We Are in His Hands Whether We Live or Die

The Letters of Brevet Brigadier General Charles Henry Howard

Edited by David K. Thomson

Voices of the Civil War
Michael P. Gray, Series Editor

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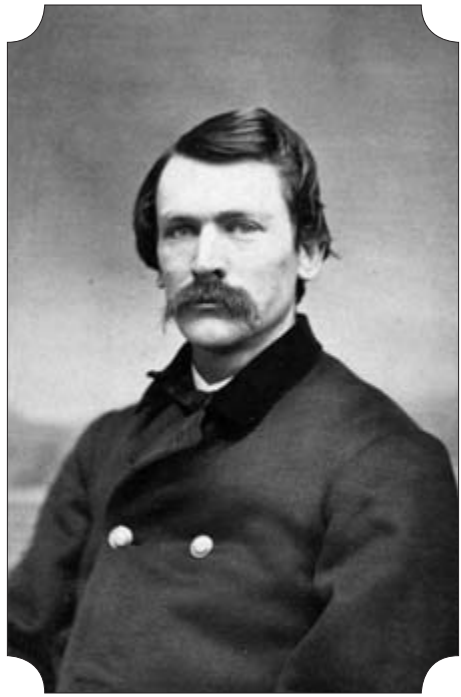

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The Voices of the Civil War series makes available a variety of primary source materials that illuminate issues on the battlefield, the home front, and the western front, as well as other aspects of this historic era. The series contextualizes the personal accounts within the framework of the latest scholarship and expands established knowledge by offering new perspectives, new materials, and new voices.

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To Mom, Dad, Pat, and Ellen

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Foreword

Leeds, Maine, nestled near Androscoggin Lake just west of Augusta and north of Portland, is a picturesque community in the south-central woods of the Pine Tree State. It is also home to the prominent Howard family, primarily due to its native son, Oliver Otis Howard, Civil War general, supervisor of the Freedmen's Bureau, and namesake to a university in the nation's capital. However, the youngest Howard, Charles, would also prove to be an important person who hailed from Leeds, and perhaps just as significant as he became a primary narrator that filled in much of the family's history. This was recently brought to light when scholar David Thomson was able to analyze these letters from Bowdoin College's Special Collections and Archives, and then carefully organize, edit, and help narrate the story that comprises this current volume. With recent trends in Civil War historiography leaning toward the study of common Civil War soldiery, perhaps it is also refreshing to gain deep insight into the lives of more uncommon soldiers, as Thomson has skillfully done with Charles's correspondence, bringing new revelations into the lives of the Howard brothers.

A precocious youngster, Charles Henry Howard left his homestead at age nine to undertake his studies, at thirteen he declared in a communiqué he would be devoted in leading a "Christian life." At fifteen he was accepted into Bowdoin College, where his brothers also attended. Howard's correspondence from Bowdoin College indicated how that institution shaped this young man in his formative years, as he wrote about religious services, temperance meetings, and various revivals. His education at Bowdoin College nurtured and instilled a "strong sense of duty" intertwined with "deep-rooted religious conviction" of the Congregationalist persuasion, something that would be challenged with the onset of civil war.

In 1861, Charles enlisted into the army and soon found himself serving as an aide on the staff of his oldest brother Otis, a brigade commander, who had been teaching mathematics at West Point prior to the firing on Fort Sumter. As the war unfolded, the Howards were quickly caught in heavy fire during the Peninsula Campaign, both being injured on the same day at Fair Oaks—Charles in the leg, Otis in the arm. Each brother recuperated back in Maine and although Otis's injury was much more serious, resulting in the amputation of his right arm, both survived. Restored to health, the Howards were again found at each other's side, only to be thrown into the maelstrom along Antietam Creek in September 1862, and then later at the reckless blood letting that took place on the heights of Fredericksburg near year's end. In the eyes of Charles, God again willed their salvation; small wonder that Charles's faith in God, having spared both him and Otis once more, remained steadfast. As both soldiers rose up in rank,—Charles became a captain and Otis a Corps Commander of the XI—the battle of Chancellorsville would again test their fortitude. Chancellorsville was a disaster for the Army of the Potomac generally, and for the XI Corps' reputation specifically. However, the Howards did not have time to brood about their failure in Virginia as Confederate forces moved into Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863. Although the Army of the Potomac was able to stave off the Southern advance, the XI Corps had another questionable performance. When the Corps was ordered to the Western Theater in the fall, Charles would view it as a new opportunity to do "God's work" in helping win the war rather than dwelling on lost opportunities in the politicized East. His premonition proved to be accurate, as their labors in and around Chattanooga and Knoxville helped capture not only their military objectives, but also the attention of their commander, William Sherman.

Otis would eventually be promoted to command of the Army of the Tennessee in 1864; the so-called "Christian General" moved on to Atlanta with Sherman, headed the west wing of his March to the Sea, and then moved into the Carolinas. In doing so Otis wiped away any humiliating scars that remained from the previous years in the East. Meanwhile, Charles was also making great strides, taking on new travels and responsibilities, and tending to important military business for Generals Sherman and Howard at Vicksburg and New Orleans. Charles would quickly rejoin his comrades during their famous march to Savannah—but on the city's outskirts, as they awaited capitulation, Charles was abruptly summoned away again, this time to Washington. There, he would earn the distinction of being given command of an African American regiment and also be asked to personally brief President Abraham Lincoln on Sherman's march through Georgia.

This collection of letters show the rise of Charles Henry Howard from a drum major to colonel of the 128th U.S.C.T., to finally being breveted as a brigadier general. Charles's correspondence is unique in that it traces his war experiences in the

Eastern and Western theaters, witnessing some 68 engagements, where he and Otis withstood hardships of war and perils of battle, yet remained resolute to their cause and faith. Readers will also gain a better appreciation of the social issues of their day, including religion, race, and army politics, and hopefully, a deeper appreciation for both Howard brothers.

Michael P. Gray
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

Acknowledgments

> To my beloved brother, General Charles H. Howard, who, setting out with the enthusiasm of a boy soldier, served his country by my side through four years; was seriously wounded at Fair Oaks, and aided me by his counsel and support during the strain of reconstruction. As a tribute of my affection and appreciation, this book is affectionately dedicated.
>
> —Oliver Otis Howard's dedication to his brother Charles in his book *Isabella of Castile*

While this work stresses the religious faith of one particular soldier during the bloodiest conflict in American history, I must also take time to thank those who maintained a personal faith in me throughout the duration of this project. The debt I owe to many individuals can never be fully repaid, but it is my hope that I can begin the process here. What follows is a list of the many teachers, friends, and casual acquaintances through the past few years that have helped make this project a reality.

This project would not have been possible if not for a chance encounter with Myra Howard at the 2010 Society of Civil War Historians meeting in Richmond, Virginia. The wonderful discussion I was able to have with Myra regarding my work on Otis Howard transitioned into a conversation regarding the work of Russ and Roz Howard and the letters of Charles Henry Howard. Following several emails, I had the opportunity to visit with Russ and Roz in August of 2010. They opened their home to my brother and me, and what proceeded was a remarkable friendship and exchange of information. This project would not have been possible without the tremendous work that Russ and Roz undertook, and for that I am

eternally grateful. It is my hope that this work accurately portrays the life of their ancestor that they endeavored to preserve since his passing more than a century ago. With any luck, this research will extend to the other Howard brothers and their role in the Civil War.

The letters of Charles Henry Howard represented here reside in the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. For permission to use the letters as well as understanding and patience with my numerous requests for duplication, I am grateful to Richard Lindemann, the Director of Special Collections, as well as Daniel Hope, Caroline Moseley, Kathy Petersen, and Marieke Van Der Steenhoven. All requests for materials had a remarkable turnaround. As an alumnus of Bowdoin College and former employee of Special Collections, I can attest to the remarkable work ethic of these individuals at one of the finest and most beautiful places in which to do research in the entire country. I must also acknowledge the wonderful staffs at the National Archives, Library of Congress, and Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University for the materials and images they provided to help supplement this project.

I must also acknowledge the work of professors Patrick Rael and Jill Pearlman during my undergraduate years at Bowdoin College. Patrick was my adviser during my time at Bowdoin and supervised my work on Otis Howard resulting in my first publication. Patrick always pressed me to become a better writer and instilled that desire in me from the time I set foot on the campus the fall of my first year at Bowdoin. While I realize there is still a ways to go to reach Patrick's level of proficiency, I hope he will take this offer of gratitude from a former student whom he provided so much to in a four-year period. Additionally, I must also thank Jill Pearlman for the work she did in pushing my abilities as a writer and for opening the world of urban history to me. Jill's courses at Bowdoin are some of my fondest memories and a shining example of the benefits of a liberal arts education. For Patrick and Jill, I must offer my sincerest thanks for their willingness to put up with an over-anxious undergraduate and push him to develop better writing skills, better argumentation skills, and confidence in his own abilities.

Thanks are also in order to Peter Carmichael. Pete took a tremendous risk when he offered to support my graduate application process with a letter of recommendation and provided the initial contact with the University of Tennessee Press. Pete's passion in Civil War studies is virtually unparalleled, and his selection as head of Gettysburg College's Civil War Institute is a selection from which the college will benefit for decades to come. A summer staple for myself and my father, the Civil War Institute offers a tremendous and rare opportunity to hear and speak with such a wide array of first-rate Civil War scholars just steps from the Gettysburg battlefield. It is my hope that this work will meet Pete's expectations and be one small element in an enduring friendship.

The final production of this work would not have been made possible without the fine staff at the University of Tennessee Press. Scot Danforth, director of the press, enthusiastically took on this project from its inception and helped me through the various stages of the process with sound advice. Thomas Wells took on the full manuscript and guided it through to its final production. Tom Post did remarkable work publicizing the release, and Bob Land meticulously edited the manuscript. The end result is a sharper and clearer assessment of the life of Charles Henry Howard. Finally, Series Editor Michael Gray offered excellent advice on understanding the broader framework of this project. For any others at the press who I have failed to mention here, I must extend a heartfelt thanks for a remarkably fluid process.

Contrary to what many non-historians may believe, the profession is not a solitary endeavor and relies on the support of friends and colleagues who offer words of wisdom, encouragement, and advice during periods where it is needed the most. I am grateful to David Sokolow, Oliver Radwan, Maxwell Palmer, Kathleen Shea-Porter, Elisabeth Conroy, Brandon Mazer, Bernardo Guzman, Robin Warner, Amy Rosania, Rashni Grant, Kaitlyn Hennigan, Lauren Van Wagenen, Hilary Phillips, Bennett Lewis, Robbi Hartt, Carolyn Skiba, Drew Meyer, Sarah Ostermueller, Julie Mujic, and Kate Lebeaux for all they have done the past few years to help encourage me in the completion of this work. I must offer a special thanks to Griffen Stabler for his willingness to read through an initial version of this manuscript, a task that he did with no complaints and remarkable dedication and attention to detail. The end result was a much stronger piece of writing. I must also thank fellow history doctoral students Matt Hulbert, Robby Poister, Trae Welborn, Ben Smith, Kylie Horney, and Angela Elder for their support during the final stages of the project during my first year at the University of Georgia. It is a debt that I hope to repay at some point during their promising academic careers. I must also thank my doctoral adviser, Dr. Stephen Berry, for his consul as the work neared completion. Dr. Berry's probing questions and advice on a range of topics (including a title) were greatly appreciated. I look forward to continuing this academic engagement with Dr. Berry in the years ahead.

Finally, I must thank my family for the support they have offered. I must offer thanks to my extended Thomson and Kelley families who endured many holiday conversations about this project and my general passion for the Civil War, only to ask for updates during the next visit. To my brother, Pat, I must thank him for his hospitality (and air mattress) on numerous research trips and understanding his "weird" brother's passion for the Civil War—even if it is not as wonderful as the world of economics. To my sister, Ellen, I am grateful for her love and support throughout this entire process, especially the many car rides to battlefields and historic sites when we were younger—something she endured with virtually no complaint. To my mother and father, Coralee and Jeffrey, I cannot properly

articulate in words what their love and support has meant to me. For introducing me to history at such a young age and encouraging my pursuit of this hobby, I offer my sincerest thanks. For their patience and understanding as this hobby became a passion and future career I will never be able to express enough gratitude. I will never be able to compensate them for the debts (monetary and otherwise) that I owe and continue to accumulate as I pursue my studies of the American Civil War. However, it is my hope that the dedication of this work to my entire family can be but a small gesture of gratitude for their partnership on this journey.

Introduction

As the end neared for Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, a colonel from Maine encamped in Goldsboro, North Carolina, wrote to his mother and reflected on almost four years of service in the Union Army. "It is a beautiful moonlight night—all our doors & windows open—sitting out on the verandah a good deal. Shrubbery in the front garden all in leaf, bright & thrifty. The trees rapidly clothing themselves in their Spring attire. Peach trees all decked in luxuriant pink blossoms. They remind me of the first part of April 1862 when we first landed upon the Virginia peninsula. I used to notice the Peach trees there because they were the first I had seen in bloom. We landed at Ship Point April 4th 1862. War has had a good deal more of romance lately or is it a change in my feelings! It may be a calousing of my heart towards the disagreeable. But kind Providence has given me many changes for the better since then."[1] Such words were not uncommon for Charles Henry Howard, a man whose providential approach to all facets of life sustained and motivated him through the course of the Civil War. Yet it was not the war itself that rapidly transformed Howard into a pious and religious man. His religious beliefs predate the war by almost a decade and were a product of his modest spiritual upbringing and education. This spiritual upbringing and education dictated all of Charles's actions in life, in that he viewed all things and people through a providential lens.

Charles Henry Howard was born on August 28, 1838, in the small town of Leeds, Maine. The Howard family had long been a part of Maine history with Charles's grandfather having served as a soldier in the American Revolution.[2] Howard grew up on a small family farm in Leeds. Charles's widowed mother, Eliza, remarried by the time Charles was three to a local soldier, Colonel John Gilmore. The marriage followed the death of Charles's father, Rowland Bailey

Howard.[3] Although Leeds would forever be home, Charles would actually spend only a small portion of his youth there as he made his way to Kents Hill School in nearby Kents Hill, Maine, to undertake full-time studies at the age of nine. Following his time at Kents Hill, Charles continued his education at North Yarmouth Academy and Topsham Academy. Charles ultimately matriculated at Bowdoin College in September 1855.[4] Charles followed in the footsteps of his brother Oliver Otis Howard, always referred to as "Otis," who graduated from the institution in 1850 before entering the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Additionally, Charles's brother Rowland was a graduate of Bowdoin with the Class of 1856.[5] Charles's time at Bowdoin—which saw him miss a semester of school because of ill health—was stressful and challenging for the Maine native. The sickness, however, did not preclude Charles from coming back to complete his studies and graduate on time with the rest of the Class of 1859.[6]

Yet, despite Charles's ability to graduate on time, the overall strain proved too much for him, as he fell severely ill upon his graduation from Bowdoin. Charles took this opportunity to visit a "water cure" in Keene, New Hampshire, before taking up the offer of his brother Otis in the fall of 1859 to join him at West Point, where Otis served as an instructor of mathematics.[7] Charles quickly jumped at the offer to join Otis and took the year to recuperate from the strains of his Bowdoin education. However, it was during this year at West Point that Charles truly began to see increasing sectional tensions surrounding the "peculiar institution" of slavery. Charles expressed as early as 1857 his sincere belief that disunion and secession were distinct possibilities.[8] However, it was his time at West Point that greatly affected Charles as he witnessed the tension present between cadets of the North and South who continually quarreled in the run-up to the election of 1860.

With all eyes focused on the presidential election of 1860, Charles returned to his native state of Maine to continue his education at Bangor Theological Seminary with prospects of entering the ministry. Since Charles's official conversion in 1853 while at Kents Hill and baptism in 1857 while at Bowdoin, he often believed in a call to service as a member of the ministry and took steps in preparation for such a career. Charles's older brother Rowland held such pious ideals and followed his time at Bowdoin with studies at Bangor Theological Seminary as well, graduating the year of Charles's arrival.[9] Eventually settling on a membership in the Congregational Church, Charles fully invested himself in his studies as the election passed and Southern states began to secede from the Union. Charles grasped the seriousness of the situation but was determined to continue his studies as long as that was God's will, confident that a providential sign would dictate a change in his circumstances.

A divine sign soon presented itself to Charles on April 12, 1861, with the firing on Fort Sumter by Confederate forces. Shortly after this attack, Charles received

word from his brother Otis that he had recently been granted a colonel's commission in the Union Volunteer Army and was mustering a new regiment at the Maine state capital in Augusta. Furthermore, he asked for his brother's assistance in the organization of these new recruits. Charles answered his brother's call and soon found himself organizing the men before they were ushered off to Washington, DC, to provide necessary defense for the beleaguered capital. While still waiting for an officer's commission, Charles entered into the fray, participating in the first battle of the war, a complete disaster for Union forces at Bull Run.[10] However, the casualties and experience of the July 1861 battle would prove a mere harbinger of things to come.

All told, Charles Henry Howard took part by his own estimation in sixty-eight significant battles and skirmishes as a part of the Armies of the Potomac, Cumberland, and Tennessee at various points of the war as he rose through the ranks from drum major to brevet brigadier general by war's end.[11] Howard saw action at such battles as First Bull Run, Yorktown, Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Chattanooga, as well as Sherman's Atlanta Campaign and March to the Sea. The war's end saw Howard in command of the 128th United States Colored Troop (U.S.C.T.) Regiment on the coast of North Carolina. During Howard's service in the war he was twice wounded, once at the battle of Fair Oaks (where his brother Otis also was wounded) as well as at the battle of Fredericksburg.[12] Yet despite the struggles, setbacks, and periods of severe angst that Charles Howard faced, there was rarely a moment when Howard wavered in his faith and utmost reliance on God to adjudicate this struggle between warring factions of the United States.

Howard's postwar career saw him as a member of the Freedmen's Bureau serving as inspector of schools for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, and ultimately assistant commissioner for the District of Columbia, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, and Virginia. Charles also worked for the American Missionary Association for five years before becoming editor in chief of The Advance, a Congregationalist journal, and later, controlling editor of Farm, Field, and Stockman. He also received appointments by Presidents Garfield and Arthur on separate occasions to serve as inspector of Indian Agencies.[13]

The correspondence of Charles Henry Howard covers a wide period of history, from his first letter in 1852 at the age of thirteen until his death in 1908, and ranges from the extraordinary to the utterly trivial. Starting with his first sojourn away from home to attend Kents Hill School, Charles always placed great thought on the state of his mother's health and that of his siblings back in Leeds. His concern for his mother's well-being was something that did not leave Charles's mind through the years as he found himself farther from Maine and ultimately caring for a family of his own. Yet what makes Charles's letters truly unique is the

overwhelming focus on faith and providence affecting every facet of his daily life. From a young age Charles placed a heavy reliance on a divine will that guided him as he moved forward in life. This reliance on providence only increased as the Civil War appeared imminent in the years leading up to the 1860 presidential election. Once the war commenced and Charles answered the call of his nation (and brother) to serve, God's will dictated all actions in his life, from the more personalized elements such as prospects of promotion and success of prayer groups, to larger goals such as the overall success of Union arms.[14]

Beyond the biographical insight into a prominent nineteenth-century Maine family, Charles's letters offer a unique contribution to a historiographic issue of recent prominence. While there have been many recent publications of Civil War soldiers' correspondence, the heavy focus that Charles places on religion and faith marks his work as unique from everyday soldiers' writing. Indeed, Charles's providential approach to the Civil War reflects a topic that has seen a reawakening in recent academic scholarship. Historian George Rable's recent publication *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* has presented a refreshing look into the Civil War as primarily a providential contest.[15] According to Rable, both sides strongly believed in this providential notion with its origins in the decade prior and ultimately lasting through the war itself. Victories and defeats on the battlefield and home front were attributed to God's design and his pleasure or frustration with his people. Rable stresses this providential imperative when he notes,

> In short, religious conviction produced a providential narrative of the war. These religious convictions created a fatalism grounded not in deism but in providence. Many Americans believed in a providential God who was also a personal God, a God deeply invested in the fate of nations and individuals.[16]

Other historians, such as Mark Noll, have echoed this interpretation of God's providential role in the Civil War. Noll cites Charles's brother Oliver Otis Howard as one of the shining examples of a Northern soldier heavily reliant on providence to shape the course of the conflict.[17] Harry Stout emphasizes the close bond between providence and fatalism, arguing that the ideological connection led to an escalation in the fighting on the part of the North. The increasing violence led to carnage and utter devastation wrought upon the people of the South.[18]

The letters of Charles Henry Howard seem to reinforce this notion of a providential interpretation of the conflict. Throughout the war, Howard consistently acknowledged God's role in shaping the events of the war. Charles's youthful conversion, close relationship with his brothers, and time spent at seminary in the

year prior to the conflict undoubtedly influenced his perspective on the war. Howard's religious beliefs solidified after joining his brother's staff as Charles's close work with his brother Otis, renowned within the army for his religious ideals, only strengthened his Christian worldview.[19] Additionally, Charles's position on his brother's staff enabled him to comment in detail on the thoughts of prominent military commanders in the Union Army on a variety of fronts, including their relationships with President Lincoln as well as intra-army squabbles. The position of Charles as a member of his brother's staff who still saw extensive combat thus affords the reader with a wonderful opportunity to garner insight into the war from yet another angle. Finally, Charles had the distinct opportunity to serve in both of the major theaters of the war. His experiences with the Army of the Potomac through the Gettysburg Campaign and subsequent time spent with the Army of the Cumberland, and later the Army of the Tennessee, provides an invaluable perspective on the contrast between these two theaters and how commanding generals operated within them as the war progressed in both its aims and overall strategy.

While religion served as a guiding light for Howard, his remarks are not restricted to simple matters of faith. Rather, his religious insights reflect a man deeply conflicted at times by a faith grounded in a providential framework. On many occasions Charles struggled to reconcile his faith with the realities of war that, at times, ran contrary to the political and military goals and realities of the North. In these moments, particularly following the battle of Chancellorsville, Charles wrestled extensively with such personal dilemmas of faith and understanding as he tried to comprehend the larger goals of God in the Civil War. Union defeat when combined with death and destruction unlike anything the world had seen forced Charles into an uncomfortable position, trapped by his faith and confidence in God as he attempted to justify the horrors that surrounded him. Such moments of uncertainty and confusion undoubtedly brought personal angst unto Charles and only complicated an already difficult experience. To be sure, providence and faith provided Charles with the stability he required to endure the conflict. That being said, Charles, like other men of faith who wore blue and gray, suffered from moments of religious doubt as the war raged on and the death and destruction hit truly biblical proportions.

Although an officer during the war, Howard's experiences in both the Eastern and Western Theaters, varying from a staff position to positions in the field, demonstrate an individual who took great pride in his service. The role of faith and providence in Howard's life is undeniable, yet an analysis of Howard's letters and life go much beyond this; one can see the insightful thoughts and concerns that he had regarding race and memory. Such notions followed Howard's career as he moved from the Freedmen's Bureau to his work in publishing and congressional affairs. All in all, these letters offer the reader a remarkable opportunity to examine a

man who was more than just a Civil War soldier, but one whose career and actions speak to the struggles and questions that remained long after the guns fell silent in 1865.

On several occasions, Charles addressed the racial dynamics of the Union Army. From the beginning of the war, with the issue of contraband being thrust upon the army to his work as colonel of a U.S.C.T. regiment by war's end, race figured prominently into his service. His concern for—and, in some instances, skepticism about—African Americans is reflected in his work with the Freedmen's Bureau. Charles's vacillation on race relations reflected the ideas of his brother Otis. From Otis's time at West Point to his service in the Union Army and ultimate role as commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, Otis's thoughts on race relations evolved.[20] Charles's issues with slavery and overall relations with African Americans grew out of the work he undertook.

In the first months of the war, Charles described two separate instances where slaves crossed Union lines only to be turned away owing to no clear policy from Washington to take this property away from their masters.[21] However, as a reflection of shifting war aims and strategy within the Lincoln administration, one can begin to see the gradual acceptance of "contrabands" as a part of everyday life in camp. In particular, a decisive moment occurred for Charles with the murder of a black servant by the infamous Irish Brigade. Charles had great attachment to the young boy, and the boy's death triggered a shift in Charles's views on African Americans. Charles's concern for the welfare of the Southern African American community extended beyond the Civil War under his purview as an inspector of schools in the Freedmen's Bureau. While living in the heart of the Old South in Charleston, South Carolina, Charles Howard lamented,

> The newspapers here cry out against the Freedmen's Bureau—Call it only an irritant to prevent the natural healing of the several parts of Society in the South. But the real trouble is they desire to have full liberty to deal with the negro as they please, and the fact that they wish to get rid of this Bureau which is entirely philanthropic in its objects, proves to me that they desire and intend if they can, to put the foot again upon the neck of the black man.[22]

Yet several weeks later Charles bemoaned the inability of former slaves to meet the Freedmen's Bureau halfway when he remarked, "An erroneous impression among the negroes that the lands were to be divided among them has to be met and counteracted all through this country and it is almost or quite a superhuman task to teach them to go quietly & steadily to work for wages! They are very reluctant to

engage in any way to their former masters and yet this is the most desirable course for them at present."[23] Thus, Charles's evolving notions of race and citizenship remain a prominent theme throughout Charles's correspondence.

Finally, Charles also offers significant insight into the contested battles waged over the popular memory of the Civil War. Charles strongly advocated for the Volunteered Officers Retired Bill, a bill that would grant volunteer officers with the rank of brevet brigadier general (his own rank by war's end) or higher three-quarters of their final pay starting at the age of seventy for the remainder of their life. Such an arrangement had already been extended to U.S. Army Regulars who met the criteria. Charles lobbied extensively on behalf of the bill in two different sessions of Congress without success. Nevertheless, Howard's letters speak to the battles still being waged over the legacy of the war, and those who participated in it.[24]

The letters of Charles Henry Howard share the story of a man who took an active role in a contest that defined the future of the United States. In that regard Howard could be seen as offering little to the saturated scholarship in the field. However, when taken in its larger religious context, Charles Howard's correspondence offers a fresh new perspective and angle into the crucial time period of the Civil War and the pervading religious sentiment present not only in his writing, but also in everyday life that he encountered. Through Howard's lens, one can see the difficult issues a man of faith had to grapple with as a soldier and his overriding reliance in providence to guide his path. While he is just one sample, my hope is that this work helps to reinforce the ever-present ideal of religion in the ranks of men from both North and South. My amazement never ceases at the risks men took to fight in this great conflict and the principles they fought to uphold or assert. Perhaps Charles Henry Howard's words can help shed some light on the role of faith and religion in a war that is still very much open to debate and exploration.

Editorial Method

The editing of these letters has proved to be somewhat complex. At all times I wanted to maintain Charles's voice in these letters and therefore did not alter any misspellings or grammatical errors present in his work. Brackets ([ ]) were reserved solely for words that were illegible owing to his handwriting, missing portions of pages (indicated with [torn]), or efforts to reduce confusion for the reader. As best as possible the use of brackets was kept to a minimum. On rare occurrences, brackets may include a word with a "?" mark to indicate the editor's best guess of what Charles was stating with that word. Additionally, whenever Charles began a letter with "dear brother," every effort was made to identify which brother the letter was addressed to and indicated with brackets. Charles was certainly an educated man and therefore the errors that did appear were few and far between, yet they were preserved wherever possible in order to facilitate a smooth reading and interpretation of Charles's work. Because there has been an effort made to reduce the interruption of Charles's writing I have avoided the use of sic for misspellings and have left the spelling as is in these instances.

Furthermore, wherever possible I have endeavored to provide background information on individuals included in the letters. There are inevitably individuals whose associations to Charles could not be determined. In addition, there are individuals who have close family ties to Charles that have been made known through the tireless and detailed efforts of Russ and Roz Howard, as indicated in the acknowledgments. For these individuals, you will not find reference material, as this is Russ and Roz's genealogical work.

For the scope of this project I restricted myself to the correspondence of Charles Henry Howard located in his collection at Bowdoin College. During the war Charles wrote various accounts of battles for a variety of Northern newspapers,

but they have not been included here. The focus solely on the writing of Charles Howard is rewarding in and of itself, and provides the reader with the truest exploration of Charles's thoughts and ideas during his lifetime. The letters included in this collection are a mere portion (110) of the collection housed at Bowdoin and reflect the correspondence that provides the reader with the greatest understanding of Charles Howard's beliefs and thoughts on life in the nineteenth century while not overwhelming the reader with too much superfluous work. Additionally, the entire manuscript collection of Charles Henry Howard at Bowdoin College has been transcribed. Owing to the work of Russ and Roz Howard in collaboration with the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives at Bowdoin, the transcriptions have been posted online and can be located on the Bowdoin College Special Collections website at http://library.bowdoin.edu/arch/mss/chhcl.shtml.

Finally, it should be noted that references to Otis Howard invariably arise in the various chapter introductions. Although primarily a work on Charles Howard that explores his correspondence, Otis periodically enters into the equation owing to the close relationship between these two brothers on a personal level, but also a professional level—especially during their Civil War service. When it came to a majority of Charles's Civil War tenure, he acted as a direct subordinate to Otis, and therefore much of his correspondence details the relationship between the two of them and the struggles they both faced. For all other questions, the notations will help to provide clarity within the various letters.

1

"The Savior Says Ask & Have Faith & Ye Shall Receive": Charles and His Early Years

Charles Henry Howard was born on October 28, 1838, in the small town of Leeds, Maine. The third son of Rowland and Eliza Howard, after Oliver Otis (only referred to as Otis by family members) and Rowland, the Howard family traced its settlement in New England back to the 1640s and to Maine shortly thereafter when it was still a part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.[1] Charles grew up on a small, simple family homestead where he worked from a very young age in the family's fields harvesting their crops. Charles's father, Rowland Bailey Howard, passed away in 1840. Only a year later his mother remarried a local military officer, John Gilmore.[2] Charles's time at home was ever so brief; he left at the age of nine to undertake studies at nearby Kents Hill School. Founded in 1824 Kents Hill School originally went by the name of Maine Wesleyan Seminary.[3] Charles enjoyed his time at Kents Hill as he fully immersed himself in his studies. Charles's first surviving correspondence as a thirteen-year-old emphasized the large role of faith in his life. Indeed, it was in 1853 while at Kents Hill that Charles officially accepted Christianity. In a September 30, 1853, letter to his mother, Eliza Gilmore, Charles remarked, "It is this I have been seeking to have my sins forgiven, seeking to get religion, & I have faith that God has forgiven men, through Jesus our Lord, & I mean to live a Christian life."[4] Charles explored both the local Congregational as well as Methodist churches before ultimately settling on the Congregational Church.[5] Following his time at Kents Hill, Charles undertook studies at North Yarmouth Academy and Topsham Academy before entering Bowdoin College in the fall of 1855.[6]

Following in the footsteps of his brothers Otis (class of 1850) and Rowland (class of 1856), Charles entered Bowdoin College in the fall of 1855. Originally chartered in 1794 by the General Court of Massachusetts, Bowdoin College drew its name from James Bowdoin, a wealthy Bostonian in the shipping industry whose son donated land for the creation of a school.[7] Set in Brunswick, Maine, along the banks of the Androscoggin River, the school became an ideal location for sons of Maine compared to the colleges and universities of Massachusetts farther afield.[8] The town of Brunswick was selected following a rigorous analysis of other possible towns in the area, but generous donations by a William Stanwood and the town of Brunswick all but assured the ultimate location of the college.[9] In September 1802, the first eight students of Bowdoin College commenced their studies under a watchful professor, soon becoming Bowdoin's first graduating class in 1806.[10]

Despite economic struggles and the challenges faced by the establishment of Maine statehood, the school continued to grow over the course of the nineteenth century. The student body and faculty expanded, and so with it did the facilities of the college.[11] Improvement to the college continued through the financial turmoil of the late 1830s so that by the time of Charles's admission in 1855, Bowdoin was one of the strongest schools in New England from an educational and fiscal standpoint.

Charles's time at Bowdoin was interrupted by a sickness that overcame him during his freshman year. It required Charles to return to Leeds in order to regain his health. Yet this did not deter Charles, for upon his return he worked earnestly to catch up to his class, insistent that he would graduate with his classmates.[12]

At Bowdoin, Charles spent many dedicated hours on declamations and recitation of works of classical literature. By all accounts Charles enjoyed his time at the college and the friendships that he forged there. In a biography of Charles written by his son Otis McGraw Howard, he referenced a letter written by his father in 1892 reflecting on his time at Bowdoin. In the letter, Charles reminisced, "I do not expect ever to give her an endowment of money, but I am not insensible of the debt her sons owe to her and to those who in the early history of this century founded by their liberality and by the Christian consecration of their means, so beneficent an institution. Bowdoin has been true to her mission to give a thorough foundation of education, accompanied by positive Christian influences, to the sons of New England." Such reflections on Charles's part echo the sentiments of many Bowdoin men during the nineteenth century regarding the dramatic effect the school had on their subsequent careers.[13]

While at Bowdoin, Charles's development and espousal of religious ideals continued. Although not an institution with official denominational ties, Bowdoin College had strong connections to the Congregational Church and would often appeal to the church in Maine and neighboring Massachusetts when funds dwindled.[14] Charles's letters from college often remark upon various services, prayer meetings, and revivals attended, and personal reflection upon the words of the Bible that he undertook. Charles even visited neighboring communities to attend religious services that he believed con-

formed with his particular set of religious ideals—most commonly in the nearby town of Harpswell. Charles's religious commitment culminated in July 1857 with his baptism alongside his older brother Rowland. In a letter home to his mother, Charles summed up his religious devotion and providential beliefs when he declared, "I do pray that I may be as willing to do what I feel to be His will in all things."[15] Charles's baptism proved a seminal moment in his religious conviction, one that set the tone of his faith for the years ahead when he would be challenged by the horrors of war.

Equally telling during this period is Charles's increased discussion of national issues. As early as 1857 Charles discussed his fear over the prospects of disunion. Such discussion at Bowdoin—in the state of Maine, for that matter—proved rather commonplace. The reality was that the greater Brunswick area and its prosperous shipping industry had significant economic ties to Southern-sympathizing New York City and the key Southern ports of New Orleans and Savannah.[16] In 1858 Senator, and future Confederate president, Jefferson Davis undertook a vacation to Maine. The visit reflected the close ties between the South and the state of Maine. Although not Davis's first visit to Maine, it was certainly his most infamous.[17] While in Maine, Davis spoke on several occasions detailing the close relationship between North and South, but in particular the state of Maine and its Southern brethren in Mississippi. Davis reiterated the high esteem each state held for one another and the common bond as Americans that would keep them together—as it had since the days of the American Revolution. In fact, his speeches were considered so inflammatory in their Unionist sentiment that he had to respond to complaints from his constituents in his native Mississippi, denying claims he had made such conciliatory remarks. Davis's trip to Maine culminated in the receipt of an honorary degree from Bowdoin at the 1858 Commencement.[18] The issuance of the honorary degree found few detractors at the time on the largely Democratic Board of Trustees. Those who did complain were somewhat reassured by a simultaneous honorary degree presented to Bowdoin alumnus William Pitt Fessenden from Maine—an ardent abolitionist, Republican senator, and future secretary of the treasury for President Lincoln.[19] However, despite the uproar in the years that followed as the nation went to war and the calls increased urging the college to rescind Davis's honorary degree, the college refused to do so.[20] Such a remarkable turn of events culminated with the issuance of an honorary degree from Bowdoin College in 1865 to one of Davis's chief antagonists during the war, General Ulysses S. Grant.[21]

However, Bowdoin's role in the coming of the Civil War did not end with Jefferson Davis. In 1850 a Bowdoin College professor's wife by the name of Harriet Beecher Stowe arrived in Brunswick and within two years produced the nineteenth century's most famous and best-selling work (next to the Bible), Uncle Tom's Cabin. With Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe brought the horrors of slavery to life for a Northern population largely immune to the "peculiar institution." Stowe produced the work in serialized format while living in Brunswick and often held readings for Bowdoin students during the time of Otis Howard's senior year. One of those students, Joshua Lawrence

Chamberlain, would go on to become a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient who received the Confederate Army's surrender at Appomattox Court House in April 1865.[22]

The connections between Bowdoin College and the Civil War are indeed quite remarkable when one considers that the school boasted a student body of only 269 students and nineteen faculty members on the eve of the war.[23] *Yet by war's end, Bowdoin College could claim that a larger percentage of its alumni participated in the war than any other college in the North. The title had long been given to Dartmouth College, when a Bowdoin alumnus, Edgar Achorn, class of 1881, tabulated the numbers and determined that Bowdoin's contribution to the war effort outnumbered Dartmouth's (relative to their sizes) 25.02 percent to 22.82 percent. While the numbers have been disputed over the years, academics in recent years have vindicated Achorn's work. The fact that Achorn went to such lengths to defend his alma mater demonstrates the reverence he held for the men from this small college in Maine.*[24]

Charles's graduation in 1859 did not diminish his concerns of war or his faith in the Union. His time spent in 1860 living with his elder brother, then-lieutenant Oliver Otis Howard, at his home at West Point, where Otis served as a professor of mathematics, only enhanced Charles's convictions. A young man of twenty-six at the time of his appointment, Otis garnered significant respect at "the Point" that Charles witnessed during his time there.[25] *Charles's stay at West Point provided him with a deep appreciation for military culture and strong belief in the Union—one that would prove important when a call to arms emerged in just a year's time. In the midst of the South Carolina Secession Convention in December of 1860, Charles wrote his brother Rodelphus as the situation rapidly spiraled out of control. Charles plainly remarked, "Secession seems inevitable. Hope they'll be no sacrifice of principle."*[26] *The time that Charles spent with his brother Otis following graduation proved fundamental in forming his convictions regarding the call to Union, duty, and honor in the spring of 1861.*

With war still on the horizon—if only slightly out of view— Charles began to undertake studies at the Bangor Theological Seminary, guided by his deep appreciation of faith and belief in a possible higher calling to the ministry. Charles's decision to attend seminary was not uncommon for Bowdoin men. He followed in the footsteps of alumni such as Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and even his own brother, Rowland, an 1860 graduate of Bangor Theological Seminary. Charles wrote and delivered his own sermons during his days at Bowdoin, a practice that only increased during his time at West Point. He would often deliver sermons when the local minister had been called away to urgent matters, and he greatly enjoyed the challenge of the task. Reflecting upon the art of the sermon and the process of writing them, Charles remarked in a letter to his mother, "I seemed to be aided & blessed on this work dear mother so that I felt encouraged that I had not mistaken my calling. I think it awful to enter the ministry just like many other professions without any reason to believe we are called to the work."[27] *Charles's comfort and enjoyment of the process reaffirmed his pursuit of the ministry and his faith in the crucial importance it held to his, and others', happiness. While Charles was studying at*