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BOOK NEWS

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Timothy L. Wesley Reveals Political Motivations of Religious Leaders during the Civil War

"A thoughtful, deeply researched, and impressive history of the place of religion in nineteenth-century America."—Aaron Sheehan-Dean, author of *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia*

Baton Rouge—In *The Politics of Faith during the Civil War*, Timothy L. Wesley examines the engagement of both northern and southern preachers in politics during the American Civil War. Controversial ministers risked ostracism within the local community, censure from church leaders, and arrests by provost marshals or local police. In contested areas of the Upper Confederacy and border Union, ministers occasionally faced deadly violence for what they said or would not say from their pulpits.

The generation that fought the Civil War lived in arguably the most sacralized culture in the history of the United States. The participation of church members in the public arena meant that ministers wielded great authority. Wesley outlines the scope of that influence and considers, conversely, the feared outcomes of its abuse. The reticence of otherwise loyal ministers to bring politics into the pulpit often grew not out of partisan concerns but out of doctrinal, historical, and local factors.

The Politics of Faith during the Civil War sheds new light on the political motivations of home front clergymen during wartime, revealing how and why the Civil War stands as the nation's first concerted campaign to check the ministry's freedom of religious expression.

Timothy L. Wesley teaches history at Pennsylvania State University, where he is a fellow with the George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center.

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