimentary establishments that collectively supported the progress of the state *and* each other. This conception helped initiate a transformation in which many corporations and businessmen were seen as ambitious pioneers of enterprise rather than faceless shysters of monopoly.⁴³

Despite its brief tenure, the Whig Party that influenced Curtin helped create these perceptions of business, government, and the public’s interaction with the two. Whigs implemented hierarchical, technological, and creative approaches to help recast the society in which they lived and worked.⁴⁴ Curtin’s own Whig desires to instigate economic progress and industrialization recurred within his inaugural speech and career as a whole. “Our temperate climate, productive soil, and inexhaustible mineral wealth,” he noted, “have stimulated the industry of our people and improved the skill of our mechanics. To develop, enlarge, and protect the interests which grow out of pure natural advantages, have become cardinal principles of political economy in Pennsylvania.”⁴⁵

For Republicans, Curtin was an ideal standard bearer to promote and uphold governing practices. Biographer William Henry Egle contended that the governor was “a believer in systematic and efficient protection [of labor], in liberal internal improvements, and in the policy of encouraging well-paid and wide-diffused free American labor.”⁴⁶ Curtin considered the integration of economics and politics not only healthy, but necessary in fostering the dual

⁴² “The Growth of Liberty,” *Central Press*, March 10, 1859, p. 2.

⁴³ Louis Hartz, *Economic Policy and Democratic Thought: Pennsylvania, 1776-1860*. (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1968), 121.

⁴⁴ Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 31-2.

⁴⁵ Egle, 119.

⁴⁶ William Henry Egle, ed., *Life and Times of Andrew Gregg Curtin*. (Philadelphia: Thompson Publishing, 1896), 35.

interests of the public and business. Cooperation offered success at all levels of society so long as the Union providing it could maintain itself—and therein was the dilemma in 1861.

The fortunes of free labor rested in more than cultivating successful business. Threats of slavery compromised the rewards of the free worker. Republicans formed their political opinions with the conviction of increasing the rights “to human self-development” that granted individual freedom.⁴⁷ Whiggery was emblematic of an era in which citizens desired to transform their humble origins into lives of accomplishment and worth.⁴⁸ Slavery was a direct obstruction and contradiction to this philosophy.⁴⁹ From Curtin’s perspective, slavery and sectional differences were detrimental to national credit, currency, and the protection of capital. This “deranging” of business and society had the potential to ruin the foundations on which Pennsylvania’s economic success was built. Monetary and national interests were at the heart of Curtin’s anti-slavery endeavors. Prosperity was vulnerable to the dangers of slavery as it expanded across the land. Not only were bondage and its ramifications adverse to the core doctrines of democracy, but they imperiled the economic roots that democracy was meant to nurture. By reducing the potential of the free worker, slavery was limiting the potential of America itself.

According to one newspaper, “This draining of capital has had its influence on every branch of trade, to the injury of agriculture and credit, and the utter prostration of the finances of individuals and communities.” For these reasons and more, “protecting home industry” became a vital aspect of the Republican platform in Pennsylvania.⁵⁰ “Can we expect protection from the

⁴⁷ Howe., 267.

⁴⁸ Many Democrats too believed their party was the bulwark of the common man, especially Jacksonian Democrats. All parties wished to be representative of the average citizen. The great divides between these parties were debates over what role the government would play in this process of advancement.

⁴⁹ Howe, 266-67.

⁵⁰ “Remember!” *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, Friday, October 29, 1860, accessed November 8, 2011, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

Democratic Party?” Curtin asked of a Philadelphia crowd in 1860. “[They] dare not declare for protection on the laboring man, whose labor is the basis of our wealth and prosperity.”⁵¹ The American economy was a system of shared interest between government, business, and individual. If one failed, all three could fail. Slavery increased the likelihood of this failure.

By the 1850s, the precarious threats slavery posed to white labor became speedily apparent to Whig and Republican politicians. The debate over the peculiar institution brought the former party to ruin. Not only did early Republicans believe slavery undermined the ability of the worker to earn a decent living on an economic and moral level, but they also felt that the “Slave Power” was a conspiracy headed by calculating southern politicians to subvert the Constitution and government for their own financial empowerment. The striver’s ethic, not slavery, was the key to economic growth and social mobility. For citizens concerned with such issues in the North, the southern establishment struck at the heart of their dreams to institute a society predicated on free labor.⁵² This debate was of great import in 1861, as Curtin explained: “To develop, enlarge, and protect the interests which grow out of pure natural advantages, have become cardinal principles of political economy in Pennsylvania.” Popular thought among the people demonstrates that “progress, and the law depend on educated and requited labor; and that labor and the interests sustained by it should be adequately *protected* against foreign competition.” If citizens had the power to advance themselves, Curtin recognized their noble efforts as worthy of guardianship—protection from external forces—as reward.

Curtin never once used the term “slavery” in his inaugural speech. The governor used phrases such as “local” and “peculiar” institutions when speaking of human bondage. Although decidedly opposed to chattel slavery due to its adverse affects on free labor, Curtin did not

⁵¹ “Important Speech of Col. A. G. Curtin,” *Philadelphia Press*, October 5, 1860, accessed February 29, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁵² Foner, 39.

directly attack it for fear he would incite additional secession and possible violence. “From the abundance of the resources of the State and nation,” predicted the *Philadelphia Press*, “[Curtin] believes that the pecuniary difficulties will soon be righted, unless complicated by a civil war. . . . [T]he tone will be highly conciliatory, and the address will be well received.”⁵³ But his views against slavery’s expansion were well known to Democrats, who said he spoke on behalf of “niggerism,” eventual amalgamation, and national ruin.⁵⁴ Republicans retaliated by writing, “Col. Curtin comes in for a large share of defamation, simply because he occupies a prominent position for the people.”⁵⁵ Such was how Curtin viewed the purpose of government: *for the people*.

At that time, slaves were not viewed as people and portions of the governor’s address reveal a complaisant attitude toward chattel bondage. He noted, “[Pennsylvanians] have faithfully adhered to the compromises of our great national compact, and willingly recognized the peculiar institutions and rights of property of the people of other States. Every true Pennsylvanian admits that his first civil and political duty is to the general government.” The moderate nature of Curtin’s political ideology (compared to ardent abolitionists) was the reason Republicans nominated him for governor. Curtin’s election nevertheless pleased some Pennsylvania abolitionists. As one constituent in the Tioga Valley wrote, Curtin’s triumph “was hailed by the earnest people of our quiet valley as the sign of redemption, and the herald of universal emancipation, from the bound of eternal slavery.” Curtin and his followers “showed

⁵³ “Gov. Curtin’s Inaugural,” *Philadelphia Press*, Tuesday, January 15, 1861, accessed November 8, 2011, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁵⁴ “Millerstown, June 14, 1860,” *Lehigh Register*, June 20, 1860, accessed February 27, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁵⁵ “Democratic Degradation,” *Central Press*, October 3, 1860, accessed February 27, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

that the great idea which the people of Pennsylvania have generalized by endorsing the principles of Republicanism, is, *that FREE territory shall forever REMAIN free.*”⁵⁶

Curtin then cared little for what most abolitionists thought. His foremost concern was Union and its promise. Through his willingness to honor the rights of slaveholders, he revealed his openness to compromise as an alternative to disunion. Many moderate politicians of the North felt moral anxiety over slavery, but felt incapable of taking action without inciting further sectional strife. Following his inauguration, Curtin said, “by a prompt repeal of ever statute that may, even by implication, be liable to reasonable objection, do our part to remove every just cause for dissatisfaction within our legislation.” He considered constitutional remedies to the situation to be “example[s] of magnanimity and implicit obedience to the paramount law.”⁵⁷

More radical Republicans were unwilling to compromise for they felt negotiation destroyed the sanctity of both the Union and the Constitution rather than mended it. To capitulate to the demands of southern politicians inhibited republican government.⁵⁸ Yet Curtin revealed his openness to compromise, a trait he admired of his Whig hero, Henry Clay. Without the ability to share dialogue, many politicians felt they lost the ability to govern. Compromise was a key feature of democracy, and most southerners had lost their ability to participate in this system. Northerners, even loyal Democrats, realized cooler heads had to attempt to prevail for the sake of a united (though still ideologically split) nation. “We have had such difficulties and estrangement before,” claimed Gettysburg’s Democratic *Compiler*, “and we always had to get together again by mutual concession and compromise, after years of senseless warfare upon each

⁵⁶ “After the Election,” *Agitator*, October 17, 1860, accessed February 27, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University. Italics and capitalization original to source.

⁵⁷ “Debate on the Joint Resolutions Relative to the Maintenance of the Constitution and the Union,” *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, accessed February 18, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁵⁸ McClintock, 9.

other. . . . We call upon all . . . to speak out in favor of union and harmony.”⁵⁹ If only southern Democrats had felt the same way.

While Curtin addressed the “fearful uncertainty” and “weakening of commercial credit,” southerners had even more at stake if the fieriest of Republicans were to have their way. For as vitriolic as slavery matters were, political and economic capital were at stake if southerners lost influence in Washington. Slavery endured because the South long reigned supreme in all three branches of the U. S. Government.⁶⁰ But Curtin did not subscribe to the dough face trend of granting the South all its wishes. On these sentiments, pro-Curtin editorialists were frustrated: “we are fairly sick to death—nauseated—with the howl of secession and dissolution which goes up from reckless, unprincipled Southern throats, and is taken up and lovingly re-echoed by the northern curs of low degree who only bark as their cotton-growing masters give the pitch.”⁶¹

Curtin was willing to negotiate through strength, hoping that compromise would succeed as it had in previous decades. Referring to southerners as “friends and fellow countrymen,” the governor appealed to his citizens in the same manner Lincoln would two months later by asking Americans to summon “the better angels of our nature.” Although Curtin touted the “supremacy of national government” and free labor, he was more than willing to make concessions to the slaveholding South. In fact, he stated, “I have already taken occasion to state publicly, and I now repeat, that if we have any laws upon our statute books which infringe upon the rights of the people of any of the States, or contravene any law of the federal government, or obstruct its execution, they ought to be repealed.”⁶²

⁵⁹ “A High Handed Move,” *Compiler*, July 23, 1860, accessed February 29, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁶⁰ Harold Holzer, *Lincoln President-elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter 1860-1861*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 55-6.

⁶¹ “The Election,” *Columbia Spy*, November 3, 1860, accessed February 29, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁶² Egle, 118.

His statements did not imply that some Republicans were beyond making feeble concessions to prevent further dissolution of the Union. Charles Francis Adams, for one, put forth conciliatory approaches regarding the western territories and fugitive slaves which empowered slaveholders still in the Union. Neither Republicans nor the nation as a whole, however, could risk further disenfranchisement by “emboldening disunionists” and caving in to their additional threats. Lincoln and Curtin were well aware of this fact. “The people mean to preserve the integrity of the national union at every hazard,” Curtin noted. Lincoln again tried to walk the middle ground and attempted to reconcile without confining federal authority.⁶³ The effort made little headway.

Meanwhile, many northerners rejected compromise and concession. These constituents voted Republicans into office to protect themselves, not southerners. Curtin himself noted, “Conscious of their rights and their power, the people looked to the ballot-box alone as the legal remedy for existing evils.” He argued that citizens had the right to “vindicate” their will in “fair elections . . . at the ballot-box.” The statement was too little, too late in the eyes of most south of the Mason-Dixon Line. As Carl Becker has stated, majority rule is most efficient only when electoral defeat does not bring about “a fatal surrender of vital interests.”⁶⁴ And such is exactly how many southerners viewed the election of Abraham Lincoln. Slavery was too cardinal to every sphere of southern life to depend on the outcomes of Election Day. From Lincoln’s perspective, allowing the minority to dictate governance made the purpose of that government superfluous and only gave the minority additional leverage to continue unlawful patterns. “Plainly,” he wrote, “the central idea of secession, is the essence of anarchy.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 248.

⁶⁴ Foner, 8-9.

⁶⁵ McClintock, 173.

The Pennsylvania governor may have had other issues in mind when he called for reason and compromise. The undeniable fact that Pennsylvania's economy was connected through trade with the South generated great concern as sectional crisis arose. These worries were prominently elaborated in Curtin's address. Pennsylvania was the borderland of North and South, East and West. "[W]ith the great avenues of trade and travel passing through her borders, carrying on an extensive commerce with her neighbors, in the vast and varied productions of her soil, her mines, and her manufacturing industry, and bound to them by the ties of kindred and social intercourse," Curtin said, "the question of disunion involves momentous consequences to her people." Disunion epitomized potential ruin in every way imaginable.

Because of Pennsylvania's ingrained economic ties to the South, Curtin contended that "the question of disunion involves momentous consequences to her people." But this divisive quarreling was as old as the Republic itself. The ability to compromise became increasingly difficult within the "cult of honor" that was prevalent in the antebellum era. A willingness to make concessions was frequently coded as being weak and unmanly by pundits and politicians. Up until 1860, use of the word "disunion" was implemented as an instrument to threaten and gain political sway, not to actually split the nation.⁶⁶ Perpetual fear of disunion was rampant, wrote one writer with the *Atlantic Monthly* only two months before Curtin's election, because "danger of a dissolution of the Union" had so frequently been used as a "scarecrow" tactic.⁶⁷

Still, the governor gave hope that "the madness that now rules the hour will subside, as [the government's] patriotic, faithful, and national aims bring ample protection and peaceful progress to all sections of the Republic." At the same time, repetitive use of disunion rhetoric "limited American's political and moral imagination, ultimately discouraging the politics of

⁶⁶ Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2008), 104, 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

compromise and lending an aura of inexorability to the cataclysmic confrontation of North and South.”⁶⁸ The liberal-mindedness Curtin thought integral to the right of man’s self-advancement was endangered because the government that promoted it could be fractured by war. Disunion (and slavery) posed ominous threats to the political and economic frameworks free citizens relied on to attain autonomy.

As the governor had hoped, the address was well received by the general public—at least in Pennsylvania. Harrisburg’s *North American* observed “a spirit of fraternal kindness” in the governor’s “frank and manly” articulation. *The Bulletin* asserted, “The address is remarkably moderate and conciliatory. It condemns [sic] the secession movement, but hopes it may be arrested without resorting to extreme measures.”⁶⁹ Even Democratic opponents found themselves nodding in approval over many of Curtin’s sentiments. *The Patriot & Union* confessed the speech was far more magnanimous “than we had reason to anticipate [sic], that it has occasioned an agreeable surprise. Not that we can commend many of its utterances, but, considering the ultra position taken by many of Governor Curtin’s political friends . . . the sentiments embodied in the Inaugural are as conservative as a Republican dare at this particular juncture.”⁷⁰ The governor’s judicious nature persisted throughout his tenure, but his liberal spirit toward the rights of his constituents altered as scores of Pennsylvania boys began perishing on battlefields of the ensuing war.

Curtin delivered his inaugural address at a crossroads moment for the country. Northern leaders could have taken a complacent, indecisive stance toward secession as the James

⁶⁸Ibid., 2.

⁶⁹ “Gov. Curtin’s Inaugural --- The Cabinet,” *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, Thursday, January 17, 1861, accessed November 7, 2011, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁷⁰ “The Inaugural Address of Gov. Curtin,” *The Patriot & Union*, Wednesday Morning, January 16, 1861, accessed November 8, 2011, p. 3. Ibid.

Buchanan administration had done; or they could actively pursue a preservative course for the Union and all it stood for. At that critical moment, Curtin chose the latter. Maintaining the Union as the legacy of the Founding Fathers represented not only honoring their constitutional ideals but that the common man should be afforded the equal opportunity to advance himself with the striver's ethic and the liberal spirit of his society. Slavery, secession, and disunion marked startling contrasts and threats to these moral rights and potentials of American society. Curtin, Lincoln, and scores of fellow Republicans realized these glaring facts at the outset of sectional divergence. Within weeks of their respective inaugurations, tens of thousands of northerners answered their call to "promote the union" and defend "the noblest political structure ever devised and enacted by human wisdom." Few could have dreamed of what awaited them.

Chapter 2
“Vigorous Measures”
Andrew Curtin and Emancipation

September 25, 1862 was a day of excitement, grief, and gossip in the soot-covered streets of rail town Altoona, Pennsylvania. The day’s issue of the *Altoona Tribune* offered coveted details on the recent Confederate repulse from Maryland. But with that good news also came the casualty listings of the 125th Pennsylvania, a local infantry regiment that sustained considerable losses at the Battle of Antietam. Alongside the sorrowful news were two proclamations President Lincoln had issued the day before. One statement suspended the writ of habeas corpus, noting that northern citizens “shall be subject to martial law” should they fail to obey wartime regulations and maintain loyalty. The second proclamation was a much lengthier one, a pronouncement that struck at the core of the southern rebellion by manumitting all slaves in bondage in Confederate-held territories, making them “forever free,” if the states in rebellion did not return to the Union before January 1, 1863.

As these military and political developments unfolded, a confidential convention of notable political figures had just concluded a meeting in Altoona’s Logan House Hotel. “Their sessions were secret,” the city’s paper noted, “and although a number of reporters have given sketches of their proceedings we incline to the opinion that there was considerable guess work about the reports.”¹ Indeed, the meeting was secretive. But little did the townspeople know that the conference, convened by their governor Andrew Curtin, carried political weight in the vital matters they were reading of—especially the recently publicized preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

¹ *Altoona Tribune*, September 25, 1862, accessed October 27, 2011, p. 1-3. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

The Loyal War Governors' Conference, as the press named the meeting, was a transitional event in the long process by which northerners gradually adopted emancipation as a strategic and moral component of the Republican administration's efforts to win the Civil War. There was little evidence in the political career of the meeting's leader, Governor Curtin, to identify him as a fiery abolitionist or radical. Like most former Whigs and later Republicans, Curtin's foremost concerns rested in creating the circumstances for economic sustainability and prosperity so ordinary white men could thrive. The liberal outlook on society and governance that defined the policies of Curtin supported systematic change for the benefit of commoners and the nation as a whole. Although he was not willing to wage a war for the abolition of slavery from the outset of his career, Curtin developed antipathy toward the peculiar institution after the Civil War commenced because it stood in the way of the progress he believed offered economic opportunities and basic rights.

The potential for social and economic mobility intertwined with what scholars have called the "new world of free trade . . . underpinned by explicit ideologies of liberalism and free labor, in which the ownership of persons was unacceptable, although in practice the elaboration of new forms of unfree labor was an important part of the transition."² Furthermore, the attainment of wealth and property was virtuous because it was tied to national growth. Seeking wealth and independence in the expanding republic was not selfish, but exemplary and patriotic. In this regard, liberalism "was the main engine of American expansion."³ But if slavery expanded, that engine could fail. "Slavery," noted British statesman Richard Cobden in 1864,

² Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 4.

³ Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the World from its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Knopf, 2006), 72-3.

“is the question on which liberalism & humanity throughout the world are mainly interested in this terrible struggle.”⁴

At the same time, northern leaders were forced to concede some liberties in order to allow others to flourish. Classical liberals, typically against militarization, the seizure of property, and the suspension of civil liberties, found themselves supporting one of the mightiest armies and most expansive of governments on earth. The evolving form of liberalism Curtin embraced came to embody the sanctity and righteousness of the Union Cause—taking much bolder action than many politicians were willing to gamble in regard to emancipation and the war. By endorsing martial law and property confiscation in the South, Curtin seemingly contradicted his own precepts of liberalism protecting the commoner’s autonomous lifestyle and property.

But how could a constitution that protected individual freedom reign while it simultaneously protected the right of citizens to possess human property? How could the republic correct its elemental contradiction without brining itself to destruction?⁵ The time to adopt more strategic measures had arrived. If declaring martial law weakened the efficiency of slavery and, above all, vindicated the Constitution, such was a risk Curtin was willing to take. In order to save the liberal spirit of the federal government and society, that same spirit required flexibility in the name of self-preservation. However, Curtin felt southerners’ rights of safety were null and void in the wake of secession. He said of his Confederate foes: “Can it be possible, then, that. . .they are to enjoy this labor, and so be enabled to continue this war, because it is owned and slave?” he asked. “True it was a right of property regulated by that Constitution

⁴Anthony Howe, Simon Morgan, and Richard Cobden, *Rethinking Nineteenth-century Liberalism: Richard Cobden Bicentenary Essays*. (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), 16.

⁵Silvana R. Siddali, *From Property to Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861-1862*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 12.

which they now repudiate with contempt—but it is hard to understand why Northern sympathy should seek to afford them the protection of the Constitution for the security of any property which stands in the way of the Government.” Could it be “possible that the destruction of their interests should be denied to us by those who profess to be loyal to the Government?”⁶

National loyalty was the basis for all forms of public reward—a creed that defined the governor’s career and policies. Confederates were deemed unworthy of such recognition. Curtin, like Cobden, concluded that the peculiar institution was indeed “against humanity,” but in slightly different terms. Curtin believed slavery threatened a free society as it already existed whereas radical abolitionists hoped destroying slavery could recreate America as it should have been in the first place. Already acknowledging that slavery greatly inhibited visions of national growth in financial and moral terms, Curtin also realized the institution was one of the most productive tools in the Confederacy’s war machine. He gradually endorsed broad-minded stances on emancipation and federal authority, ultimately fusing the notions together with the ambition of strengthening the Union’s hands.

Notions of liberalism included not only the well-being of the citizenry and the worth of self but also the authority of the federal government as it broadly helped ensure the protection of labor, capital, and individual independence.⁷ Such convictions demonstrated that “progress was a pattern of ordered change in which order and change were equally important.”⁸ Indeed, federal emancipation policy was gradual, even as it also was deliberate and transformational. In the case of many of the governors who met in Altoona, however, they felt action was too gradual, that the moment to adopt a more decisive stance on emancipation had arrived. From Curtin’s

⁶ “Union for the Sake of Union,” *Press*, March 12, 1863, accessed February 18, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁷ Randall, 26.

⁸ Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 74.

perspective, loyal citizens and soldiers were entitled to more rights than traitorous rebels who benefitted from the toils of human property.

The governors' deeds illustrated the renewed nature of liberalism in the North. Their words were less ardent than those of Charles Sumner or Benjamin Wade, but were emblematic of a larger movement in which Republicans were demanding justice for loyal individuals. This new, multi-faceted form of politicking blended old notions of agency and reform with the more contemporary ideals of proactive governance as a measure to ensure prompt Federal victory. Agency, in the view of François Furstenberg, was the "ability to alter circumstances, to change the environment, to reform government, and above all to resist oppression."⁹ Curtin sought to assist in all these objectives by altering the political discourse on emancipation and modifying the government's stance on slavery to institute the war measures he thought most beneficial. At the time, Curtin did not consider African Americans his equals. Most northerners felt much the same way. The governor was well aware of this widespread opinion and thus addressed emancipation in strictly strategic terms as beneficial to the welfare of the Union and its white populace.

Only a year and a half prior, Curtin demonstrated that emancipation rhetoric was not among his priorities. The Secession winter of 1860-1861 witnessed many last-minute measures that failed to maintain the Union despite Curtin's efforts. One such action included a proposed constitutional amendment by Tennessee Governor Isham Harris that called for the protection in perpetuity of slavery where it already existed, a concession some moderate Republicans were willing to consider.¹⁰ Curtin promptly forwarded the memorandum to the Pennsylvania Legislature, hoping to garner support among the state's representatives. Within two months,

⁹ François Furstenberg, "Beyond Freedom and Slavery: Autonomy, Virtue, and Resistance in Early American Political Discourse." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (2003), p. 1300.

¹⁰ Holzer, *Lincoln President-elect*, 47.

shortly following Lincoln's own inauguration, Secretary of State William Seward submitted the amendment in question to the states noting that Congress would have no "power to abolish or interfere, within any State, with the domestic institutions thereof."¹¹ Curtin alluded to his support of such a measure to the legislature on March 20, explaining that, "the restoration of fraternity and the concord amongst the States of our time-honored and beloved Federal Union, which may result from your action, will, I rest assured, command for it your earnest and early consideration."¹² This last-ditch effort promoting pacification failed to gain steam, however, and civil war began within a month.

Curtin's notions of governance before the war included the willingness to compromise on matters of sectional antipathy in order to guard the cultivation of free society. By revealing the ability to empathize with ideological opponents in the South, Curtin believed he was demonstrating the same political flexibility as the framers of the Constitution, and thus helping to preserve the national compact they created in times of similar social unrest. War changed that vision dramatically. He vowed to make no more concessions in regard to the "peculiar institution." In the governor's view, striking at slavery, the "root of the rebellion," became perhaps the strongest moral measure in the war effort. To preserve the republic and prevent future warfare, Curtin declared, the government had no other option but to liberate both minds *and* the slaves.¹³

Throughout the first year of the war, Curtin and fellow northern leaders looked on in despair as the vast armies of the North were continuously defeated in the eastern theater of the conflict. The summer of 1862 brought further disappointment at the gates of Richmond as Union General George B. McClellan proved unable to seize the rebel capital. Even though he helped

¹¹ Reed, 354.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Egle, 319.

establish a massive federal training facility for troops at Camp Curtin in Harrisburg and created the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps, Curtin nevertheless sought to do more on behalf of the Union Cause. But disaster ensued. “Now everything looks like a great defeat to the arms of the Union,” Pennsylvania’s *Columbia Spy* despondently noted after yet another Federal debacle at the Second Battle of Bull Run in August 1862.¹⁴

In the wake of this string of military calamities, Republicans faced an equally daunting predicament on the political front. With abolitionists and radicals demanding more attention to emancipation efforts, moderates encouraging intensive focus on military measures, and anti-war Copperheads decrying anything originating from Lincoln’s party, the pro-war coalition appeared to be tearing at the seams.¹⁵ Upheaval in the border states further complicated the issue. Throughout the spring and summer of 1862, “President Lincoln made earnest and successive appeals to the border states to accept compensated emancipation, which simply meant the giving of them a fair consideration for their negroes in dollars and cents,” reported Philadelphia’s *Daily Evening Bulletin*.¹⁶ Lincoln’s liberal tactic of attempting to show border state slaveholders that their own interests coincided with national interests failed dismally.

At the same time, Curtin was annoyed by abolitionists, whose rhetoric he regarded as ineffective at keeping Copperheads at bay or maintaining general support of the war effort. The governor yearned for alliances, not additional enemies. A Philadelphia advocate of Curtin’s shared his leader’s sentiments in one public address, noting that, “[e]very inducement invokes us to consolidate and co-operate [even with Democrats]. The comfort and necessities of our fellow citizens in the field of war—the support of our patriotic President and our fearless Governor . . .

¹⁴ “War News!” *Columbia Spy*, Saturday, September 6, 1862, accessed November 9, 2011, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

¹⁵ William B. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors*. (New York, NY: A.A. Knopf, 1948), 232.

¹⁶ “Losing Our Negroes,” *Daily Evening Bulletin*, Monday, June 20, 1864, accessed November 9, 2011, p. 6. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

call upon us to sink all considerations before the one absorbing duty of the hour” —military victory.¹⁷ In his own words, Curtin revealed a willingness to recognize “the spirit of concession and compromise” for the greater good of Union and political cooperation.¹⁸

“Liberal Comity”

Governors could be among the most intuitive collaborators in the Union’s cause. On September 6, 1862, the same day *Harper’s Weekly* noted the inability of legislators to cooperate, Curtin sent a telegram to ten fellow northern governors in hopes of salvaging some political capital at a dismal moment for the country. As Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia of 55,000 men was lurking in western Maryland, preparing to spring into Pennsylvania and capture Harrisburg, a rallying cry was needed. “In the present emergency,” Curtin wrote, “would it not be well if the loyal governors should meet at some point in the border States to take measures for a more active support of the government? An immediate answer is requested, that as early a day as possible may be named for the meeting, if approved.”¹⁹ At this desperate stage, Curtin was far more concerned about bracing the authority of the federal government than he was about abolitionism. Like Lincoln, Curtin viewed the latter option as politically viable only as a means to ensure the former.

Within a matter of days, governors and representatives of thirteen northern states consented to attend the conference, agreeing to meet in Altoona, Pennsylvania on September

¹⁷ “Address of the Union Central Committee to the Loyal Men of Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday, August 27, 1862, accessed November 9, 2011, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

¹⁸ Curtin quoted in Reed, 366.

¹⁹ Curtin to Governors, Military Dispatches Books, 1861-1866. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives. File Box August 18, 1862 – September 9, 1862.

24.”²⁰ Governor Edwin Morgan of New York, the staunch conservative chairman of the Republican National Committee for much of the conflict, refused to attend the suspicious conference because he felt that the single best manner of supporting the war was to furnish state troops only as they were requested by the federal government.²¹ Such concerns over the expansion of military power and jurisdiction were observed by Lincoln’s own Attorney General Edward Bates, who noted that, “[t]here seems to be a general and growing disposition of the military, wherever stationed, to engross all power, and to treat the civil government with contumely, as if the object were to bring it into contempt.”²² Curtin, however, believed that a strong army was necessary to ensure the survival of civil government. He also subscribed to a concept of “a liberal comity between the States,” recognizing that the cohesion of the loyal states was a valuable strategic asset in the maintenance of national liberty.²³ The *New York Tribune* echoed the sentiments regarding nationwide cooperation by noting that only through “the cooperation of all friends,” from *all* states, could “the National cause” uphold the preservation of “Universal Humanity.”²⁴

Like many citizens in the North, the governors were supportive of—yet frustrated by—the slow progress of the Union’s military efforts. As all other strategic options evaporated, state leaders adopted or encouraged policies that consolidated the federal government’s supremacy in regard to both military and civil matters. In doing so, the liberal spirit that protected rights, promoted economic opportunities, and motivated Republicans could be further safeguarded by a

²⁰ Military Dispatches Books, 1861-1866. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives. Ibid.

²¹ Adam I. P. Smith, *No Party Now: Politics in the Civil War North*. (New York: Oxford, 2006), 69 and Leonard N. Ray, “War Governors’ Centennial Issue of Past & Present.” *Past & Present* (1962): 23.

²² Mark E. Neely, *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties*. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2007), 173.

²³ Excerpt of Curtin 1861 Inaugural quoted in Egle, 118.

²⁴ “*The New-York Tribune* 1863,” *Central Press*, Friday, February 6, 1863, accessed November 9, 2011, p. 4. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

stronger national institution. For Curtin, bearing up federal authority was to weaken slavery—and thus the Confederacy itself. Similarly, Governor Richard Yates of Illinois publicly asked Lincoln to adopt “more decisive measures” to promote this agenda. Federal officers in the South “should not be frittering away their time guarding the property of traitors, and the government ought not to spurn the Negroes as soldiers.” Doing so would render “foreign intervention impossible” and bring about “a speedy close” to hostilities, Yates contended.²⁵ On September 10, Senator Lyman Trumbull of Illinois insisted to fellow radical senator Zachariah Chandler of Michigan, noting of the planned conference: “nothing will now save us but a demand of loyal governors, *backed by a threat*, that a change of policy and men shall be made.”²⁶

With similar thoughts possibly in mind, Curtin and several of the anti-slavery governors attending the conference sought to assert strategic and moral (albeit supportive) pressure on the Lincoln Administration. By urging the legal abolition of slavery, by upgrading the military, and by offering support to the beleaguered presidency, the governors hoped to alter the ongoing political discourse through their meeting and proclamation. Their motives were both “progressive and aggressive.”²⁷ However, few of them at that moment realized that Lincoln had already set the wheels of emancipation into motion. Curtin and abolitionist governor of Massachusetts John Andrew discussed the upcoming conference with Lincoln at the Executive Mansion to clarify their purpose of endorsement for his administration. “In that interview,” Curtin later recalled, Lincoln “did not attempt to conceal the fact that we were upon the eve of an

²⁵ “Gov. Yates to President Lincoln,” *Journal of the American Temperance Union: and the New-York Prohibitionist*, Vol. XXV, No. 8, August 1862, Volumes 26-29.

²⁶ Hesselstine, 254. Italics original to source.

²⁷ L. U. Reavis, *The Life and Public Services of Richard Yates, the War Governor of Illinois. A Lecture Delivered in the Hall of the House of Representatives, Springfield, Illinois, Tuesday Evening, March 1st, 1881*. (St. Louis: J. H. Chambers & Company, 1881), 12.

Emancipation policy, and he had from us the assurance that the Altoona conference would cordially endorse such a policy.”²⁸

Early in the war, Andrew suggested to Curtin the plan of initiating a John Brown-style slave insurrection in Virginia to incite fear and menace the Confederacy. Curtin considered it a barbarous proposal. “So far as I am concerned,” wrote Curtin, “this war will be conducted only by civilized methods.”²⁹ Andrew was more than willing to help incite slave rebellion, but moderate Republicans desperately wished to avoid such measures. On this occasion as well as the upcoming conference, Curtin served as Andrew’s ballast of moderation. While they ultimately desired the same goal, they frequently differed in how best to achieve it. Their differences did not weaken, but strengthened their partnership, allowing them to have a broader perspective on the issues at hand. But Andrew adopted a radical stance on abolition that moderates did not agree to. These concerns were quite clear in Washington as the Lincoln Administration pondered the release of a proclamation of emancipation in the fall of 1862. Considering the multitude of recent military disasters, such a declaration would be perceived as a drastic and frenzied signal of northern desperation. Secretary Seward recommended to Lincoln that the proposed proclamation be shelved until a battlefield victory was achieved. Little did many realize that moment would arrive sooner rather than later.³⁰

As the Army of Northern Virginia pushed closer to the Pennsylvania border, Curtin grew increasingly distraught. Issuing a call for emergency volunteers under the command of General John F. Reynolds in Harrisburg, Curtin accompanied the column of militia to Hagerstown, Maryland. “Our people [are] responding to the call in a most wonderful manner,” the governor

²⁸ Alexander K. McClure, *Abraham Lincoln and Men of War-times. Some Personal Recollections of War and Politics during the Lincoln Administration*. (Philadelphia: Times Publishing, 1892), 272.

²⁹ Hesseltine, 219.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 247-8.

wrote Lincoln during the mobilization process (although the force of Pennsylvanians ultimately refused to march into battle when asked by McClellan).³¹ In Hagerstown, Curtin awaited word on September 17 for the outcome of the nearby Battle of Antietam. Twelve hours of continuous combat left 23,000 men dead, maimed, or prisoners of war. Lee's force escaped to the relative safety of Virginia during the following evening and Pennsylvania was temporarily safe from invasion.

Curtin was moved by the carnage and bravery he witnessed during the Maryland Campaign, reshaping his perceptions of the war through witnessing its costs firsthand. In an address to the Pennsylvania Legislature, he noted of these sacrifices, "Having accompanied this force to Hagerstown, I am enabled to speak of the courage, fidelity, and cheerfulness with which the men suffered unaccustomed privations, and bore the fire of the rebel force, performing with alacrity all the service that was required of them."³² But for Curtin, support for those in the military needed to move beyond mere laudatory rhetoric and offer physical, financial, and moral comfort. One of the core ideals of Curtin's liberalism constituted tenets of justice, not simply for common individuals but for those who had earned the right in battle.³³

The protection and good health of soldiers and their loved ones was very much on Curtin's mind as the war progressed. But perhaps most importantly for him, the losses of Antietam and the war as a whole required a vindication of the Union cause. Struck down in the prime of their lives, those who perished at Antietam were representative of the Union's citizenry in all their social, geographical, and political diversity. Their diverse nation, pledged to offering

³¹ "Andrew G. Curtin to Abraham Lincoln, Sunday, September 14, 1862 (Telegram concerning military affairs)," accessed November 15, 2011. American Memory Collections. The Library of Congress. <<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mal&fileName=mal3/434/4342000/malpage.db&recNum=0>>.

³² Curtin quoted in Reed, 456.

³³ Richard Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics: Class Conflict and the Origins of Modern Liberalism in Chicago, 1864-97*. (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1998), 5.

opportunity to its citizens, was worth preserving. These sentiments resonated with the governor as he proceeded by train from Harrisburg to Altoona in late September. The upcoming conference *had* to illustrate the Union's strategic and moral goals as perfectly evident and absolutely necessary.

The decisive victory of Antietam altered the political situation of two weeks earlier when Curtin transmitted conference invitations to his fellow governors. Lee's repulse from Maryland offered Lincoln much-needed political clout and, as he had promised Secretary Seward, he released the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22 in the wake of Union military success.³⁴ Furthermore, the demands of radical Republicans and governors who yearned for slavery's end reached new and intense levels. Even with midterm elections looming, Lincoln and Republicans felt they could finally act.³⁵ Like some of the loyal governors, abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass simultaneously scoffed and praised the Proclamation. Although the document was far from their ideal vision, it was nevertheless "a major step toward a millennium of liberty" in which slavery would be expunged.³⁶

While the president embraced the governors' motion of support, he also hoped to avoid being preempted by so-called radicals advancing emancipation measures. Lincoln therefore felt he was not beyond influencing the terms of debate at the conference. *A Harper's Weekly* columnist astutely noted of Lincoln's acumen for political canniness: "The conservative Republicans think him too much in the hands of the radicals; while the radical Republicans think him too slow, yielding, and half-hearted."³⁷ Curtin, standing between these two ideologies,

³⁴ Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 170.

³⁵ Harold Holzer, Edna Greene Medford, and Frank J. Williams. *The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views (Social, Political, Iconographic)*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 63.

³⁶ David F. Ericson, *The Debate over Slavery: Antislavery and Proslavery Liberalism in Antebellum America*. (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 60.

³⁷ Ronald C. White, A. *Lincoln: A Biography*. (New York: Random House, 2009), 592.

perhaps more than anybody realized how true that judgment was. The governor did not seek to convey a radical message in support of emancipation from the conference, but radicals such as Andrew did.

The president may have had the last laugh on the matter. His release of the preliminary proclamation the day before the meeting offered him a three-fold political advantage. Lincoln at last had an opportunity to issue the Proclamation in the aftermath of military success, he tactfully limited how radical the message of the governors could be regarding war aims, and he discreetly ushered *them* into a corner to support the Proclamation as he deemed fit, knowing that the entourage of governors would still be supportive.³⁸ Subsequently, though the governors were joyous that some emancipation policy had been adopted, emotions were nevertheless mixed, especially amongst the radicals.³⁹ Andrew read the Proclamation in a newspaper aboard a train in transit to Altoona and later noted, “It is a poor *document*, but a mighty *act*; slow, somewhat halting, wrong in its delay till January, but grand and sublime after all.”⁴⁰

Curtin’s reaction was less poetic and more pragmatic. In an October 1863 interview in his Bellefonte home, a Harrisburg correspondent recorded Curtin’s reflections on the emancipation situation. Curtin recognized that “peace men” and Democrats in the North predicted southern victory and “that the Government could never crush rebellion.” They viewed the government as weak, ineffective, and uncoordinated. The governor sought to disprove their judgments. But as the states and their governors began collaborating, “these same peace men were urging that the war was for the negro—that the struggle was for the emancipation of the slave. If the struggle does bring a ray of light and hope to the slave, the owner had himself to

³⁸ Hesseltine, 254-7.

³⁹ Rebecca Gifford Albright, “The Civil War Career of Andrew Curtin, Governor of Pennsylvania.” *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Volume 48, (1965): 23.

⁴⁰ Henry Greenleaf Pearson, *The Life of John A. Andrew, Governor of Massachusetts, 1861-1865*. (Boston, NY: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), 51.

thank.” Slavery was “the cause of [the South’s] calamities” and Curtin revealed no qualms over ex-slaves making the best of their situation. But ultimately, he “sincerely believed that all which was wanted now effectually to crush [the] rebellion, was vigorous measures on the part of the Government and active support from the people.”⁴¹ The Governors’ Conference embodied this tenet to the limit.

To help assure the survival of American democracy, Curtin felt a resounding demonstration of support for the president and the military in a great hour of need was warranted. “I shall be ready to perform any duty that may be required of me in such an emergency,” Curtin wrote Stanton earlier that month.⁴² Support of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation and conference marked a political point of no return for Curtin. As he declared a month following the Proclamation’s formal release: “There can be but two parties in the North—those who are in favor of the Government, and those who are against it.”⁴³ Support of emancipation ultimately served as a determining factor in the judgment of loyalty.

Discussing and debating emancipation well into the night of September 25 in Altoona’s Logan House Hotel, the governors finally reached a consensus in the early morning hours and agreed to travel to Washington to discuss their proceedings in person with Lincoln. Andrew took notes during the deliberations and spent nearly half an hour modifying the preamble until most of the governors could agree on its language. When it came time for the executives to affix their signatures, all did so with the exception of Maryland’s Augustus Bradford. The leader of the slave state (and a Democrat) feared the repercussions of associating himself with prominent

⁴¹ “Andrew G. Curtin at Home—His Reception by the Friends of His Boy and Manhood—Grand Ovation—Eloquent Speeches, &c., &c., &c.,” *Evening Telegraph*, October 20, 1863, accessed February 19, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁴² Military Dispatches Books, 1861-1866. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives. File Box August 18, 1862 – September 9, 1862.

⁴³ “Celebration by the Union League,” *Press*, February 24, 1863, accessed February 19, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

Republicans. “Gentlemen, I am with you in heart and soul, but I am a poor man, and if I sign that address, I may be a ruined one,” he confessed to them.⁴⁴

When all was completed, a communiqué was sent via the hotel’s telegraph office to the president that included the governors’ declaration. Lincoln replied with an invitation for the gathering to conclude at the Executive Mansion.⁴⁵ The radicals hoped this personal meeting with the president would also allow them to present their case against the Democrat McClellan that was absent from their written address.⁴⁶ For three hours the following day, the thirteen governors met with Lincoln, discussing their thoughts from the conference, their support of emancipation, and for some, their displeasure with McClellan. Perhaps fearful of inciting dispute within the Army of the Potomac as well as within the government, the governors largely kept their complaints and opinions of McClellan to the confines of Lincoln’s office. And like Curtin, Lincoln was unwilling to kick the hornet nest and relieve McClellan at that moment. Little Mac was granted one more reprieve, but ultimately squandered his final chance and was sacked on November 5, 1862. His attempts to publicly warm up to powerful Republicans like Curtin could no longer shield him.

“Assurances of Protection”

The declaration issued by the state leaders was generous toward Lincoln and his policies, ensuring support of the republic that defended the rights they desired for all citizens. Placing aside some of their desires for more proactive emancipation measures, the governors nevertheless recognized the necessity of reinforcing their president in an hour of need. While all of these leaders expressed different means of politicking, they were all aware that fusing together

⁴⁴ Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union*, vol. 2. (New York: Scribner, 1959), 240.

⁴⁵ Ray, 38.

⁴⁶ Hesselstine and Hazel, 203.

their strategies was a sure means of developing interstate and national cooperation on behalf of the military's efforts. The governors asserted the need for an additional 100,000 men in the army, a goal that was difficult to achieve in the wake of further defeats in the subsequent months—a factor that foreshadowed the approaching Conscription Act of March 1863.

The governors requested a strengthening of the military because the liberal theory that many observed recognized that force was sometimes necessary “to protect the weak against the strong” in a state of war already extant.⁴⁷ And such was exactly Curtin's response to slavery by late 1862. Liberals sought their own sense of justice, but could also flex their collective muscle in instances of war and defense. They also supported Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, issued on the same day as the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Although Curtin was hesitant to enforce suspension as he felt it infringed upon personal liberties, he eventually concurred with the president on the issue (as he did in nearly all matters). One year after the Governors' Conference, Curtin wrote to Lincoln: “The proclamation suspending the writ of habeas corpus is a heavy blow but as it is right we can stand it.”⁴⁸ Such was war.

The opening paragraphs of the governors' declaration expressed sentiments with which a majority of northern citizens agreed. The document argued that the “loyal and cordial support” of the government was necessary so that “the constitutional rights and liberties of the people themselves can be saved from the wreck of anarchy or from the gulf of despotism.”⁴⁹ Linked to the ideals of the American Revolution, liberalism was explicitly associated with these sacred ideals of liberty and virtue. For many, this liberty was the purpose of Union, and over time, the rights afforded by Union could be extolled to humankind. Consequently, that Union absolutely

⁴⁷ J. D. Armstrong, Theo Farrell, and Bice Maiguashca, *Force and Legitimacy in World Politics*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 98.

⁴⁸ Neely, 74.

⁴⁹ Egle, includes a complete transcription of the “Address of the Loyal Governors,” 318-20.

needed to be upheld. In the right atmosphere, “liberal idealism” and “patriotic nationalism” had the potential to unite “Americans of all sections at the highest levels of political conviction.”⁵⁰

These doctrines drove Curtin and his fellow governors to support and assert the policy of emancipation to sustain the national Union. Liberalism helped guarantee that “American nationalism, self-government, and property were all part of the same package” and that the nation as a whole “could long endure.”⁵¹

Whereas the first segments of the “Address of Loyal Governors” embraced unity, political cooperation, and a general sense of patriotic and obligatory rhetoric, the latter portions were something far different in nature. Curtin perceived the government’s right to establish military law in the South implied “the right and the duty of the government to liberate the minds of all men living therein by appropriate proclamations and assurances of protection.” In reinforcing the Lincoln Administration’s claims for a broad construction of executive power, the governors were also lending support to the government he was attempting to maintain.

Ensuring such liberties would allow men who were “capable, intellectually and morally, of loyalty and obedience . . . not to be forced into treason as the unwilling tools of rebellious traitors.” Therefore, to allow slavery to continue to exist was a crime and thus “unjust to the loyal people whose . . . lives are made a willing sacrifice on the altar of patriotism.”

Discrimination of that magnitude would have been a slap in the face to “the wife who is compelled to surrender her husband . . . in favor of rebel masters permitted to retain their slaves. It would have been a final decision alike against humanity, justice, the rights and dignity of the government, and against sound and wise national policy.”⁵² Their words spoke of reinforcing the traditional sense of contract theory. If combatants were to give of themselves for the higher

⁵⁰ Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Causes of the Civil War*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 173.

⁵¹ Hess, *Liberty*, 12.

⁵² Governors’ Address quoted in Egle, 319.

purposes of Union, that government owed them affirmations of dual allegiance. Emancipation demonstrated such support because it would enable Union victory. In doing so, Curtin and fellow liberals transformed prewar economic ideologies into military and social measures meant to brace the efforts of soldiers. Yet many northerners initially failed to recognize this deeper humanitarian mission of emancipation initiatives proposed by government.

As with the Emancipation Proclamation itself, these words left most whites unconvinced that blacks were their equal.⁵³ Less than two years earlier, New York City's *Anglo-African* newspaper declared that "[u]nder the guise of humanity" the Republican party's "opposition to slavery means opposition to the black man, nothing else."⁵⁴ Furthermore, "the standard by which [many] Republicans measured the black man's alleged imperfect humanity was the white man's alleged near perfect humanity."⁵⁵ But this racial argument was beyond the point for a majority of northerners, including Curtin. As Illinois officer James Connolly wrote, loyalists did not fight for money, power, or fame but "for the idea of Union, Freedom, an intangible something always sought for by mankind, often fought for and never appreciated when possessed."⁵⁶ But Lincoln and Curtin did appreciate that "intangible," and they desired to grant its survival in perpetuity. Although whites thought of blacks as lesser forms of humanity, humanitarian sensibilities were nevertheless key themes in the perceptions of the liberal legacy. "The war," argued *Frank Leslie's Illustrated*, "was not a contest for supremacy and territory, but a conflict for the maintenance of national integrity and the destruction of a rebellion against law, order, and the dictates of humanity."⁵⁷

⁵³ Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006), 74.

⁵⁴ James D. Bilotta, *Race and the Rise of the Republican Party, 1848-1865*. (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2002), 288.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 305.

⁵⁶ Hess, *Liberty*, 27.

⁵⁷ Gallagher, *The Union War*, 19-20.

Public reactions to the conference were numerous and mixed. Despite the document's rhetorical parameters, opponents denounced the "radicalism" of the governors' message. "Wise as this measure was, and successful in its ultimate consequences," noted a biographer of Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton, the conference's "immediate political result was disastrous. Party conflicts, which had been smothered in the general enthusiasm [of the war], were now revived with great bitterness. Regardless of the conference, increasing Republican support for emancipation at national and state levels ushered violent protest by Democrats who argued the war was losing its focus."⁵⁸ Illustrating these emotions was the *New York Herald*, which called the meeting a "treasonable . . . plot that had been set afoot by the radicals . . . to abolish the Union, the constitution, and Negro slavery together, without regard to legal, moral or social obstacles."⁵⁹ Many Americans did not agree that emancipation would help bring a speedy end to the war, and thus were highly unwilling to accept the emancipationist revision of the Union's war aims.

The governors' address was sent by Andrew to fellow state executives who did not attend the conference. Of them, the leaders of Connecticut, Kansas, Minnesota, Oregon, and Vermont expressed their approval. The governors of Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, and New York—all slaveholding or Democratic states—declined or flatly rejected the announcement. Curtin realized that emotions were heated.⁶⁰ "I did not then doubt," he confided to friend Alexander McClure after the war, "that it would lose us the coming election in Pennsylvania . . . but I believed that the country then knew what the war was about, and that it

⁵⁸ William Dudley Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton, including His Important Speeches*. (Indianapolis: Bowen-Merrill, 1899), 207.

⁵⁹ Ray, 42.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

was time to bring slavery to the front as the great issue.”⁶¹ If the governor truly felt this sentiment at the time, his forecast was partially correct.

In the midterm election of that year, Democrats gained three seats in the Senate and half of the two-dozen Pennsylvania seats in the United States House of Representatives, giving Democrats control of the House. Capitalizing on the fatigue of recent military defeats and anti-abolitionism, Democrats claimed their most substantial triumph in years.⁶² Loyal Democrats wanted no deviation from the original goal of preserving the Union. For many of them, becoming embroiled in slavery issues was an infuriating distraction. Even two years following the conference, men such as Unionist Party representative Robert Mallory of Kentucky declared, “I say, Mr. Speaker, that it was that meeting of the factious governors at Altoona, and the pressure they then brought to bear, and had previously with others brought to bear, on the President of the United States . . . that caused him to abandon his original policy.”⁶³

Copperheads claimed the meeting was a coup d'état to replace Lincoln with the radical John Frémont. They referred to the conference as “A Second Hartford Convention” devised by the “Disloyal Governors of the Loyal States.”⁶⁴ Republican newspapers retaliated by exclaiming that Democrats making such accusations were “wretched culminators” guilty of “counterrevolution and anarchy.” The “Vallandigham press” was notorious for casting such “foul and infamous aspersions” upon the noble efforts of dedicated Republicans, they declared.⁶⁵ In the ensuing months, Democratic papers continued to attack Curtin for his supposed “advocacy

⁶¹ Letter from Curtin to McClure, McClure, 272.

⁶² Philip Shriver Klein and Ari Arthur Hoogenboom, *A History of Pennsylvania*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), 289.

⁶³ Hesseltine and Hazel, 195.

⁶⁴ The Hartford Convention took place in the fall and winter of 1814-1815 in Connecticut. Established by Federalists weary of the War of 1812, leaders contemplated secession and the dissolution of the Three-Fifths Compromise, among other issues stemming from their frustration with the Federal Government. Copperheads thought the Loyal War Governors' Conference to be an abolitionist cabal of a similar nature.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 205.

of negro emancipation, equality, and fraternity.” The *Lancaster Intelligencer* asked, “[s]hall we be overrun by this horde of semi-barbarians . . . ? Curtin is *for* this.”⁶⁶

Democratic-affiliated Union soldiers were outraged by the purported tone of the conference and any measure promoting emancipation. Many bemoaned “fearfully” regarding the collaboration of “Abolition” governors, perhaps knowing that many of them advocated McClellan’s dismissal. As one Yankee recruit noted, scores of troops “believe with all their hearts and minds in McClellan . . . and are unwilling to be slaughtered in the experiment of muddle headed politician generals” in the name of emancipation.⁶⁷ Some men in the 106th Pennsylvania Infantry were “boldly stating that they would not have entered the army had they thought such would be the action of the government.”⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Pittsburgh’s Peace Democrats responded to the alarms of emancipation by establishing the Democratic Club—a political organization to counter Pennsylvania Republican Union Leagues.

The opposition of constituents and many soldiers shows that the Governors’ Conference failed to some degrees in its hopes of rallying the people on behalf of the nation’s war aims and strategies. Historian Allan Nevins went so far as to editorialize that, “[m]isrepresentations of the conference . . . persisted, and it had better never been held.”⁶⁹ Curtin, however, considered his own initiatives in this endeavor, especially the Altoona conference, as “one of his happiest efforts” in sustaining the republic.⁷⁰ John Andrew too subscribed to the worthiness of the dual mission of the Governors’ Conference and the Union: “Wisdom will still live when all of this generation has gone under the dust; and the people, country, and humanity, will live when [we]

⁶⁶ “The Friends of Curtin,” *Lancaster Intelligencer*, Tuesday, September 1, 1863, accessed December 9, 2011, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University. Italics as shown in original source.

⁶⁷ Gary W. Gallagher, ed. *The Antietam Campaign*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1999), 53.

⁶⁸ Guelzo, *Proclamation*, 212.

⁶⁹ Nevins, 240.

⁷⁰ “Gov. A. G. Curtin, Hon. L. W. Hall and Gen. Anderson the Speakers!!” *Central Press*, August 31, 1866, accessed January 15, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

all . . . have been forgotten and lost, even to history.”⁷¹ The ideals of democracy supplied through Unionist strength were universal features governors hoped could be extended to all citizens of all generations and places. For Curtin, the fate of the war involved nothing less than deciding the fate of mankind. With thorough and strategic measures, Curtin declared at one rally, “we will prove this the strongest Government ever conceived by the mind of men, and our children and our children’s children, for generations to come, will enjoy all the blessings which our fathers bequeathed to us.”⁷² The military that reinforced government was the surest way to maintain Curtin’s goals and national promises.

Like many of their governors stated in the Altoona proclamation, some soldiers grasped the concept that the “institution of slavery was antithetical to republican government, and that any republican government that tried to accommodate slavery was doomed to eventual failure.” As a result, claimed a member of the 3rd Wisconsin Infantry, “the rebellion is abolitionizing the whole army.”⁷³ While that claim may have been too broad to categorize an entire fighting force, it certainly spoke to the “ordered change” and new attitudes toward emancipation within the army. The entrenched southern aristocracy threatened democratic institutions, and Federal troops quickly realized it. Curtin and the governors recognized that while loyal white citizens were sacrificing of themselves for the Constitution and nation, many southerners continued to garner the economic benefits of slavery. The liberties that Republicans promised to citizens were significantly compromised. “War means desolation and death,” Curtin confided to a crowd of supporters the previous June. “The rebels have set up the standard of revolt, and are striking at the liberties of a great people, and the history of the world, both sacred and profane, proclaims

⁷¹ “The Altoona Convention,” *Press*, October 27, 1862, accessed January 15, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁷² “No Drafting—Freemen Always Volunteer,” *Philadelphia Press*, July 26, 1862, accessed January 15, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁷³ Manning, 50, 45.

they shall suffer death. The time has now come when the lives and the property of the rebels will be used to break down this most unholy rebellion. [Immense applause].”⁷⁴

But the ability of men to engage in this endeavor was sometimes determined by the color of their skin. Andrew Curtin—the governor heralded as the “Soldier’s Friend,” the leader who brought northern leaders to marry a policy of emancipation to one that supported executive authority, was not welcoming of African American troops. At the war’s outbreak, many of Philadelphia’s 22,000 African Americans were eager to muster into service. But Curtin, among other governors, was hesitant to enlist black combatants into service for fear of political backlash. Many black Pennsylvanians journeyed to Massachusetts to join regiments endorsed by Governor Andrew. As recruitment numbers dropped, an ever-growing number of citizens petitioned Curtin to make use of the large force of men willing to serve. Even one Irishman from Philadelphia could not “see exactly why it is that the *Negurs* can’t go to the war” when their white counterparts were being conscripted into service.⁷⁵

One month after the Emancipation Proclamation’s formal release, Frederick Douglass wrote to Curtin, asking if he would at last accept Colored Troops for the cause. Curtin replied that he would not. In Yates’ previously used phrase, Curtin “spurn[ed] the Negroes as soldiers.” However, with the need for additional manpower, the subsequent Confederate invasion of Pennsylvania that summer, and the insistence of Secretary of War Stanton, Curtin reconsidered the roles of black troops.⁷⁶ Still, “[b]lack enlistment efforts met plenty of resistance Many white soldiers—even liberal, antislavery ones—maintained decidedly racist views after” the

⁷⁴ “No Drafting—Freemen Always Volunteer,” *Philadelphia Press*, July 26, 1862, accessed January 15, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁷⁵ J. Matthew Gallman, *Mastering Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia during the Civil War*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 45-6. Italics as shown in original source.

⁷⁶ Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), 187,191.

arrival of black troops.⁷⁷ Perhaps the governor's most revealing opinions of slavery and Union during the war are exhibited in an October 6, 1863 campaign speech in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, in which he noted, "It is common to say that this war is either for or against the nigger. Well, my friends, it is but candid to admit that some of the most immense interests and sacred principles revolve around the massive and woolly head of the nigger." The slave owner, "proud, and tyrannical, enjoying the unrequited labor of others," stood up against the noble institutions of the government. As a result, "[h]alf a million of their men have [been] stricken," Curtin stated. "The Government of the United States belongs to us . . . and slavery shall fall beneath the majestic tread of that free Government."⁷⁸

The Union was not responsible for war, the governor argued. Southerners brought war upon themselves. "The fidelity and loyalty of our people will constitute one of the purest chapters in the history of freedom. . . . Is the negro here by his own choice? He was taken from Africa, where his home was found. The sweat of his face has poisoned the ground to the slaveholder." He told the crowd no white families had been slaughtered in slave uprisings in the absence of their men. Meanwhile, during the New York Draft Riots, "mob turned to plunder, rob, and murder the negro, merely because he was negro, the poor negro returned and collected what was left." Curtin claimed those rioters were "all friends" of Democratic Governor Horatio Seymour. "I have no such friends," Curtin boasted. "If in this struggle a ray of the light of liberty gets into the brain of the poor negro, of what have we to complain?"⁷⁹

Curtin's speech is rife with the racism and paternalism that characterized most white northerners of the era. Yet, his racial views also draw distinct lines in the sand against his

⁷⁷ Judkin Browning, *Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2011), 99.

⁷⁸ "The Canvas for Governor," *Press*, October 8, 1863, accessed January 18, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

southern opponents. “Negroes” were not property or beasts. They were human. Curtin’s rhetoric expressed a deeply-engrained presumption that most of the “poor negroes” did not exemplify intellect equal to that of the white man. However, Curtin also believed such categorizations should not have excluded the black man from the decency of humanity or certain rights. In its most simplified terms, slavery represented death, not only the demise of singular human individuality and liberty, but the democratic institutions that cultivated free civilization. The governor also came to recognize the right of African Americans to contribute to the defense of society. The praiseworthy actions of black militiamen and troops at Milliken’s Bend, Port Hudson, and Battery Wagner revealed the worth of blacks as combatants, reinforced emancipationist ideology, and contradicted the doctrine of both Copperheads and Confederates—points all of which Republicans were quick to highlight to the general public. To ignore the goals of Federal soldiers in favor of Copperheads “was tantamount to treason” in the eyes of Republicans and an increasing number of northerners.⁸⁰

In the 1863 election season, Curtin was prompt to correlate his upgraded political convictions to the recent contributions of African Americans on the battlefield. “When the rebels were on our soil,” he confided to a crowd, “I would have employed all agencies to drive him off. I would have armed black and white, and yellow men; I would have equipped the cloven-footed gentleman himself.” He also claimed to have “armed three hundred negroes” (likely with shovels) to construct fortifications outside Harrisburg as rebels unsuccessfully attempted to cross the Susquehanna downriver from the capital. In fact, these laborers performed with such vigor—along equally paid white workers no less—that “gentleman cheered and ladies

⁸⁰ Barnet Schecter, *The Devil's Own Work: The Civil War Draft Riots and the Fight to Reconstruct America*. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 262.

waved their handkerchiefs” in gratitude as the column passed through the city.⁸¹ Enlisting in vast numbers by late 1863, were not blacks also entitled to the benefactions of the governor known widely as the “soldier’s friend?”

His moral intuition regarding black rights were repressed by fears of political culpability. This sentiment was expressed by Harrisburg’s *Daily Patriot* as rebel invasion loomed. “Pennsylvania was afraid to allow the niggers to help her,” the newspaper stated. Eager black recruits were forced to formally enlist in Massachusetts. “Governor Curtin,” the paper continued, “would like to call upon the colored element about now, but dissent [sic]—he couldn’t see his way clear to the Pennsylvania vote if he chunked the nigger between him and the prejudices of the white element; politics had pulled the wool over the gubernatorial eyes”—restraining the governor’s liberalism.⁸² As the conflict progressed, Curtin’s views on the subject continued to change. By war’s end, Curtin demonstrated his ideological flexibility yet again during an 1866 journey to his hometown. There he “referred to the war as having its origin in human slavery.” He continued by “terming the American people a nation of Abolitionists. Proclaimed all men equal before the law.”⁸³ Curtin needed only to examine his own perceptions to see how profoundly the Union changed during his tenure.

The circumstances of the Altoona collaboration may have marked the beginning of Curtin’s personal and political transformation. The Address of Loyal Governors (co-authored by Curtin) spoke volumes about the Union war effort as it was and what it was to be.

Complimenting the Emancipation Proclamation with moral and forceful rhetoric, the governors’

⁸¹ “The Canvas for Governor,” *Press*, October 8, 1863, accessed January 18, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁸² “The War Meeting in Tanner’s Alley,” *Daily Patriot and Union*, June 10, 1863, accessed January 21, 2012, p. 3. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁸³ “Gov. A. G. Curtin, Hon. L. W. Hall and Gen. Anderson the Speakers!!” *Central Press*, August 31, 1866, accessed January 15, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

declaration was indicative of the evolving forms of liberalism Curtin embraced in the dual names of humanity and Union. The Emancipation Proclamation was a legal document, largely devoid of moral rhetoric and meaningful prose. But Curtin was among numerous Republicans who realized the inner meaning of Lincoln's law. The Proclamation was in fact "a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion" and served as a foundation ensuring all citizenry would be "forever free." How was such an action *not* a moral one?⁸⁴

By publicly denouncing slavery's dangers to democracy, Curtin embodied the growing antipathy toward the peculiar institution. The governor's activism encouraged (and even demanded) dynamic government action in ending slavery, bolstering the military, facilitating interstate cooperation, and conveying proactive support of Lincoln policies—methods that continued to become more inclusive as the war carried on. Curtin implemented such actions "believ[ing] that the blood of the heroes who have already fallen, and those who may yet give their lives to their country, will not have been shed in vain." Indeed, more blood would be shed in the years following the Emancipation Proclamation, but the carnage was necessary in preserving "the hope of humanity."

⁸⁴ Excerpt of Emancipation Proclamation from William Lee Miller, *President Lincoln: The Duty of a Statesman*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 264.

Chapter 3
“The Soldier’s Friend:”
Andrew Curtin and Military Welfare

Mrs. John Harris was aghast by the sights that greeted her as she rode into the desolate and drenched fields surrounding Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Having accumulated medical supplies and nursed the wounded on countless battlefields, Harris was rarely witness to carnage so complete and psychologically debilitating. A veteran member of the Ladies’ Aid Society, she still expressed difficulty in comprehending the scope of what she saw. “Am full of work and sorrow,” she despondently wrote during an interlude from her medical duties. “The appearance of things here beggars all description,” she continued. “Our dead lie unburied, and our wounded neglected. Numbers have been drowned by the sudden rising of the waters in the creek bottoms, and thousands of them are still naked and starving. God pity us!—pity us!”¹ On July 9, 1863, a mere five days after Robert E. Lee’s invading Army of Northern Virginia fled Pennsylvania, Harris wrote Governor Curtin of the scene that remained at the ravaged crossroads town:

“Gettysburg [July] 9, 1863
 Gov. Curtin – [Illegible]
 Surgeons greatly needed. Our own men neglected. The conditions of Rebels a disgrace to humanity. Fifty of our own men and Rebel dead are unburied, eaten by worms near the 2nd Division 2nd Corps hospital. What does it mean?
 Mrs. John Harris”²

Indeed, such was a question thousands of Americans were asking themselves by summer 1863. What was to come of all this death and tumult? Was the reunification of the country or the abrogation of slavery truly vindicated by the cost of such measures? As the third summer of the conflict marked new highs and lows, Curtin attempted to answer these questions for his

¹ Frank Moore, *Women of the War; Their Heroism and Self-sacrifice*. (Hartford, CT: S. S. Scranton & Company, 1868), 201.

² Telegraph from Harris to Curtin. Military Dispatches Books, 1861-1866. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives. File Box July 9-31, 1863. The first name of Mrs. John Harris is an uncertainty but the historical record suggests she served as a nurse at Manassas, Chancellorsville, and other major campaigns of the war. I have inserted some slight punctuation in her telegraph so as to make it more cohesive.

concerned constituents. He did so by explaining the human costs of war as necessary to protect the values of the nation. The governor's personal ideology continued to shift as these military losses expanded. The liberal spirit to which he ascribed once meant cultivating a government and society in which the autonomous individual could plant the seeds of his own success in a fair and economically viable atmosphere. By the third year of the Civil War, however, Curtin realized that protecting personal agency was not enough to either sustain or reward a large percentage of the Union's common soldiers or their deprived families. Desperate times did call for assertive measures. The government was not about to abandon the needs of its most deserving citizens.

Without the abilities to heal the wounds of war and make proper amends on the behalf of combatants coincided with Curtin's desires to establish new social standards. These actions revealed the changing nature of liberal thought as it merged with conceptions of a new nationalism. Pre-war ties between righteous citizenry and state were fortified out of necessity. Reaching this goal not only required a bolstered defense of the army, but additional civic aid in the forms of medical care, burials, and educations for burdened military families. The endeavor invoked patriotic implications and ultimately helped foster a nation "for the people," a phrase that may have never been uttered at Gettysburg had it not been for Curtin's deeds and sense of obligation to the "gallant soldiers."³

In the year leading to Gettysburg, no amount of well-wishing, speeches, or patriotic ceremonies could bolster the Union's war efforts in the eastern theater. Curtin's Pennsylvania Reserves endured some of the worst of the combat—fighting in the unsuccessful Peninsular Campaign to seize Richmond, helping to push the rebels from Maryland soil at Antietam, and

³ Curtin quoted in "Annual Message of the Governor," *Altoona Tribune*, January 7, 1863, accessed January 20, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

briefly penetrating the firm bulwark of Confederate defenses at Fredericksburg that December. As he had done at Antietam three months prior, Curtin once again headed efforts to secure passage and medical care for Pennsylvania's wounded. Curtin and a detachment of medical workers departed Washington on December 19, 1862 for Falmouth, Virginia with the intention of transferring the disabled. Initiatives headed by the governor revealed his longtime tendency to micromanage Pennsylvania's war efforts, a factor that possibly led to his downward spiral in physical and mental health. That said, pro-Republican newspapers lavished attention upon his works. In the view of *The Press*, Curtin "and his unceasing efforts in this humane undertaking are worthy of all praise."⁴ The recovery and recuperation of maimed soldiers proved a daunting but morally obligatory endeavor. As nurse Anna Morris Holstein reflected, humanity behooved loyal citizens to work "zealously" on behalf of the wounded. "[We] worked because there was irresistible impulse *to do, to act*."⁵

Caring for men scarred in battle expressed a civic religion, equal in patriotic significance to voting and citizenship. Rehabilitating the nation also required rehabilitating the troops afflicted in the process, restoring them as healed and active citizens to serve the nation in other forms. These measures served as living memorialization to the individual soldier and a moral testament to the society he defended. Harrisburg resident Kate Dean wrote to the organizers of a soldier fundraiser in March 1863 that she was honored to offer her "humble services in the aid of the common cause of our country . . . with that liberal spirit which will inspire me to continue in rendering all the services in my power to aid and relieve the sufferings and sorrows of the

⁴ "Gov. Curtin's Mission to Washington," *Press*, December 22, 1862, accessed January 24, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁵Paul A. Cimballa and Randall M. Miller, *Union Soldiers and the Northern Home Front: Wartime Experiences, Postwar Adjustments*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 130. In addition to nursing efforts, Holstein later helped preserve Valley Forge as a historic landmark.

wounded soldiers.”⁶ For Curtin and dedicated citizenry, public spirit and charity coalesced as a singular form of patriotic expression. But their work was far from over in 1862.

Rushing to Virginia once again following General Joseph Hooker’s defeat at Chancellorsville in May 1863, the governor visited the camp of the 148th Pennsylvania (partly recruited in Curtin’s home county) and learned of the regiment’s heavy losses, including the wounding of personal friend Colonel James Beaver. “Many noble fellows known to him had fallen,” admitted Captain Robert H. Forster of Curtin. “[M]any others were suffering from their painful wounds; and withal there was no success to cheer and compensate” them in their miserable condition. “Vain indeed were his efforts to cancel his sad emotions,” the captain said of his governor who emotionally broke down. The “few that heard his touching and pathetic words will ever forget it.”⁷

The strain of war increased. Pandemonium gripped Pennsylvania in the ensuing weeks. Seizing the initiative from his May victory, Robert E. Lee’s forces cloaked their movements northward via Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley to initiate yet another invasion into the North. Pennsylvania Railroad official Thomas Scott wrote Curtin with urgency on the night of June 15: “Get up a strong proclamation, calling upon our people to rise at once. There is not a moment to be lost. The rebels are moving in large force, and invasion cannot be checked excepting by immediate action.”⁸ Earlier that day, Lincoln issued his own proclamation requesting 100,000 militiamen, 50,000 of them from Pennsylvania, to help thwart the rebel advance.

Embarrassingly, Pennsylvania could not meet the bare minimum of troops asked of her. With no

⁶ “Interesting Correspondence,” *Daily Patriot and Union*, March 28, 1863, accessed January 24, 2012, p. 3. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁷ Captain Forster’s account featured in Cimballa and Miller, 22. His speech was delivered at a veterans’ club in 1877 and was subsequently featured in *History of Centre and Clinton Counties*.

⁸ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*; Series 1-Volume 2, 135.

strong presence of a standing militia force, the commonwealth could muster only 8,000 “emergency men”—some four thousand fewer men than the State of New York supplied.⁹ The frantic search for men and materiel carried on. But even in these times of desperation, politics could still remain supreme. When one southern Pennsylvanian telegraphed congressman and Curtin antagonist Thaddeus Stevens inquiring how the government intended to halt the invasion, the fiery Republican caustically replied, “send for [Curtin aide] McClure, he will stop them at the first toll-gate.”¹⁰

Although some Confederate columns came within a few miles of the Pennsylvania capitol, the bulk of the Army of Northern Virginia became engaged at the crossroads community of Gettysburg on July 1. The circumstances of the first day of battle did not bode well for the Federals, including the death of Curtin’s acquaintance General John Reynolds. Pushed back to high ground after losing the town, the Army of the Potomac settled in for the fight of its life. Among those in the thick of battle was Curtin’s cousin, Brigadier General David McMurtrie Gregg, who led a repulse of Confederate troops in a massive cavalry action east of town. Receiving bits of news here and there, Curtin grew increasingly anxious over his state’s fate. Even as battle raged some forty miles away on July 2, Curtin was still reaching out to fellow northern governors in the hope of obtaining additional troops. He desperately wrote to Governor Joel Parker of New Jersey that day asking, “[h]ow soon will you send forward more troops? I cannot magnify the necessity for their presence at the earliest possible moment.”¹¹ When all was said and done, Lee’s army was defeated. At least 10,000 corpses were strewn across the once pastoral fields of Adams County. Another 30,000 were left maimed and bleeding in the

⁹ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 91.

¹⁰ Egle, 370. Stevens is referring to Curtin associate Alexander K. McClure, one of Curtin’s most trusted aides. Stevens is poking fun at Curtin’s desires to improve state roads via tollgates.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1078.

torrential rainstorms that saturated the bleak fields on Independence Day. Both ecstatic and shocked, Curtin telegraphed two Bellefonte colleagues, “Lee is routed and his army is in flight. The pontoon he left at Williamsport destroyed and he cannot escape. The battles were terrible and casualties large—very large but the victory is complete.”¹² Union victory was fulfilling, but not as complete as Curtin had hoped, for Robert E. Lee had escaped again into Virginia.

The governor was correct in at least one assertion: the battle truly was terrible. As he had after many major battles, Curtin began receiving letters and telegrams from constituents inquiring about the fate of their loved ones in the military. Responding to Alfred Huidekoper of Meadville, he stated, “I regret to say your nephew has lost an arm.” The triumph at Gettysburg “has been achieved with the sacrifice of thousands of lives” in “the most desperate battles in history,” Curtin said.¹³ The fight was the bloodiest to take place in the history of the Western Hemisphere but it also marked a turning point for the nation. The fighting set the stage for a reinterpretation of the Union’s mission in the war, framing the conflict in moral terms of commitment and perseverance. Lincoln’s words delivered on a brisk morning that November consummated the highest ideals of that Union. Curtin’s deeds leading to that moment at Gettysburg helped bring fruition to Lincoln’s meaningful prose.

But that day was still four months away.

In the meantime, the governor assisted in coordinating relief efforts for the beleaguered Pennsylvania community inundated with bloodied combatants. The day after Lee began his retreat toward the Potomac, Curtin wrote Surgeon General William Hammond in Washington:

¹² Curtin to E. C. Hurns and H. N. McAllister, July 6, 1863, Military Dispatches Books, 1861-1866. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives. File Box July 1-8, 1863. Curtin sent many telegrams on this day repeating similar messages to multiple colleagues and officials. His excitement over victory is obvious.

¹³ Curtin to Alfred Huidekoper, Not dated. Military Dispatches Books, 1861-1866. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives. File Box July 9-31, 1863. The nephew in question was Lt. Col. Henry S. Huidekoper of the 150th Pennsylvania Infantry. He was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1905 for his actions at Gettysburg, in which he lost his right arm due to two wounds.

“You may be assured that our people will take the wounded to their homes and render every assistance and help that the most careful nursing may demand, and that our public buildings can be used as hospitals, to any extent.”¹⁴ But with Federal surgeons woefully undermanned, help was yet needed. Vivid descriptions of the scene were presented to Curtin through the many letters of Mrs. John Harris. “In the name of our dying soldiers,” she pleaded, “I ask you to allow competent surgeons to come here[.] Our dead are unburied and [the survivors] are living destitute and neglected.”¹⁵ In order to obtain an accurate picture of the situation, Curtin decided to see the battlefield for himself.

Arriving via train by July 11 with a small caravan of assistants and officials, Curtin was as taken aback by the slaughter as Harris was. As one report cited, visitors “were shocked and the heart sickened at the sights that presented themselves at every step. . . . [men] left wholly unburied. . . . And this, too, on Pennsylvania soil! Humanity shuddered at the sight, and called aloud for a remedy.”¹⁶ Touring the battlefield extensively, the governor sought to visit each Pennsylvania unit he came across. Thomas V. Cooper, a hospital steward, later wrote, Curtin “walked through the ranks of the wounded, now lying high upon the bank [of a creek], and again I noticed his marvelous remembrance of names and localities. He could and did call fully one-fourth by name, and when given the names of others he would cheerfully recall some family

¹⁴ “The Wounded in the Recent Battles,” *Daily Patriot and Union*, June 7, 1863, accessed January 3, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

¹⁵ Harris quoted in Curtin to Hammond, July 8, 1863. Military Dispatches Books, 1861-1866. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives. File Box July 1-8, 1863.

¹⁶ Edward Everett, O. O. Howard, and David Wills, *Revised Report Made to the Legislature of Pennsylvania, Relative to the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Embracing an Account of the Origin of the Undertaking; Address of Hon. Edward Everett, at Its Consecration, with the Dedicatory Speech of President Lincoln, and the Other Exercises of That Event; Together with the Address of Maj. Gen. O.O. Howard, Delivered July 4, 1866 [i.e. 1865], upon the Dedication of the Soldiers' National Monument and the Other Proceedings upon That Occasion*. (Harrisburg: Singerly & Myers, State Printers, 1867), 175. Also refer to Gabor S. Borritt, *The Gettysburg Gospel: The Lincoln Speech That Nobody Knows*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 36. Curtin arrived in Gettysburg on July 10 or July 11. Reports on the date of his arrival are conflicting.

associate or incident” from the past.¹⁷ Only weeks earlier, he visited Camp Curtin as the Confederates approached, noting to the recruits, “I will not betray you.”¹⁸ These same sentiments may have been in his thoughts as he surveyed Gettysburg’s damage. The governor expressed this obligation in the belief that the Union’s men were worthy of dedication in both life and death. From a political standpoint as well as a moral one, necessity urged proper action. A February 1862 measure passed by the Pennsylvania Legislature deemed as such, requiring care for the state’s dead and wounded wherever possible.¹⁹ Over 500 Pennsylvanians were killed in the battle, and if word of their ill-treatment spread, the situation had the potential to cost Curtin at the polls that fall.²⁰

The dead “traitors and rebels” with no “sentiment of patriotism,” however, would be offered no such pledge by Curtin on the fields of Gettysburg.²¹ The majority of Confederate dead remained in their shallow graves for nearly a decade.²² The “honored dead” did not include these southerners and the ultimately successful cause Lincoln, Curtin, and northerners exalted would render southern losses fruitless.²³ Despite the governor’s hopes that the wayward brethren of the South would someday return to the national family, his compassion had its limits. Gettysburg’s *Star-Sentinel* concurred to a degree, stating “common humanity” should permit southerners to reclaim their dead but not to allow for their burials “in our around *our* own

¹⁷ Egle, 369. The creek was likely White Run or Rock Creek located slightly south of Gettysburg.

¹⁸ “Governor Curtin’s Address to the Soldiers,” *Press*, June 20, 1863, accessed January 13, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

¹⁹ Coco, *Blighted Land*, 109.

²⁰ Gerard A. Patterson, *Debris of Battle: The Wounded of Gettysburg*. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 1997), 173.

²¹ Curtin’s reference to Confederates in “Governor Curtin’s Address,” *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, December 11, 1861, accessed January 13, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

²² Gregory A. Coco, *Wasted Valor: The Confederate Dead at Gettysburg*. (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1990), 146.

²³ John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation*. (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2005), 111.

National Cemetery.” Furthermore, “*our* state,” the paper declared, “should not make the purchase, nor should it be suspected.”²⁴

The idea for a soldiers’ cemetery on the battlefield originated among many, but most prominently with two local, rival attorneys: David McConaughy and David Wills. Three weeks after the fight, both lawyers sent individual letters to Curtin, posing possibilities to launch a concerted effort to recover and bury the North’s dead. Wills, acting as Curtin’s agent in the recovery, consolidated efforts by various states in gathering their lost men. Dr. Theodore Dimon of New York had approached Wills and proposed the dead be “disposed in this burial place by regiments and states with proper marks designating their graves.”²⁵ Wills and Curtin found the proposition admirable and completely appropriate. Capitalizing on the idea, Curtin wrote Wills on August 21: “Pennsylvania will be so highly honored by the possession within her limits of this soldier’s mausoleum.” With the assistance of her sister states, it would be Pennsylvania’s pride to help erect as “glorious a monument to patriotism and humanity, that it becomes her duty, as it is her melancholy pleasure, to yield in every reasonable way to the wishes and suggestions of the States.” The finished project would serve well for the “solemn uses of a national sepulchre.”²⁶

As during the Governors’ Conference one year earlier, Curtin revealed his hopes for bipartisan cooperation throughout the Soldiers’ National Cemetery construction and dedication. He returned to Altoona once again to head an Interstate Commission with governors and representatives from the North to discuss the plans he shared in an August letter to Wills.

According to William Saunders, the preeminent landscape architect chosen to design the burial

²⁴ Ibid., 114. February 2, 1864 excerpt from *Star-Sentinel*. Italics original to source.

²⁵ Martin R. Conway, “State Agents at Gettysburg And Their Role in Establishing The Soldiers National Cemetery.” Report dated February 1966. File 831. Vertical Files. Gettysburg National Military Park.

²⁶ Henry Sweetser Barrage, “The Cemetery” taken from “Gettysburg and Lincoln,” Adams County, PA Historical Society, File Box 190, 2-3.

ground, Curtin's original intention was to ask the states "for their sanction to remove the dead at the expense of Pennsylvania." His gesture "was not favorably entertained," for each state wished to pay homage to the dead in their own way. Thus, at the 1863 Altoona conference, the multi-state commission agreed to share the honor "to furnish a plan for the improvement of the cemetery grounds."²⁷ The burial site on Cemetery Hill was purchased for \$2,475.87, paid in full through the Pennsylvania Legislature at Curtin's bequest.²⁸

Although the grounds remained in the care of the state until 1871, it was among the first generation of *national* cemeteries in the truest sense—a serene memorial of contemplation filled with the remains of loyal Unionists bounded by a common cause and a common fate. The Union dead were buried among each other regardless of rank, class, or distinction. Northerners understood the concept of the cemetery's unique design, especially Curtin. As the dead were being disinterred from their shallow graves, he pleaded to a crowd in Harrisburg to comprehend the larger significances of the recent campaign: "[T]he Administration of the government of Pennsylvania sinks into insignificance when compared with the great struggle in which we are engaged for the vindication and supremacy the National Government—a struggle which involves the preservation of the national life itself."²⁹ Without a Union endowed by citizens' access to equality, that national life could never be sustained and the spirit that defined Curtin's own career could never be bequeathed to subsequent generations.

As the governor agreed with Saunders, the cemetery's design was elemental in conveying a visceral message to the grounds' visitors. The semi-circular headstones sweeping across the

²⁷ "William Saunders Account," Not dated. David Wills Correspondence, File 832. Vertical Files. Gettysburg National Military Park.

²⁸ "Governor's Message," *Central Press*, Friday, January 15, 1864, accessed January 27, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

²⁹ "Grand Ratification Meeting at Harrisburg. Serenade to Governor Curtin," *Huntingdon Globe*, August 12, 1863, accessed January 27, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

face of Cemetery Hill served as awe-inspiring and terrible tangibles of remembrance. Single graves embodied individualism—a concept key to liberals. At the same time, recognizing the costs of war in totality served as an emotional and spiritual symbol of nationalist unity.³⁰ The collective human price of these individuals as a whole denoted their gift to the betterment of society. In return, a grateful nation laid them to rest with its highest honors. Northerners realized the whole was greater than the sum of its parts, encapsulating the stark contrast and greatest strength of the Union over the Confederacy.

Well into autumn, Curtin was still receiving letters and appeals from families as far away as the Midwest who were continuing the search for lost family at Gettysburg. One personal plea was from John Hazenmuller, who travelled to Harrisburg from Minnesota in the hopes of speaking with the governor to find the remains of a fallen relative. The missing man was Captain Louis Muller, who was shot through the skull in the fierce and costly charge of the 1st Minnesota Infantry on July 2. Curtin sent the despondent Minnesotan off to the battlefield with a note for Wills stating, “Please aid M. Hazenmuller in any way you can in finding the remains.” Fortunately, Muller’s body was discovered on the field and was transported home for burial in Bayport, Minnesota. Only twenty-six years of age when he met his untimely demise, Muller was an immigrant from Switzerland and was wounded and promoted on multiple occasions throughout his two years of service.³¹ Once criticized for his ties to Know-Nothingism’s anti-

³⁰ Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes toward Death, 1799-1883*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 129.

³¹ Curtin to Wills, October 7, 1863. Communication Artifacts, catalog item number: GETT 43643. Gettysburg National Military Park Collections. Information on Capt. Louis Muller written by Ranger Paul M. Schevchuk, NPS. Also refer to Brian Leehan, *Pale Horse at Plum Run: The First Minnesota at Gettysburg*. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2002), 61, 79, and 226 n.

immigrant views, during the war Curtin did not spurn immigrants as he once had done to African Americans.³²

Proving their citizenship, immigrants such as Muller sanctified their civic enfranchisement with blood. Curtin realized that foreigners-turned-soldiers were entitled to the same opportunities his father enjoyed as an immigrant iron founder. As one editorialist wrote years earlier, “A liberal spirit pervades the American republic in this nineteenth century; and religious warfare, and sectarian bigotry can never become a successful or permanent element of American politics.”³³ If immigrants and members of shunned denominations sought citizenship and security, they should have been granted as much if they were willing to demonstrate loyalty. Narrow-mindedness had no place in a society that sought domestic growth. By recognizing their mettle at Gettysburg, Curtin accepted many immigrants into the folds of nationalism.

Campaigning for Union

Northerners believed that their mission was the one of pure democracy, liberty, and individual rights. As a result, foreigners both domestic and abroad arrived at similar conclusions. In doing so, America “demonstrated to the world the viability of liberal nationalism.”³⁴ Such was one of many virtuous ideals Lincoln validated when he spoke of the “new birth of freedom” weeks later. In the interim, however, Curtin needed to seize victory in an uphill re-election campaign. Initially, Curtin had little desire to run for re-election given his poor health and the daily trials of war, but Lincoln convinced him otherwise. Curtin’s gubernatorial opponent was the staunchly

³² “Curtin and Know-nothingism,” *Democratic Watchman*, August 15, 1863, accessed January 28, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

³³ “Democratic Principles Ever The Same,” *Daily Morning Post*, September 1, 1854, accessed January 28, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

³⁴ Paludan, 285.

Democratic, anti-war advocate, and highly experienced state Supreme Court justice George W. Woodward.

Circling the state on the campaign trail in the frantic months between Lee's invasion and the October election, Curtin spent an extended period of time in the western regions of the state courting the votes of sailors on the coast of Lake Erie and stumping in the hardscrabble oil fields of Warren and Crawford Counties. At a mass gathering on September 10, 1863 (the fiftieth anniversary of Perry's victory on Lake Erie), Curtin again alluded to the noble efforts of the nation's earliest generations by singling out a veteran seaman of the 1813 battle and lauding him before the crowd of thousands. If citizens accepted the false promises of Democrats, Curtin warned, the endeavors of current combatants as well as the decades-old efforts of this aged sailor would have been to no avail. To support Woodward was to disfranchise the soldier, the governor claimed. Woodward's Pennsylvania Supreme Court "resolution endorsing and sympathizing with Vallandigham" that limited soldier voting rights created hesitation amongst many Keystone voters.³⁵ Curtin's displeasure with Woodward opinions opposing Lincoln's policies of enlistment, conscription, and emancipation were grounded in distinct ideological convictions.

Curtin had relative ease in securing the support of Union troops in his re-election campaign, as did Lincoln the following year. Whereas many Democrats sought to cease further bloodshed in what they felt was an unwarranted conflict, Republicans did not want the nation's losses to be for nothing. Regardless of some initial discontent with emancipation measures and mismanagement of the war, northern combatants also did not wish the agonies of their comrades to be in vain. Curtin shared great anxiety with Union soldiers over such a dismal prospect, and sought to convey this attitude to constituents. His September 1863 rally in Erie presented itself

³⁵ "An Editorial Letter," *Press*, Tuesday, September 22, 1863, accessed January 12, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University. The War of 1812 veteran's name in question was Ben Flemming.

as an ideal venue to illustrate these concurrent perspectives. In a moving ceremony the tattered colors of the 83rd Pennsylvania Infantry, a local regiment, were unfurled to the crowd before Curtin. The brigade commander, Colonel Strong Vincent, was mortally wounded on the slopes of Little Round Top on July 2, 1863. Upon his departure to the service, Vincent wrote his wife, “If I live, we will rejoice over our country's success. If I fall, remember you have given your husband to the most righteous cause that ever widowed a woman.”³⁶ Curtin would have agreed with Vincent’s sentiments. Without a nation sustained by the righteous capacity for growth through merit, civic and republican virtue could not survive. Vincent himself could not have risen to his various posts in life had it not been for such ideals. The goals of a more perfect Union could never endure if that union was indefinitely fragmented by civil war.³⁷

A shadow of the mighty regiment it once was, the remnant of the 83rd Pennsylvania was under the leadership of Captain John Graham in autumn 1863. “Graham took ground openly in favor of the Governor, and abjured the present Democratic organization, to which he had [previously] belonged.” He was a Curtin man now, and intended to campaign for him throughout Erie County. Clutching the shredded regimental colors, another veteran of the 83rd who lost his leg in the Seven Days battles also converted to the Republican Party because its local members elected him treasurer of the county. As Philadelphia’s *Press* touted, “Such are the examples that will go to the people as substantial proofs of the generosity of the Republican party, and as a substantial rewards for the brave and self-sacrificing” soldiers committed to maintaining the national Union.³⁸ Such accolades reflected Curtin’s philosophy regarding soldiers. All Federal troops, dead and alive, were entitled to benefits and recognitions befitting

³⁶ Samuel P. Bates, *Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: T.H. Davis & Company, 1875, 432.

³⁷ For additional insights on republicanism and virtue refer to Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *The American Civil War: This Mighty Scourge of War*. (Oxford: Osprey, 2003) and Walter A. McDougall’s *Throes of Democracy: The American Civil War Era, 1829-1877*. (New York: Harper, 2008).

³⁸ “An Editorial Letter,” *Press*, Tuesday, September 22, 1863.

their contributions. Nurturing opportunity and demonstrating concern for the plight of troops and their families became an ethical duty equal in worthiness to military recruitment. State welfare was required to heal the visible as well as invisible wounds of war in the name of rebuilding the shattered nation. Times of brutal yet necessary inhumanity simultaneously called for rehabilitating instances of compassion. Curtin, the “Soldier’s Friend,” accepted this fact with conviction.

Many in the ranks were willing to corroborate Curtin’s unofficial title of “friend.” As a soldier of the 11th Pennsylvania Cavalry exclaimed in an editorial in Wellsboro, Pennsylvania’s *Agitator*, “The soldier points to Andrew G. Curtin as his friend, who has striven to make his pathway as pleasant as may be; with the other hand he indicates Judge Woodward as his enemy who has attempted to snatch from us that right sacred to every citizen of the United States.” In the cavalryman’s view, the perceived tactics of Woodward and his allies “disenfranchised” soldiers and deprived “them of the right of suffrage,” reducing “them to mere machines propelled at the discretion of the their master like the slave.”³⁹ Likewise, Harrisburg’s *Evening Telegraph* opined, “The soldiers in the Mexican war were allowed to vote because that war was waged to benefit slavery. The soldiers in the war against rebellion have been disenfranchised because the rebellion is carried on *for* the benefit of slavery.”⁴⁰

Outbursts were frequent in the Republican press in the weeks prior to the 1863 election, painting Woodward as a contemptible judge who despised the Union and hated any soldier who fought for it. These rumors, combined with Curtin’s genuine efforts on the soldiers’ behalf,

³⁹ “From the 11th Pennsylvania Cavalry,” *Agitator*, Wednesday, October 21, 1863, accessed January 3, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University. The soldier who wrote this letter signed his name only as “M. D. B.” However, after consulting the regimental muster rolls of the 11th, I have come to the conclusion that the soldier in question was likely Private Morris (or Maurice) D. Bailey of Company F.

⁴⁰ “The American Soldier,” *Evening Telegraph*, Monday, August 24, 1863, accessed January 13, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University. Italics added.

provided the governor an edge in a narrow race. The political hype achieved convincing results, even on troops who did not have the ability to vote. Pennsylvanians incarcerated in the hellish confines “in the Libby Prison at Richmond observed the Election Day, and opened the polls accordingly. There were 114 votes cast of which Curtin received 96, Woodward 18, scattering 1.”⁴¹

Pennsylvania troops could not legally vote unless they found themselves on leave in their home state, but through their informal ballots cast in camps and prisons they desired to interject their views into the discourse of the election.⁴² Private William Williams wrote, “I would like to see Cirtain a lecting again. I think we can’t git a better man then he is.” Williams hoped to show those Democrats “a trick or two.”⁴³ Woodward’s fallout with many in the military may have been due to his ardent states’ rights principles above anything else. Notions of state sovereignty did exist in the North, but other than a smattering of state judges who possessed little jurisdiction outside the courts, few sensible northern politicians invoked the phrase to limit the flexibility of the government or its soldiers. Nevertheless, most citizens above the Mason-Dixon Line were nationalists, sometimes states’ rights nationalists, but most often Union advocates who believed the nation had the rights and the means to save itself from dissolution.⁴⁴

Looking beyond political advantage, Curtin pursued a course that empowered government and its combatants. His sense of nationalism, though earnest, could still be unrelenting toward opponents. He possessed little fear of slandering pundits and politicians with differing governing convictions or partisan motivations. “I cannot understand that bogus loyalty

⁴¹ Untitled news brief, *Weekly Mariettan*, November 7, 1863, accessed January 14, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University. Reports of voting within numerous Pennsylvania companies or regiments reveal similar voting patterns.

⁴² Orr, “A Viler Enemy,” 190.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁴⁴ Phillip Shaw Paludan, *A People's Contest: The Union and Civil War, 1861-1865*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 380.

which professes loyalty to the Government and yet refuses to support the President,” Curtin stated. “I have repeatedly said, and I say it now, that the man who, by word or deed, holds back his fellow man from joining the armies of the Republic, and filling up their diminished ranks, or who in any way obstructs the execution of the national will in this war, is a traitor.”⁴⁵

Concurrent with decades of campaign tactics, those not supporting the war were depicted as not supportive of the troops in the field. Republicans embraced this ploy with great ferocity in 1863 and 1864. Soldiers were incensed by rumor of dissent at home. “It is justice to the soldier that every traitor in the North be muzzled,” members of the 148th Pennsylvania editorialized. “We want no fire in the rear. We are willing to fight the solid legions and the guerillas of the South, but not the *gorillas* of the North.”⁴⁶ Likewise, the majority of Republicans were unwilling to contemplate, let alone abide by, Democratic impositions. Settling for some derivative of the perfected Union Republicans desired was nothing less than insult to severe national injury. Northerners in the field also realized this fact. However, soldier displeasure with Democrats did not always equate to their disavowal of them. Soon realizing that the sanctity of a restored Union combined with the necessary extinction of slavery was, in the words of historian Chandra Manning, “above politics,” many Democrats increasingly picked their fights elsewhere. But some soldiers considered the heated political process a natural component of the democracy they were defending.⁴⁷ They recognized the fact that their deeds not only had the power to save the nation, but also create it anew. As Secretary of the Senate John W. Forney declared at a Curtin rally in 1863: “This is a struggle for all time—not for to-day or to-morrow,

⁴⁵ “Philadelphia’s Reception of Governor Curtin –Arrival at Manayunk,” *Philadelphia Press*, October 12, 1863, accessed January 3, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁴⁶ “Letter from the Centre county Regiment,” *Central Press*, April 24, 1863, accessed January 23, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University. Italics shown as in original document.

⁴⁷ Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*, 100.

or next year, but for all coming years.⁴⁸ The Civil War was ultimately invoked as a deliverance of mankind, even to men not yet born. Recognizing all governments were flawed to varying degrees, Curtin consistently urged the need to “proclaim to all the world that this Government, the best one that was ever made, is to be sustained by power.”⁴⁹

While Curtin savored widespread support among Pennsylvania troops, he was far from relishing in universal approval from them. One private camped near Warrenton, Virginia wrote Gettysburg’s *Compiler* that Curtin being depicted as the “soldiers’ candidate” was nothing more than pure “balderdash.” The infantryman contended, “[t]he Abolition wing of the honored sons of Pennsylvania support *Andy*; but the large, conservative, Democratic wing jump over *Andy*, and go in for the great statesman, Geo. W. Woodward for Governor.”⁵⁰ These words illustrated the beliefs of a contingent of Federal soldiers who grew increasingly frustrated with the revised war aims and tactics of the Union, especially those methods including emancipation. Civilians on the home front expressed similar anger regarding conscription. “I think the organization to resist the draft in Schuylkill, Luzerne and Carbon Counties is very formidable,” Curtin wrote Stanton of discontent miners following the passage of the Militia Act in 1862. “I wish to crush resistance so effectively that the like will not occur again,” he concluded.⁵¹ Curtin faced similar dilemmas in the state’s anthracite region, where the already beleaguered Irish immigrants were especially angered with the changing face of the political situation. “The draft will make misery

⁴⁸ “The Meeting in Independence Square,” *Philadelphia Press*, October 12, 1863, p. 1.

⁴⁹ “Union Meeting in the Thirteenth Ward,” *Press*, September 25, 1863, accessed January 19, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁵⁰ “Curtin’s ‘Soldier’ Dodge Played Out,” *The Compiler*, October 12, 1863, accessed January 21, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University. Italics shown as in original source.

⁵¹ Grace Palladino, *Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State in the Anthracite Regions of Pennsylvania, 1840-1868*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 102.

in many families,” said miller Isaac B. Taylor in a letter to Curtin. If he lost his son, he would be broke, Taylor admitted.⁵²

Frustrated over the draft and emancipation, workers had no qualms in resisting conscription and federal authorities. Seeking shelter with complicit neighbors, they evaded provost marshals and established tightly knit bands of dissention. The end results were tantamount to some of the deadliest draft resistance in U. S. History. Curtin viewed the uprisings as nothing less than dastardly conspiracies to undermine the Union at home.⁵³ Like Woodward and other Democrats, resisters did not subscribe to enhanced visions of liberalism and rejected the empowered role of government in their local communities.

Curtin’s slim re-election victory on October 13, 1863 was a testament to this waning enthusiasm for the war. Of over a half million votes cast, Curtin’s victory was determined by a mere 15,000 ballots—less than half the margin of his election win three years earlier.⁵⁴ Not long after Curtin’s second inaugural, a hotel owner in Philipsburg hoisted a banner above his establishment that declared, “Death to Copperheads.”⁵⁵ As the election results revealed, the commonwealth was truly split. One scholar describes Curtin’s dilemma on the home front as a heated case of “imperfect nationalism” in which support for the war and Republicans was anything but universal.⁵⁶ He felt their rebellious actions during the conflict inhibited the Union’s military capacities. Such laborers received no sympathy from the governor who proclaimed the

⁵² Ibid., 96.

⁵³ Ibid., xii-xiii.

⁵⁴ Harold Cox, *Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1789-2004. Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Election Returns 1863*. Wilkes University, November 4, 2000, accessed January 29, 2012. <<http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/gov/PaGov1863.html>>. Curtin received 269,506 votes while Woodward received 254,171. 51.46% to 48.54%, respectively.

⁵⁵ Sandow, 97.

⁵⁶ William Blair, “We Are Coming, Father Abraham—Eventually: The Problem of Northern Nationalism in the Pennsylvania Recruiting Drives of 1862,” in *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*, ed. Joan E. Cashin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 206.

necessity of “protection to labor.”⁵⁷ If workers could not care for the welfare of the Union, that same Union need not care for them. Support had to be mutual.

The same could not be said in some instances of the 1863 race. Curtin lost Adams County and its county seat of Gettysburg by 228 votes, a rather embarrassing statistic considering the level of work he committed to the community’s recovery.⁵⁸ He nevertheless looked toward the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery with affection and solemnity. Realizing that the burial ground’s creation eclipsed the individual prestige of Pennsylvania, the “consecration” was a day of national recognition for all the states. The governor played a central role throughout the process, as one reporter testified of the cemetery: “Its conception originated with Governor Andrew G. Curtin, the fast and firm friend of the soldier, whom he assists in life, and to whose noble memory, in death, he is among the first to pay a noble tribute.”⁵⁹

“A Noble Idea”

Pittsburgh’s *Presbyterian Banner* reported that Andrew Curtin “accomplished a good deed in the part he acted toward the furnishing of a cemetery for the noble Americans who fell” at Gettysburg.⁶⁰ The retrieval, identification, and final interment of the Union dead proved depressing, but also reassuring to their families. Many found solace in the fact that their loved ones died the good death in the name of the good cause. The cemetery exposed feelings of reassurance and solace as much as it did loss and grief.⁶¹ For Curtin, it was the “loyal and

⁵⁷ Egle, 335.

⁵⁸ Cox, *Pennsylvania Election Statistics: 1789-2004*.

⁵⁹ “The National Cemetery at Gettysburg,” *Press*, Thursday, November 12, 1863, accessed January 12, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁶⁰ “A Cemetery for the Heroes that Fell at the Battle of Gettysburg,” *Presbyterian Banner*, Wednesday, November 25, 1863, accessed January 13, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁶¹ Mitchell, *Vacant Chair*, 143. Curtin also lost his home county, Centre County, by over 300 votes.

intrepid spirit” of the people that ultimately granted them victory in this consequential decision.⁶²

The vast undertaking required a reflection of those who had died and contemplation for those who were yet to die.

Only hours before Curtin’s arrival in Gettysburg, the crowds of spectators funneling into the town square begged Lincoln and Secretary Seward for speeches. The president, still attempting to compose of his oration for the next morning, spoke only a few humorous words to the carnival-like crowd from the David Wills home. Seward on the other hand, delivered a frequently overlooked oration that evaluated the ongoing war as efficiently as anybody could. Americans’ refusal to abolish slavery and “avert the catastrophe of civil war” in the young nation was now “deluging it in blood.” He prayed for a swift end to the rebellion but above all, he wished for citizens to realize “that this Union is a reality” and “that we owe it to our country and to mankind that this war shall have for its conclusion the establishing of the principle of democratic government.”⁶³ Like Seward, Curtin agreed that the United States and the war’s outcome were indeed “the hope of humanity,” for Americans but also for citizens anywhere who yearned for democracy and a fair share. At a formal banquet hosted by General Richard Busted in New York two weeks earlier, Curtin echoed the sentiments of Seward and his president. “We must remember,” he argued, “that all of humanity is all of one family. It is made up of the living and the dead, and those who have gone before us have shed their benefactions upon us by the good works they have done.”⁶⁴ The ceremony on November 19 not only helped solidify this Republican argument, it immortalized it.

⁶² Reed, 446.

⁶³ “A Cemetery for the Heroes that Fell at the Battle of Gettysburg,” *Presbyterian Banner*, Wednesday, November 25, 1863, p. 2, accessed January 13, 2012. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁶⁴ “Banquet to Governor Curtin,” *Press*. Thursday, November 5, 1863, accessed January 14, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

The presence of some 15,000 attendees at the cemetery ceremony at Gettysburg “testified the devotion of the people to Liberty, their firm purpose to maintain it, and their profound reverence for those who have already given their lives in its defence,” said one correspondent. Papers wrote that the Union “has been for some time familiar with the fact, that the establishment of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg for the interment of the remains of those who fought and died in the memorable struggle of July, originated with Gov. Curtin. It was a noble idea, prompted by the highest patriotism and holiest affection for the memory of the brave and gallant men.”⁶⁵ The theme of the dedication embodied the words of Pericles, who over two millennia earlier stated at the establishment of another military cemetery: “Comfort, therefore not condolence, is what I have to offer to the parents of the dead who may be here.”⁶⁶ As writer Gary Wills argues, a resting place for the dead had to be transformed into an outdoor classroom for the living.⁶⁷

Realizing the significance of the day’s events, Curtin brought his twelve year-old son, William, to witness the ceremonies and the speeches of Edward Everett and President Lincoln. The father and son sat only paces away on the speakers’ platform as Lincoln rose to deliver his “few appropriate remarks.” The concise oration struck a chord with Curtin. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address shared key beliefs and goals with the proclamation of loyal governors Curtin wrote with Governor Andrew a year previously. The governors’ collective statement proclaimed, “We believe that the blood of the heroes who have already fallen, and those who may yet give their lives to the country, will not have been shed in vain.”⁶⁸ In 1863, even more so

⁶⁵ “Dedication of the National Cemetery,” *Franklin Repository*, November 25, 1863, accessed January 3, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁶⁶ Michael Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Identify, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 234.

⁶⁷ Gary Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 65.

⁶⁸ Egle, 319.

than in 1862, Republican stalwarts knew well “the great task remaining” would be a long and bloody affair but also an essential one.

Lincoln’s and Curtin’s references to soldier efforts undertaken “not in vain” recalled biblical sacrifices, especially those of Christ. The common efforts of Christ and soldiers to save mankind were drawn from passages such as: “if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” Salvation was delivered through sacrifice and, in turn, salvation initiated “a new birth of freedom.”⁶⁹ In order for a society based in personal liberty and nationalism to endure, that society needed to redefine itself.⁷⁰ In the Union’s case, to preserve was to create anew.⁷¹ Lincoln achieved this goal through political and oratorical means; and Curtin followed suit. “[S]urely the nation that has provided all of this,” the governor argued, “is destined to come out of the contest purified, and as with a new birth, to march onward in the fulfillment of her destiny.”⁷²

Fulfillment of that obligation did not end at the cemetery’s dedication, which was only partially completed when Lincoln spoke. Months of work remained to accomplish the task. In accordance with the plans agreed to during a December 17, 1863 meeting in Harrisburg (including many of the governors who had met in Altoona the year before), the Soldiers’ National Cemetery was officially granted to the care of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The state agreed to care for the grounds and graves in perpetuity in the name of all the northern states that contributed to the care of the property. The meeting also requested that Pennsylvania

⁶⁹ A. E. Elmore, *Lincoln's Gettysburg Address: Echoes of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 121.

⁷⁰ James P. Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism: The Troubled Odyssey of the Liberal Idea*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Publishing, 1996), 198.

⁷¹ Kent Gramm, *November: Lincoln's Elegy at Gettysburg*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), ii. Phrase derived from quote by Jacqueline Kennedy stating, “When a civilization is in crisis, to preserve is to create.”

⁷² “Pittsburg, June 1,” *Evening Telegraph*, June 2, 1864, accessed February 2, 2012 p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University. Curtin is speaking in reference to charitable works for soldiers and their families at the Sanitary Fair in Pittsburgh.

establish a “corporation” of trustees composed of numerous governors and state officials in the name of national and bipartisan unity. As of that winter, the cost for the removal of the dead on the battlefield totaled \$5,209.38. The estimated cost for completion of the cemetery was \$63,500—considered a small price compared to the one paid by the men buried on the grounds.⁷³

The efforts were tiring. Curtin’s fatigue continued well past his second inauguration on January 19, 1864. Delivered to the state legislature, the speech was far less detailed and grandiose than the address he delivered three years prior. Much had changed, including the governor himself. His adherence to the Union was one aspect that had not been altered. He pledged to his fellow leaders, “I will give my whole moral and official power to the prosecution of the war.” For him, the preservation of the national life was “the first, highest, noblest duty of the citizen; it is his protection in person, property, and all civil and religious privileges; and for its perpetuity in form and power he owes all his efforts, his influence, his means, and his life.” With rebellion’s potential to destroy the Union, “no real freedom can prevail, and no government authority consistent with the genius of our free institutions can properly operate,” he said. Ultimate victory required the people to “withhold no power which can strengthen the government in this conflict.” To “wield the might of the government for its own preservation” was the only way to achieve complete success and sustain “the valor of our troops.”⁷⁴

Curtin fully subscribed to Lincoln’s belief that to ensure the survival of democracy, “no choice was left but to call out the war power of the Government.”⁷⁵ A fair government void of

⁷³ “The Gettysburg Cemetery,” *Huntingdon Globe*, Wednesday, January 13, 1864, accessed January 12, 2012, p. 3. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University. The Union states that contributed to the creation of the National Cemetery in one form or another included Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. However, not all states were present at the December 1863 conference. The cost for the removal of the dead was recorded in Curtin’s January 1864 address to the Pennsylvania Legislature.

⁷⁴ Egle, 171-2.

⁷⁵ Lincoln quoted in Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 99.

despotism that allowed free citizens “to have a fair chance in the race of life” was the liberal dream—and the military was a major apparatus in securing that ambition.⁷⁶ The trick was to foster a government neither too oppressive nor too powerless. As Lincoln admitted, “Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?”⁷⁷ In his first message to Congress, Lincoln referred to this conundrum as the “inherent, and fatal weakness” of all republics. The fate of the republic in question, however, rested largely in the deeds of its soldiers. Gettysburg proved that.

“Children of the Commonwealth”

Curtin’s liberalism was defined by a multitude of factors ranging from civic, economic, and moral obligations to his constituents. In a variety of ways, his promotional support of Sanitary Fairs hosted by the United States Sanitary Commission and United States Christian Commission—predecessors of the American Red Cross—illustrated these commitments to soldier care. The Great Central Fair beginning June 7, 1864 at Philadelphia’s Fair Buildings on Logan Square was one of the largest such charitable events of the war. One newspaper coined the event “A Grand Offering to Patriotism and Humanity.”⁷⁸ Like financier and philanthropist Jay Cooke, Curtin felt the fairs were part of a higher calling. Cooke, for one, “crafted a classical liberal understanding of patriotism, one in which the appetitive actions of self-serving individuals would combine to produce the greatest public good.” This, in turn, fostered “preeminent national loyalty” and patriotism.⁷⁹ By improving the state of the nation, soldiers

⁷⁶ Lincoln quoted in Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It*. (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1948), 160.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁷⁸ “Inaugural Ceremonies,” *Press*, June 8, 1864, accessed January 3, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁷⁹ Lawson, 41.

sought to improve their own conditions in the game of life. This philosophy illustrated the hopes and promises of American civilization. Working toward combined moral and civic betterment, an 1861 educational journal proclaimed of the nation:

“The Union is the grand idea of Government . . . and the men that enjoy its blessings should maintain their own rights under its authority, by respecting and sustaining with a liberal spirit the rights of others. In the right of opinion, protection, consists the freedom of the American citizen, and in the spirit of toleration it would encourage, is to be found our security and the perpetuation of our liberty.”⁸⁰

Ardently dedicated and devout, members of the commissions believed each individual soldier determined his own fate and sanctification. Accepting the dual missions of God and country would allow him to cast sin away and strive toward “moral perfection” within his nation and himself.⁸¹ By raising funds, comforting the physically and spiritually wounded, and grieving the dead, the commissions helped to convey these testaments with great zeal and efficiency.

Curtin was drawn to these organizations for the same reasons Federal troops were. Like other leaders present at the Great Fair, Curtin correlated the goals of the Almighty and the Union’s soldiers as one in the same by declaring at the fair, “[L]et me dedicate this great building to the American soldier, who wants no eulogium for his love of country but obedience to God.”⁸² The efforts provided comfort amidst daily soldier grief and solacing as many of those same soldiers neared death. To be reassured that the sufferings of they and fellow comrades truly possessed meaning was perhaps the greatest consolation to those with mortal illnesses and

⁸⁰ *The Journal of the Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the National Teachers' Association, Held in Buffalo, N.Y., August 8, 9 and 10, 1860.* (Georgetown: Waters & Hunt, 1861), 71.

⁸¹ Lorien Foote, *The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Manhood, Honor, and Violence in the Union Army.* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 20.

⁸² “Inaugural Ceremonies,” *Press*, June 8, 1864, accessed January 3, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers.* Penn State University.

wounds.⁸³ Such was happening on a daily basis as Union forces simultaneously slugged their way through Tennessee, Georgia, and Virginia.

Though promising short remarks, Curtin could not help but praise “the private soldier of the Republic,” denoting him as “the true nobleman of this land.” The governor went on to reaffirm his own dedication to the common soldier in the name of the cause he struggled for. “He falls with unrecorded name,” Curtin sadly but proudly boasted. “[H]e falls in the army for small pay; no pageants mark his funeral; he is buried, perhaps, at Gettysburg, where there are a thousand graves of the unknown. And while you minister comfort for him when he is sick and wounded, pray, in God’s name, do not forget his wife and orphans when he falls.” Curtin again asked his fellow northerners to place aside partisan discrepancies by “forget[ting] all differences in politics, in sect, in caste, and religion, and declare for our bleeding and distracted country.”⁸⁴ With his last gubernatorial election behind him, partisan bickering became less a necessity. Politicking aside, Curtin remarked to the legislature in an “Appeal” that the altruistic undertakings of fairs across the nation were a true grassroots movement embodying the unselfishness of citizenry: “Throughout the cities, towns, villages, hamlets, farm-houses of the Commonwealth, are found the Heaven-directed-benefactors” who work tirelessly in the “holiest of good works.”⁸⁵

The civic virtue Curtin and many citizens advocated formed societal spirituality in which devotion to nation was second only to devotion to their Creator. Reverend Joseph Fransioli of New York said as much in his July 1863 homily on patriotism by declaring, “patriotism is not only a social virtue, commanding respect, but a Christian virtue, to be rewarded by the blessings

⁸³ “The Great Central Fair,” *Daily Evening Bulletin*, June 8, 1864, accessed January 18, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ “An Appeal from Gov. Curtin,” *Evening Telegraph*, April 16, 1864, accessed January 19, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

of God, here and after.” The Federal dead of Gettysburg and other battles could not indulge in the fruits of their own toil, but were justly delivered their heavenly rewards in the name of humanity.⁸⁶

As Curtin knew, the cost of maintaining humanity was increasing at an alarming rate. Ulysses Grant’s Overland Campaign began only a month earlier and became one of the bloodiest military expeditions of the war. The day prior to Curtin’s oration, some 350 miles southeast of Pittsburgh, the grim actions around Cold Harbor, Virginia commenced, inflicting an average of over 1,000 Federal casualties per day for nearly two weeks.⁸⁷ Curtin, and Lincoln for that matter, had no other option but to believe that the carnage was tragically worthwhile. As Henry Ward Beecher noted, each individual death in the war could mean a thousand or more happier lives in the future. Citizens sought meaning to the war to justify the extreme loss.⁸⁸ Curtin at times feared the possibility of his own personal loss as well. The governor’s half-brother, John, commanded a brigade of Pennsylvanians and New Englanders at Cold Harbor, surviving only to be wounded in the shoulder later that month at Petersburg.⁸⁹

The misery continued for nearly another year. But when Curtin was informed of the fall of Richmond in April 1865, he released a public proclamation stating, “Let us give Glory to the Lord who hath given us the victory. The Republic is saved.” May Almighty God “look favorably on us, and make us the Instruments to establish the Right,—to vindicate the principles

⁸⁶ Rev. Joseph Fransioli, “Patriotism, A Christian Virtue: A Sermon Preached by the Rev. Joseph Fransioli, At St. Peter’s (Catholic) Church, Brooklyn, July 26th, 1863.” (Brooklyn: Loyal Publication Society, 1863), 2-3. Italics as shown in original source.

⁸⁷ For a very detailed account on facts, figures, and losses at Cold Harbor, refer to Appendix 2 in Ernest B. Furgurson’s *Not War but Murder: Cold Harbor, 1864*. (New York: Knopf, 2000), 277-80.

⁸⁸ Paludan, 263-4.

⁸⁹ Joseph Gould, *The Story of the Forty-eighth; a Record of the Campaigns of the Forty-eighth Regiment Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteer Infantry during the Four Eventful Years of Its Service in the War for the Preservation of the Union*. (Philadelphia: Arranged by F.H. Taylor; Printed by Alfred M. Slocum, 1908), 203. John I. Curtin was wounded on June 18, 1864. He commanded the 1st Brigade of the Second Division of the Union’s Ninth Army Corps at the time of his injury.

of Free Government,—and to prove the certainty of Divine Justice.”⁹⁰ Union victory in 1865 ensured that a democracy of, by, and for the people could survive even amidst a conflict that claimed well over 625,000 lives. A result of the struggle was a fusion of liberalism and nationalism to the point that the ideologies became inseparable.⁹¹ “We live in an age,” wrote liberal intellectual and humanitarian Francis Lieber, “when the word is Nationalism, not Denationalization.” Governance by consent represented dual fidelity between a country and its people.⁹² For Curtin, this wartime achievement only reinforced his personal tenets formed during that war. A republic existed for its citizens, and vice versa. The war lent moral force to the national senses of identity and purpose while simultaneously offering it broader definitions of freedom at an institutional level.⁹³ Nationalistic liberalism forged by civil war successfully nurtured the goal of a more perfected Union.

Efforts for the betterment of that society did not cease with the war’s conclusion. Having championed the supremacy of the nation, Curtin focused many of his postwar efforts on social reform and institutional change. In his annual message to the legislature in January 1866, Curtin reflected, “During the last five years the people of the State have suffered deeply from the calamities of war. Thousands of her men have been slain, and others are maimed and broken. Almost every family has been stricken, and everywhere are the widows and orphans, many of them helpless and in poverty.”⁹⁴

Curtin’s worries for the well-being of Pennsylvania’s youth were linked to his Thanksgiving 1863 experience when two hungry orphans were found on the doorstep of the

⁹⁰ Reed, 685-6.

⁹¹ David M. Potter, Chapter entitled “Civil War” in C. Vann Woodward, ed. *The Comparative Approach to American History*. (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 144.

⁹² George M. Frederickson, *The Inner Civil War; Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 134.

⁹³ Potter, 144.

⁹⁴ “To the President.” *Lancaster Intelligencer*, Wednesday, January 31, 1866, accessed January 13, 2012, p. 3. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

governor's mansion. Upon further inquiry, Curtin discovered the fathers of the "two dirty, ragged, shivering little beggar boys" were killed in the war and their impoverished mothers were "utterly incapable of furnishing their daily bread" in the wake of family tragedy. The harrowing thoughts of these unfortunates and ones like them haunted the governor. As one newspaper paraphrased Curtin's thoughts on the matter: "Was it possible that the people of Pennsylvania could thank God [on Thanksgiving] for their victories, when the children of the brave men who brought us the fruits of hard fighting, and carried our flag in triumph through the blood and carnage of Gettysburg, were on the streets begging for bread!" In most instances, decrepit almshouses were the only option of survival for beleaguered families. These homes, however, often proved horrendous—serving as refuges for criminals, the mentally challenged, the poor, and orphans—hardly better than prison. In few instances did these despondent tenants receive the individual care they required. By transforming the almshouse into the singular method of state-sponsored public assistance, many politicians of the antebellum era intended to shrink government expenditures. The effects often led to the physical, moral, and mental decay of almshouse inhabitants.⁹⁵

As one Philadelphia newspaper later reflected, "schools languished . . . [T]he organization of the system was a failure . . . the orphans were badly treated; and, if radical changes were not immediately adopted," the condition of education and welfare in the state would continue to drastically deteriorate. The circulating rumors of squalor within orphans' homes coupled with the overwhelming loss of fathers in the war prompted Curtin to action. To do otherwise would have been "a scandal and disgrace," one reporter surmised.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*. (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 150.

⁹⁶ "The Macalisterville Soldiers' Orphans' School." *Daily Evening Bulletin*, January 22, 1868, accessed January 15, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

Seeking a beneficial alternative to inundated almshouses, Curtin stated the “subject of the relief of the poor orphans of our soldiers who have given or shall give their lives to the country during this crisis” was of grave import. “I am safe in saying that at some period of each day, until accomplished, [the matter] crossed my mind,” Curtin later reflected.⁹⁷ A nation based on the liberal concept of gradual progression for the betterment of society required citizens to promote compassion as much as they did economic success. In fact, the two motives correlated with each other in Curtin’s perspective. The displaced youth of the 1860s possessed the potential to become the entrepreneurs of the 1870s and beyond if they could only obtain sufficient guidance in their upbringing. “In my opinion,” Curtin stated, the “maintenance and education [of orphans] should be provided for by the State. Failing other natural friends of ability to provide for them, they should be honorably received and fostered as children of the Commonwealth.”⁹⁸ He earnestly recommended that the children be placed “into existing educational establishments, to be there clothed, nurtured and instructed at the public expense.” In doing so, he felt he represented “the wishes of the patriotic, the benevolent, and the good of the State.”⁹⁹

The federal government played a major role in correcting many sanitary and social conditions, but public health and well-being, especially of children, fell to the states.¹⁰⁰ Curtin’s initiation of state-sponsored care merged moral motivations and practicality in the name of better coordination and cost-effectiveness. Leaders in other states also nurtured the creation of military orphanages, even in the South following the war. Advocate Theodore Sedgwick Gold, a leader

⁹⁷ Egle, 285.

⁹⁸ “Pennsylvania’s Soldiers’ Orphans,” *Daily Evening Bulletin*, August 5, 1869, accessed January 14, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁹⁹ “Governor’s Message,” *Central Press*, Friday, January 15, 1864, accessed January 13, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

¹⁰⁰ Walter I. Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*. (New York: Free Press, 1974), 81.

in the quest to establish the Connecticut Soldiers' Orphans' Home demanded, "Spartan frugality and severity be tempered by Christian philanthropy" in the name of mending the scarred youth of the nation.¹⁰¹ These institutions heralded by high-minded northerners were part of a widespread, conscientious, and moral social movement that became the foundation of the modern child welfare system in America.¹⁰² While Curtin may have lacked the long-term foresightedness of his initiative, the ramifications of his policies were profound for the state's orphans. Pennsylvania's "very liberal law" provided the aid that few others could amidst the national tumult.¹⁰³ Curtin's revamped Whiggish sensibilities of contract merged the harmony of interests with morality and "patriotic enterprise." The result was the establishment of a charitable system that operated as a living memorial while it also cultivated progress within society—the first such institution in the world.¹⁰⁴

Lincoln also championed the cause in his Second Inaugural Address, expounding on "the better angels of our nature" by asking Americans to show gratitude for "him who have borne the battles, and for his widow, and his orphan."¹⁰⁵ One school administrator campaigned to the Pennsylvania Legislature for support by asking to "be just and liberal towards the bronzed veterans who saved the nation's life, and towards the children of those who fell in her defence." In doing so, they protected the nation from "foreign foes or domestic traitors."¹⁰⁶ These free institutions were deeply rooted in Curtin's classical republican principle that the communal good

¹⁰¹ Robert H. Bremmer, *The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Era*. (New York: Knopf, 1980), 85.

¹⁰² Timothy J. Owens and Sandra L. Hofferth, *Children at the Millennium: Where Have We Come From, Where Are We Going?* (Amsterdam: JAI, 2001), 307-8.

¹⁰³ "The McAlisterville Soldiers' Orphans' School," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, January 22, 1868, accessed January 15, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

¹⁰⁴ *Harrisburg Telegraph*, March 20, 1866 quoted in Robert H. E. Bremmer. *Children and Youth in America. Volume 2*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 259. The paper also notes "that the Keystone State is the first to provide liberally and practically" for war orphans. Bremmer notes that Pennsylvania, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Wisconsin were the first to establish war orphanages.

¹⁰⁵ James Alan Marten, *Civil War America: Voices from the Home Front*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 271.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 276-7.

of society was a byproduct of civic virtue. Traditional tenets of the time preached that youth required educations to mold a sense of character that recognized communal well-being over self-interests. Embracing the philosophies of educational reformer Horace Mann, the orphanages encouraged “patriotic virtue, responsible character, and democratic participation”—all in the name of perfecting the Union.¹⁰⁷

Historian Judith Giesberg may have best summarized the lofty goals of Pennsylvania’s schools: with Civil War continuing to rage, aggressive proponents such as Curtin hoped that “given an education and a trade, the children of poor soldiers might be rescued from poverty—and that the nation, too, might be spared. Having sought to protect their own children from the adult world, they sought to do the same for the children of the men who had died on the battlefield.” Embracing liberal ideas in regard to labor and schooling, the institutions cultivated skill, intelligence, and independence. These measures would help prevent the creation of the unjust caste systems that gripped so many foreign lands.¹⁰⁸ The shared personal convictions of students themselves can be seen in the individual case of Stanley Booz, a young man enrolled in Pennsylvania’s system. Born into poverty, he had little chance for advancement but his father nevertheless served and died to protect their “sacred liberties.” As Booz stated at one ceremony, the orphans felt they had a stake in society; they viewed themselves as assets rather than burdens. “[W]e expect to be able to earn our own livelihood,” he said, “and also to become useful citizens, and honorable members of society.”¹⁰⁹ Politicians and educators were not merely growing

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 450-3.

¹⁰⁸ Judith Giesberg, “Orphans and Indians: Pennsylvania’s Soldiers’ Orphans Schools and the Landscape of Postwar Childhood” in *Children and Youth during the Civil War Era*, James Alan Marten, ed. New York: (New York University Press, 2012), 202.

¹⁰⁹ Marten, *Civil War America*, 276.

young minds, they were growing democracy.¹¹⁰ The schools thus “became nurseries of patriotism.”¹¹¹

By the end of 1865, at least seventeen state orphanages were in operation throughout the commonwealth, with additional sites overseen by other charitable organizations. Within three years, over 3,700 children were enrolled in the various establishments. A great improvement over the almshouses and asylums of decades past, the institutes strove to meet the needs of their young inhabitants. As one newspaper reported in a lengthy feature article, “[g]ood health is prevalent in all the schools. The death rate has been less than one to every three hundred and fifty children per annum. . . . The devotion of the teachers and managers has been unremitting.”¹¹² Schools were provided \$150 per year per student enrolled and the children performed songs and recited poems to the legislature to woo their financial support.¹¹³ Curtin viewed the orphan initiative as repayment but also as an investment by the commonwealth. These children were part of the state’s—and the nation’s—future.

Less than three months after Curtin’s departure from the governor’s office, successor and former Civil War general John White Geary advanced a bill in the state legislature allowing for financial support of the orphanages in perpetuity. A provision in the bill permitted a student to return to the care of family or friends on their sixteenth birthday if they chose not to enter the apprenticeship provided for them. Upon departure, each orphan was supplied additional clothes, a graduation certificate, and a detailed resume compiled by their principal explaining the student’s qualifications and trade skills. Furthermore, the “wise and humane provision” directed superintendent Colonel George F. McFarland “to procure schools or homes for the children of

¹¹⁰ Geisberg, 202.

¹¹¹ James Alan Marten. *The Children's Civil War*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 216.

¹¹² “Pennsylvania’s Soldiers’ Orphans,” *Daily Evening Bulletin*, August 5, 1869, accessed January 14, 2012, p. 1. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

¹¹³ Bremmer, 149.

colored troops and sailors, subject to the same regulations and restrictions provided for orphans of white soldiers and sailors.” As Philadelphia’s *Daily Evening Bulletin* marveled, this “distinct system, providing for the especial care, maintenance and education of soldiers’ orphans exclusively at the expense of the Commonwealth, was known to no nation or State prior to its conception” in Pennsylvania. The law was later “liberally construed” to include orphans whose fathers had passed away since the war’s end.¹¹⁴ McFarland received letters on a routine basis from instructors, statesmen, and philanthropists across the nation (including some in the South), asking for details of Pennsylvania’s educational system for their own implementation. For these successful results, the newspaper concluded, “we are indebted to the administration of Andrew G. Curtin.”¹¹⁵

Forms of relief for orphans and soldiers “had a mixed economy,” marked new territory, and further merged social and bureaucratic endeavors into one. The conjoined components of charity, education, pensions, and politicking increasingly disintegrated old borders between the public and private spheres.¹¹⁶ The war’s human costs resulted in the emergence of a new nationalism, with the duties and obligations of state and federal governments arising in a concerted effort to meet humane and patriotic demands.¹¹⁷ Because of the widespread military, civic, and philanthropic efforts conducted during the war, veterans and families were entitled to numerous forms of public care frequently regardless of race, class, gender, or rank.

In her groundbreaking examination of social policy in America, Theda Skocpol states recipients such as disabled soldiers and orphans “were made to feel worthy. These beneficiaries

¹¹⁴ “The Soldiers’ Orphans Department,” *Daily Evening Bulletin*, December 15, 1869, accessed January 16, 2012, p. 4. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

¹¹⁵ “Pennsylvania’s Soldiers’ Orphans,” *Daily Evening Bulletin*, August 5, 1869, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America*. (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 47.

¹¹⁷ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 268.

did not feel demeaned as if they were accepting ‘charity’ or ‘welfare.’ And they were not ill-regarded by their fellow citizens.”¹¹⁸ In fact, such people were trumpeted as models of loyal citizenry. “Were I to select any State interest which I would more warmly commend to your prompt attention and liberality than another,” Curtin confessed to the legislature about the schools in 1867, “it would be this.”¹¹⁹

The liberalism of the Civil War era was thus about balance, an equilibrium between people and state that ensured personal liberty and protection (economically and socially) while also espousing the inviolability of Union. Citizens and government had a shared interest in each other’s well-being. Citizenship secured the entitlement of key rights with the understanding that privilege came with responsibility—including expectations of civic tasks and possible military enlistment.¹²⁰ Curtin led Republicans in ensuring that this contract was something to be upheld, even after military victory was achieved. Prior liberal notions of economic contracts gave way to a renegotiated sense of partnership between constituents and government through offering security, centralizing power, and inculcating an active sense of nationalism.¹²¹

Following the war, he asked for the rentals of housing for soldiers in poverty until they could secure “a livelihood by their labor.” He even conveyed much the same sentiment toward the displaced children of United States Colored Troops. “Owing to the greater destitution and want of information on the part of their relatives, the orphans of our colored soldiers may require some special attention.” The governor requested the state superintendent of schools “to ascertain their number and claims, and bring them into the schools that may be provided for them.”¹²²

¹¹⁸ Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 1992), 532.

¹¹⁹ Reed, 754.

¹²⁰ Cimbala and Miller, 449-50.

¹²¹ Roderick P. Hart, John Lester Pauley, and Roderick P. Hart, *The Political Pulpit Revisited*. (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005), 49.

¹²² Reed, 754.

Educational initiatives such as these frequently sought to instill benevolent attitudes and social conformity but also prepared the Negro for supposed enfranchisement, citizenship, and a degree of autonomy—all of which would wishfully benefit African Americans and Republicans simultaneously.¹²³ Still, other humanitarians were motivated by a cultural nationalism in which leaders sought to accomplish their visions of an “enlightened republic” devoid of the tyranny that had long plagued individual advancement in Europe.¹²⁴ All the Union’s facets: the “government, the educational system, free-enterprise capitalism, and a host of other American features institutionalized liberty. They were liberty’s bulwarks.”¹²⁵

On November 20, 1866, just a day past the third year anniversary of the nearby Soldiers’ Cemetery’s dedication, Gettysburg’s National Orphan’s Homestead was inaugurated on Cemetery Hill, only yards away from the burial ground where many of the orphans’ fathers eternally rested. Rev. Dr. Charles A. Hay of Gettysburg’s Lutheran Theological Seminary was among the numerous dignitaries in attendance of the opening ceremonies, offering a closing benediction. Hay “spoke of the prominence of Pennsylvania in these [charitable] enterprises, and referred to the fact that Gov. Curtin pledged” to all his soldiers “that their families would be cared for in their absence, and the orphans of such as well would be taken charge of an educated as the wards of the State.” The Homestead, Hay continued, was “one of the fulfillments of that pledge.” Community and national leaders such as Hay and Curtin entrusted responsibility to commoners that “their liberality, their sympathy, and their prayers” would sustain such noble

¹²³ Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution*, 146. Sadly, such aspirations were frequently did not reach fruition. African Americans were ostracized even from organizations such as the Grand Army of the Republic and were forced to establish their own veterans’ groups. See also Cimbala and Miller, 454. Colored children were segregated in separate educational institutions.

¹²⁴ Walter Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*, Fifth Edition. (New York: Free, 1974), 75.

¹²⁵ Hess, 12.

institutions not merely to ensure the proper upbringing of disadvantaged youth, but undertaking as much as a monument to their deceased fathers.¹²⁶

The year of Curtin's departure from the governor's office, the annual operating budget of the orphanages neared a half-million dollars—a sum of money the legislature was sometimes hesitant to offer in full.¹²⁷ But the initiative had progressed so far in so relatively short an amount of time. Youth relief was a moral obligation and a fiscal convenience. Reducing the need for poor houses as a result “lessen[ed] the burden of government” rather than enflamed it.¹²⁸ But many remained more pleased with the humane satisfaction over the monetary savings. As one Curtin colleague later wrote:

“The amount of good that has been done by instilling higher and more intelligent ideas of living into these children, many of whom must otherwise necessarily have fallen into the lower strata of society and become an expense, if nothing worse, to the State, cannot be measured by any mathematical calculation. They have been saved by the State, and for the State, and they bid fair to leave a good impression upon its citizenship.”¹²⁹

Over 650 orphans joined Curtin in a Fourth of July parade at Independence Hall in 1866. A correspondent with the *Philadelphia Inquirer* rightfully referred to them as “the Children of the Commonwealth.”¹³⁰ Public appearances by orphans were meant to serve as a reminder of the holy obligation citizens had to the common good and their common responsibilities to society.¹³¹

¹²⁶ “Inauguration of the National Orphans’ Homestead at Gettysburg,” *American Presbyterian*, November 20, 1866, accessed January 3, 2012, p. 4. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

¹²⁷ “The Soldiers’ Orphan System.” *Daily Evening Bulletin*, January 7, 1868, accessed January 16, 2012, p. 4. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

¹²⁸ *American Journal of Insanity*, vol. XXIV (1867-68) quoted in Bremmer, *The Public Good*, 182.

¹²⁹ G. Harry Davis quoted in Egle, 302.

¹³⁰ Marten, *Children and Youth*, 196.

¹³¹ Marten, *The Children's Civil War*, 216. Unfortunately, when Curtin friend James Beaver became governor twenty years later, he closed the schools rather than maintained them for neglected baby boomers born of the Civil War generation. Despite their contributions as philanthropic trend-setters, the case of Pennsylvania Soldiers’ Orphans Schools became a textbook social case of missed opportunity, illustrating “the possibilities and pitfalls in expressions of public gratitude.” See Marten, *Children and Youth*, 144.

Following in Lincoln's footsteps, Curtin believed the Union to be a national compact by and for the people—especially the soldiers and families who had offered so much in its name. The burials of the honored dead, the care for their widows and orphans, and the attention for the wounded garnered much praise and affection for their state leader. Pennsylvania's combatants gratefully recognized his actions for decades to follow. At one Pittsburgh veterans' convention following the war formally resolved: "[T]he soldiers of Pennsylvania recognize no warmer or truer friend than Governor Andrew Gregg Curtin. His name is our watchword; his fame our hope, and his merit our glory. The unswerving love of the soldier's friend will be reciprocated by their unfaltering devotion."¹³² The governor could have asked for nothing better. The soldiers' admiration for Curtin rested not solely in his persona, but his embodiment of a system to which Federals expressed devotion and received reward for the noblest of deeds.

¹³² "The Boys in Blue. Grand Soldiers' and Sailors' Convention at Pittsburgh," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, June 6, 1866, accessed January 21, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

Conclusion The Path to Union

Andrew Curtin's relief upon Union Victory in April 1865 was not savored very long. Only five days after Lee's capitulation at Appomattox, Abraham Lincoln became one of the war's final fatalities when an assassin's bullet claimed his life. Shocked and enraged, the governor sought reprisal against "the savage treason of assassins" who stole his president's life at perhaps his greatest hour.¹ Curtin released a notice for a reward of \$10,000 for John Wilkes Booth's capture.²

Curtin's anxieties were multiplied by searching for Lincoln's killer while simultaneously hosting the president's funeral procession in Harrisburg. En route to the city, Lincoln's funeral train halted at the Mason-Dixon Line on the afternoon of April 21, when a somber "Governor Curtin, though very ill, having been confined to his bed for several days, proceeded to the State border" to join his late Republican leader on his final journey. Much like his soldiers who preceded him in death, Lincoln's execution was likened to that of Christ's. The ceremonies initiated amidst "a perfect stream" of a black downpour. "Heaven wept even more than the people," Philadelphia's *Daily Evening Bulletin* reported of the conditions in Harrisburg. "Everywhere the flag is wreathed in crape. With a unanimity which has never been equaled, our citizens have shown their high regard for the honored dead in every expressive mode."³ In this respect, Curtin was inclined to agree. Less than two months after Lincoln's death, the weary and gray governor greeted returning Pennsylvania troops in the state capital, acknowledging, even

¹ Curtin secretary Eli Slifer quoted in Reed, 687.

² Reed, 687-88.

³ "The Transportation of the Body of Mr. Lincoln to Illinois," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, April 22, 1865, accessed February 12, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

“over the grave of the martyred Lincoln the power of his great office passed to his constitutional successor so gracefully that we scarcely felt the transition.”⁴

Those in the audience were likely aware of the meaning within their governor’s message. The United States not only endured a ravaging internal war but revealed its true colors and highest ideals on behalf of its people and its own survival. Even with Lincoln’s untimely demise, the succession of Andrew Johnson to the presidency demonstrated that the Constitution and the cherished rule of law had prevailed despite the cost. “Strange, (is it not),” Walt Whitman agreed, “that battles, martyrs, agonies, blood, even assassination, should so condense—perhaps only really, lastingly condense—a Nationality.”⁵ As with the Union’s combatants whose lives were cut tragically short, northerners attempted to assuage the anguish of Lincoln’s death by promoting him as the final lost exemplar of the ultimate crusade for mankind. In the years following his governorship, Curtin attempted to maintain the moral ties that had categorized he and Lincoln’s shared struggles.

While Curtin’s party affiliation eventually changed, his convictions largely did not. At the 1868 Republican Convention in Chicago, he was suggested as Ulysses S. Grant’s vice presidential candidate. But with Pennsylvania considered safe in the Republican electoral column, Curtin was passed over in favor of Schuyler Colfax of Indiana. In hindsight, Curtin may have been grateful for the disregard. As a consolation prize, Grant appointed the former Pennsylvania governor as Minister to Russia. Despite his diplomatic success there, the harsh weather of Russia was not suitable for Curtin’s still-frail health, forcing him to leave in 1872.

The diplomat was not pleased with his Republican Party upon his return to America. Frustrated by the seemingly spiteful desires of radical Republicans and the power of nemeses

⁴ “Speech of Governor Curtin,” *Independent Republican*, June 13, 1865, accessed February 12, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁵ Whitman quoted in Lawson, 178.

Thaddeus Stevens and Simon Cameron, Curtin associated himself with the Liberal Republicans and soon became a Democrat. As one writer later noted, he “desired a more liberal policy in the treatment of the southern states” following the war—a treatment calling for reconciled nationalism rather than the retribution sought by the likes of Thaddeus Stevens.⁶ One clergyman in Curtin’s hometown noted in a postwar address, “We are saying to our misguided countrymen who attempted to destroy it—lay not again your hands upon this precious heritage to rend it asunder—this can only be done at the price of blood.”⁷ The ex-governor felt exactly the same way. Stirring the political hornets’ nest in the South could only undermine the Union’s victory and delay its promises.

Furthermore, many moderates felt “that freedpeople seemed to mimic disaffected laborers who refused to work on their own success.” If Radicals had the power to create an “interventionist government that redistributed wealth,” liberal beliefs in the individual’s will to determine his own destiny would be forever compromised. Middle-of-the-road Republicans feared that economic initiatives granted to freed slaves would deny economic success to equally hard-working white laborers.⁸ Given Curtin’s advocacy for the protection of white labor, this political situation may have been a factor in the change of his party allegiance. Whereas Radicals sought all-encompassing rights for emancipated slaves, moderates possessed a less universal perspective that promoted African Americans seeking contracts for their labor while working and competing equally on a basis of merit.⁹ Curtin likely felt that if a black American could prove himself on the battlefield with his own fortitude, he could do the same in a free

⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁷ “Center County Soldiers’ Banquet,” *Central Press*, accessed February 12, 2012, p. 2. *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*. Penn State University.

⁸ Heather Cox Richardson. *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 61, 82.

⁹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 244.

market. But blacks could rarely meet prosperity on an even level with the presence of the Ku Klux Klan and Jim Crow, factors that Curtin may have never considered.

In 1880, Curtin was elected to the House of Representatives as a Democrat. Regardless of his party affiliation, Curtin attempted to maintain the policies dear to him during his governorship. Assisting in revision of the state's constitution years after the war, Curtin incorporated the clause: "The Legislature may make appropriations of money to institutions where the widows of the soldiers are supported or assisted, or where the orphans of soldiers are maintained and educated."¹⁰ Curtin's desire to cultivate progress at the individual level was a trademark of his long career extending before, during, and after the war. All of these tasks were undertaken with the "the hope of humanity" in mind, and thus the hope of the nation.

But in 1882, he delivered an impassioned speech in Congress pleading for "twenty year's suspension of [Chinese] immigration" out of his fears that white workers could not compete against the cheaper imported labor. Curtin viewed Chinese immigrants much as he did Confederates during the war: as having no loyalty to the Union, privileging old cultural rather than new national ties. He asked of his fellow congressmen: "Do we prefer to have 100,000 Chinamen take the place of 100,000 American laborers, part and parcel of the body-politic, owing allegiance to our Government, with the right of the ballot, insuring for their children our free education, and with American hopes and aspirations?" Motivated by a remodeled sense of Free Soilism and humanitarianism for "loyal" laborers, Curtin sought to limit the expansion of immigration as he had slavery—yet in this case he blamed the workers themselves rather than the system that oppressed them.¹¹ Unlike ex-slaves that had proved their mettle and loyalty in

¹⁰ Kistler, 68.

¹¹ Andrew G. Curtin, *Chinese Immigration Speech of Hon. Andrew G. Curtin, of Pennsylvania in the House of Representatives, Thursday, March 23, 1882*. (Washington: United States Congress, 1882), 4.

battle, the Chinese had yet to prove themselves worthy of civic rights or professions in Curtin's eyes.

Retiring after three terms in Congress, Curtin retired to Bellefonte and resided there until his passing in 1894. Appropriately, the location of his final resting place is *Union Cemetery*. Some thirty years earlier, on Independence Day 1865, Curtin had joined the maimed general Oliver Otis Howard and commander George Meade at another cemetery for the cornerstone dedication of the Soldiers' National Monument at Gettysburg. There he stated, "This place will forever be attractive; the statesman can here meditate on the sacrifices made for liberty and civilization . . . and all can count here, the cost to this generation of maintaining the principles of freedom, transmitted to us from our ancestors." While cemeteries and memorials were necessary forms of tribute, Curtin argued the fallen's greatest gift to the people was the republic itself. Their memory was "enshrined in the hearts of a grateful people" and such was "a monument that needs no scroll," he reflected.¹²

Salvaging the concept of Union from abstraction, historian Gary Gallagher makes evident that northerners perceived much more at stake in the war than the singular cause of slavery. The peculiar institution was ingrained in nearly every facet of southern society, but for the average northerner, Union was the all-encompassing factor of their existence.¹³ Curtin believed the Union and his liberalism illustrated the codependence the republic shared with its loyal constituents. Permanent disunion ignited by the slavery debate threatened this civic covenant and constrained the potential of the individual. Emancipation was necessary as an exigency of war, but so too was it a moral measure undertaken partly for the alleviation of enchained slaves and partly for the average Federal infantryman who sought to perpetuate the virtues of Union.

¹² "Exercise at the Laying of the Corner-Stone of the Monument in the Soldiers' National Cemetery, July 4th, 1865," David Wills Correspondence, File 832. Vertical Files. Gettysburg National Military Park.

¹³ Gallagher. *The Union War*, 2.

To repay fighting men for their afflictions, the war's aims required alteration over time. Through this process, Curtin hoped once-deprived citizens could reach the potential deceased soldiers themselves may have dreamed of. In an ideal sense, this liberalism promoted shared authority, protecting the individual by protecting their government.

Meanwhile, the turbulent repercussions of war mandated the mending of hearts and minds as combatants recovered from wounds and orphans were provided state-sponsored educations. Through cooperation, rehabilitation, and cultivation, the liberal spirit embraced by Curtin and fellow leaders effectively sanctioned the righteousness and justice extolled by the Union. The end product was a strengthening of the government *and* its people through a renewed partnership of mutual defense and independence.

Curtin's own efforts in protection and defense were recognized in kind throughout the following decades. Writer A. E. Watrous of *Harper's Weekly* concluded in Curtin's lengthy obituary, none of the governor's official titles "were as dear to him as that title of the Soldier's Friend, conferred in those schools of his, conferred in a hundred camps and hospitals, from the Shenandoah to the Red River of the South, [and] by thousands of Pennsylvania volunteers."¹⁴ His proactive policies ensured this admiration and more. As one scholar of the time noted, "the manifest destiny of America demands Statesmen thoroughly liberal in spirit."¹⁵ Many voters of Pennsylvania believed they discovered such a candidate in Andrew Gregg Curtin.

¹⁴ "Andrew Gregg Curtin, War Governor of Pennsylvania, Father to Soldiers' Orphans." *Harper's Weekly*, October 20, 1894, p. 991.

¹⁵ Marten, *Children and Youth during the Civil War Era*, 53. These words were written by Dartmouth student Willard S. Heath in anticipation of the challenges civil war would bring upon the American Republic.

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