

## **BRUNSWICK CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE**

**OCTOBER 1, 2013**

### **RELIGION IN THE CIVIL WAR OR TORN BETWEEN TWO LOVERS**

**SPEAKER: Jeff Roberts, Trinity Methodist Pastor**

There was an infinite dichotomy (a seed the same on both sides) between religious and sectional loyalties in “The War of Northern Aggression” or War Between the States. Our speaker points us to the mountainous areas of Virginia. They had no strong ties to a state. They had few, if any, slaves and wanted to do commerce with both North and South. The salt capitol of the Confederacy was in Virginia but both sides needed this mineral. The religious leaders of the day clearly knew their loyalties and rightly argued that religion could be a major catalyst toward war!

This was a time of the Second Great Religious Awakening (1790-1840’s). Evangelistic fervor was very strong with a thrust toward a nationalism of religions and a strong need to be ready for Christ’s coming. Sectional chauvinism drew nourishment from religious antagonism. Our God given ability to think and reason got all of us into a quandary. Where did they look for answers? The Bible, of course, gave justifications that aligned with the sympathies of both sides. Leviticus tells us that owning slaves is OK. Ephesians 6:5 reminds us that slave or free we are all “one in Christ.”

Our speaker gave a gem of a line from the movie Cold Mountain: Rev. Morrison quotes that, “God must be so weary of being called down on both sides of the argument.” (Rev Morrison owned 60 slaves. All of his daughters married Confederates.)

Just about the time of this “Late, Great, Inconvenience”—as some called the War, (remember, not all were equally affected), the Third Great Religious Awakening happened. The Methodists formed and promoted the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). They called themselves the MECS or Methodist Episcopal Church South. Southern Baptists sprouted up everywhere “Southern.” There were 10,000 new Southern Baptist Churches by 1890. Their belief was that the Bible supported slavery. The Catholics charged that all this Protestantism split America,

caused needless bloodshed and if everyone was to embrace Catholicism there would be no need for the Civil War!

Nonetheless there were 2388 Northern Chaplains earning a pay of \$100 per month and 1303 Confederate Chaplains who earned \$0. Ya just had to be there to find out the name of the one and only female chaplain. If you were there, you also know the name of the very young, soon to become infamous outlaw who killed one of those clergy. We observe there is a definite difference between a preacher and a minister. These clergy spent most of their waking hours doing the latter. Much individual care needed to be given. Definite proof of their work shows that 160,000 men accepted Christ by 1863. Most soldiers were deeply religious.

Pastor Jeff gives us some closure to ponder. If there had been a Confederate nation, it was going to be Christian. It is hard to deny that religion is a factor in all wars. Finally, pride comes before the fall. The South was full of pride.

Submitted by Dan Fink