# *Leonidas Polk: Warrior Bishop of the Confederacy* by Huston Horn (review)


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officers because he "believe[d] that some sort of West Point conspiracy led by Henry Halleck had derailed his military career" (p. 198). As a result, Wallace died without recognizing his faults and understanding how his own ambition led to the end of his military career.

As a boy, Wallace frequently rebelled against his father's authority. Mortenson attributes Wallace's rebellious spirit to losing his mother at the early age of seven. In the nineteenth century, mothers were responsible for helping boys "bridge the gap" to manhood (p. 10). As Mortenson sees it, the absence of Wallace's mother contributed to Wallace's aggressive nature as an adult. Even though his father quickly remarried, Wallace rejected his stepmother. As a result, Wallace "grew to embrace notions of manhood that seemed more martial or rough, rather than restrained or gentlemanly" (p. 10). Although his father wanted him to become a lawyer, Wallace wanted a life of adventure and glory. In fact, one wonders if Wallace's disdain for West Point officers stems from his relationship with his father, who was a West Point graduate.

Like the men Carol Reardon writes about in *With a Sword in One Hand and Jomini in the Other: The Problem of Military Thought in the Civil War North* (Chapel Hill, 2012), Wallace thought that he was just as qualified for military service and leadership positions as the professionally trained officers from West Point, even though he obtained his commission through political means. A veteran with modest experience in the U.S.-Mexican War, Wallace demanded that his superiors treat him as an equal. Yet Wallace's strong desire for glory, fame, and honor naturally put him at odds with the West Point–trained officers who emphasized respect for authority, discipline, and order. Mortenson argues that Wallace's "attitude problem" is best explained through a gendered lens. He applies Amy S. Greenberg's definitions of "restrained" and "martial" masculinities and Lorien Foote's conception of "gentlemen" and "roughs" to show that Wallace's understanding of what it meant to be a man put him at odds with the manhood taught at West Point (p. 6). While West Pointers "embraced a more restrained, gentlemanly, and communal manhood," Wallace leaned "toward the martial and rough notions" of masculinity (pp. 7, 191).

While there have been several Lew Wallace biographies published recently, Mortenson's contribution is the most comprehensive: it addresses Wallace's upbringing, military career, successful recruiting, aborted peace mission in Texas, role in the case of the Abraham Lincoln assassination conspirators, and service as the court president of the military commission conducting Andersonville prison commandant Henry Wirz's trial. Overall, Mortenson's biography provides a clear examination of Wallace's actions, decisions, and contributions on and off the battlefield and is recommended for anyone interested in the military and political history of the Civil War.

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*Leonidas Polk: Warrior Bishop of the Confederacy*. By Huston Horn. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2019. Pp. viii, 592. $39.95, ISBN 978-0-7006-2750-9.)

Written for enthusiasts of the American Civil War, Huston Horn's biography of Leonidas Polk details a story of struggle. The first part of Horn's work offers

insight into the world of a man who endeavored to find his identity. Polk was torn between the southern ideology of manhood and his increasing religiosity, which was often seen as effeminate by Polk's counterparts, including members of his own family. While attending the hypermasculine arena that was the United States Military Academy at West Point, Polk encountered Chaplain Charles Petit McIlvaine, and, "[a]s with Saul on the road to Damascus," Polk had a conversion experience and found his true calling as a clergyman (p. 19). Polk was assigned to preach in the Mississippi Valley, and it was in this frontier region that Polk strove to establish a working plantation, to spread Christianity to the frontiersmen, slaves, and Natives, and to overcome several major challenges to his own personal health. Lastly, Polk struggled to convince investors to back his concept of a college dedicated to promoting white southern ideals and customs. However, like many of his earlier challenges, Polk overcame this obstacle and helped create the University of the South in Tennessee toward the end of the 1850s.

As the American Civil War began, Polk was "certain that the cause of the Confederacy was the cause of God" and offered his services to the Confederacy (p. 154). Benefiting from his personal friendship with Jefferson Davis and others, Polk received the rank of major general. The second part of Horn's work details Polk's efforts to balance his devotion to piety and Christian charity with his duty to lead men into battle and to be responsible for the deaths of both Confederate and Union soldiers. As Polk struggled through the difficulties of organizing and commanding forces in the Mississippi Valley, he continually submitted his resignation to Davis. This trial was especially true after the battle of Belmont, when Polk desired to resign only to lose that desire when enormous amounts of praise for his actions reached his ears. But praise was often followed by jealousy and ire on the part of Polk's military contemporaries. Perhaps greatest among Polk's detractors was General Braxton Bragg. Bragg, who after the battle of Shiloh was elevated to a rank superior to that of Polk, was often reported to have disparaged Polk as a womanly do-nothing commander.

Horn's well-researched biography of Polk provides another fascinating chapter in the American Civil War's series of famous leaders. Yet Horn avoids the pitfalls of spending too much time on the military maneuvers of the Confederate general and, instead, offers a rich study of a man's struggle to identify himself in the evolving nineteenth century. As Horn argues, Polk's ability to demonstrate masculinity, while still retaining his clerical proclivities, placed him in a unique category of celebrity that "commanded a social position and a popular deference that few fellow Southern men could match" (p. 2).

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*The Civil War on the Rio Grande, 1846–1876.* Edited by Roseann Bacha-Garza, Christopher L. Miller, and Russell K. Skowronek. The Elma Dill Russell Spencer Series in the West and Southwest. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2019. Pp. xxii, 326. $45.00, ISBN 978-1-62349-719-4.)

The Civil War affected all parts of the United States, but much that occurred far from the major battlefields has slipped from public memory. Faculty at universities, curators of local museums, and community members in southern