



# **Chaplain to the Confederacy: Basil Manly and Baptist Life in the Old South (Southern Biography Series)**

*A. James Fuller*

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As Jefferson Davis paraded through the streets of Montgomery, Alabama, to take the oath of office as the first president of the Confederate States of America, two men accompanied him in his open coach: Alexander Stephens -- the vice-president-elect -- and Basil Manly. A noted southern Baptist preacher, educator, and the most ardent secessionist of them all, Manly had been selected to serve as chaplain to the provisional Confederate Congress and opened the inaugural ceremonies with a prayer. For nearly thirty years, Manly had worked devotedly for the establishment of a southern nation, and in 1861, his sermons and public prayers before church and congress lent moral and religious legitimacy to the new Confederate government. In this, the first full biography of Manly, A. James Fuller analyzes the life and career of this working minister, illustrating the central role of religion in the formation of the Confederacy.

Fuller argues that Manly brought together the various themes of the broader culture into his own conception of Christian gentility, including his actions as the official chaplain to the Confederate government. In Manly's eyes, the Confederacy was the incarnation of God's plan for the South. A planter, slaveholder, and staunch defender of the peculiar institution, he hoped to temper the brutality of bondage by promoting the Christian duties of masters as well as slaves. In practice he tried to reconcile the traditions of honor and evangelical virtue, the contradictions of white liberty and black slavery, the ideals of the individual and the need for community in matters both sacred and secular.

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