served to reinforce her biblical knowledge and guide her in the ways of a good Christian life.

While Nancy recorded many sermons throughout her diary, she mentioned an overwhelming number of clergymen in these entries. The most often-mentioned preacher, Mr. McGuire, was referred to just ten times in the space of 150 entries—with only seven of these directly referencing a sermon. The number of different clergy and her lack of a specific church may reflect the general instability of organized religion at this time which was suffering due to decreased church attendance and a lack of available men to preach. As in other areas of the country, clergymen in Fincastle may have left for the war, forcing separate churches to congregate under the same roof, putting aside doctrinal differences in order to continue to receive guidance and blessings from a reduced number of preachers.\(^1\) After losing available clergymen to the front lines, many southern white women transformed the practice of their religion from church-based to a more personal enactment of their faith. But “as the gender of civilian worshipers changed, so too religious practice moved from a more public and male to a more domestic and female sphere,” shifting the authority of the religious practitioner.\(^2\) Nancy thrived on this personal religious authority, employing her faith through the domestic tasks of prayer and diary writing.

Nancy often mentioned church services and memorable sermons in her entries, and naturally prayer occupied a large space in her faith-based entries. Nancy turned to God, asking for a spiritual sustenance to substitute for the lack of her husband’s physical presence. Through her writing Nancy constantly tried to assure herself of her own

\(^1\) Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 184.

\(^2\) Ibid., 185.
strength through faith: "my Heavenly Father will give me grace to bear [the separation],"
"oh God! Help me to keep [my resolutions] through thy strength," and "Oh! Thou God of
battles...do then be our strength in this our time of great need", all demonstrate Nancy’s
regular exclamations to God.\textsuperscript{73} Perhaps these repeated prayers served as a way to
reassure the writer that she was grounded in something bigger than the war, bigger even
than her family. A benevolent force beyond mortal comprehension guided her along a
predisposed path, allowing for no mistakes and accepting all responsibility. Nancy relied
on the strength of her faith; God was omnipotent, and if she trusted in Him, all would be
well. Surely this aided in her daily existence, giving meaning to her life and lifting the
heavy weight of loneliness off her shoulders if only for a little while.

Nancy’s reliance and dependence on God released her from existential anxiety,
but it did not relieve her from the daily challenges she encountered. When her sixteen-
year-old sister Jinnie fell ill in March 1863, Nancy attributed her symptoms to typhoid
fever and relied on a doctor’s visit to confirm this fact and provide a solution. Figgat
depended on the earthly knowledge of a physician to ease her sister’s ailments and put an
end to her pain. But by late March the signs increasingly pointed to serofula, and,
preparing herself for the worst, Nancy asked God to "spare [Jinnie] great suffering."\textsuperscript{74}
Resigned to Jinnie’s probable death, her diary pointedly addressed God and asked him to
bless her beloved sister, "who we do not expect to live from one day to another."\textsuperscript{75} The
entries no longer focused on the physical nature of her distress and instead focused on life
anew with God in Heaven. Preparation in this way served to reinforce Nancy’s ideas

\textsuperscript{73} Figgat Diary, August 2, 1862, November 25, 1862, January 3, 1863.
\textsuperscript{74} Figgat Diary, March 30, 1863. Serofula is the term referring to tuberculosis of the lymph glands,
typically with a slow and painful progression.
\textsuperscript{75} Figgat Diary, April 15, 1863.
about her faith. Thus, when Jinnie died and the “grim monster invaded our happy family,” Nancy recognized the presence of her Lord when “the departing spirit, calmly, sweetly left its frail tenement of [the day], to rise to the bosom of her Savior.”

Again Nancy leaned on the tenets of her faith to explain the uncertainties of life but for the first time since the start of her diary, these beliefs fell short. Doubt slowly crept into Figgat’s writing, evidenced by shifts in the subjects she covered and a decline in the frequency of entries.

A general transformation in the tone of Nancy’s diary occurred after Jinnie’s death. In the next seven months Nancy wrote only sixteen new entries, representing a substantial decline in the sheer quantity of her writing. A preoccupation with death and the war suddenly appeared in Figgat’s writing, and the focus of her diary shifted from recording church sermons and letters from Charlie to general news of the war and gloomy accounts of random deaths within her community. Nancy’s faith no longer served its previous purpose, and she now applied it only in regards to the war. Since written prayers did not provide healing or strength, she must have looked to other mediums from which to draw strength. While she grappled with this new relationship to her faith, she employed her prayer-like writing in a new way, imploring “God in mercy [to] raise us up another to lead our armies to victory.”

Focused on the war, Nancy now applied her Christian beliefs to the southern cause and utilized her faith in a slightly different way. In an optimistic turn, Nancy recorded success in battle and the continued survival of her husband and brothers alongside statements to God, perhaps as a way to rebuild her faith.

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76 Figgat Diary, April 23, 1863.
77 Nancy had written 102 entries in the seven months prior to Jinnie’s death, but also must note that there is a page torn out from the diary between the entries for June 16 and July 3, 1863. While this may account for some of the discrepancy, it only represents an average of ten more entries.
78 Figgat Diary, May 1, 1863.
by focusing on the positives in her life. While these entries were scarce, they point to the lingering impetus for her writing and her continued battle with her own spirituality.

The death of her infant son soon crushed Figgat’s attempt at reconstructing her religious beliefs. On June 14, 1863 Nancy recorded that “Charlie cut his first tooth last week and this week his lower ones,” a significant step in his development. The arrival of teeth brought with it the introduction of new food and signaled an important step in his progression away from infancy and into childhood. Infant mortality was high in the nineteenth century, however, and the appearance of teeth also must have added worry and anxiety to the life of Nancy Godwin Figgat. Teeth meant solid food and weaning—a relief to a new mother—but they also meant fevers, infection, and disease, an increase in the burden of worry and threat of death. In Virginia, two-hundred and four children lost their lives as a result of “teething (a disease of the digestive system)” in 1860 alone, so mothers were incredibly cautious and wary of this important developmental step.79

Nancy’s diary included no more traces of her son or his new teeth until her entry on November twenty-seventh of the same year. On this day Figgat recorded that her “little Meade” had been sick for several days due to teething, and in an attempt to ease his pain she administered a “mustard bath to feet, cold water to head, and mustard to spine.”80 This was a process that she repeated several times in an attempt to draw down his fever and kill the infection which was ravaging his fourteen-month-old body. Along with these traditional healing practices, Nancy called on God for help, pleading with him; “if best, spare my child, Thou Knowest; help me to be resigned, be with me in my

80 Figgat Diary, November 27, 1863. Mustard is mentioned as a remedy for illness in Martha Ballard’s diary. It was used by Ballard to “bring down the courses”; in effect stopping the progression of the disease. For more on the use of mustard and other traditional medicines by Martha Ballard, see Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s A Midwife’s Tale (New York: Vantage Books, 1990), 357.
Intertwining the practicality of traditional medicine with the almighty power of God, Nancy hoped to save her son from an infection which she viewed as an imminent precursor to death.

Figgat’s prayers proved futile—her son died less than two weeks later. In an entry significantly different than any other in length and style, Nancy described the excruciating day, recorded in the style of a prayer directed to God. Meade’s misery affected Nancy so much that she called into question the most reliable of her relationships: “but in the agonies of death, his moans, were to me so distressing. It seemed as if he must cry out & those teeth (oh they cost him his life) ground together, so as to almost drive me from Him.” In this moment God no longer provided a complete understanding of the world. How could this happen to her son? Why would God inflict such pain on one so young? When a mother loses a child many such questions arise, but when Nancy tried to rely on her faith for answers, she found that which had given her life so much meaning, so much purpose, was now absent. Where was God when she “with my own hands…closed his eyes on earth forever”? Could God reign over such a world where little boys were suddenly snatched away from all who loved them?

To witness such a painful death, an inexplicable display of life’s unrelenting and natural cycle, must have proven difficult for the small and fractured family. Nothing could quell Nancy’s grief. Her husband absent, Nancy faced this trial alone, although she wished, “O could his dear Papa have been with him & me” on this day of despair. In her eyes, Meade’s need for his father was surpassed only by her own need for Charlie’s company. Perhaps Nancy thought that if a mother must survive her son’s death, she should share the moment with his father. Would Charlie’s presence have made this day

81 Figgat Diary, November 27, 1863.
any easier? Possibly with Meade’s death the insecurities of single motherhood arose—had she been able to give Meade “the care of both [parents]” as she vowed on the day of his birth? Her husband’s presence might have reassured her that this was a shared crisis, providing an infrastructure of support for the newly grieving mother.

In an attempt to understand Meade’s death Nancy returned to her faith, and in the first hints of her grief, she littered her writing with generic religious statements. She could not rely on Charlie due to their separation, but knew she needed a stable and guiding presence in her life. Nancy tried to insert the tenets of her faith into her writing thereby infusing God’s authority into the experience of Meade’s death. At Jinnie’s death Nancy could physically feel the presence of God as her sister’s spirit departed, describing it as “a sweet night The Holy Spirit was there pervading the hearts of the witnesses.”

This death reinforced her faith and convinced her of God’s holiness—reassuring to those dealing with such a loss. Trying desperately to find her faith in this new situation, Figgat resorted to employing phrases describing God’s knowledge, stating that while “I would not now have him back…[secret] recollections of him will bring tears, while I can say ‘Thy will be done.’”

Recognizing her overwhelming feelings of grief, Nancy tried to create a safe place to express these emotions through a faith-based language. When memories arose, she could assure herself that Meade died as a result of some mysterious

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82 Figgat Diary, April 23, 1863.
83 Possibly these thoughts on the sanctity of death were related to general nineteenth-century Christian beliefs about death and the certainty of an afterlife based on a person’s faith. For example, in 1860 a prominent minister in East Tennessee published a sermon entitled, “Glorifying God in Death,” which outlined how people should die in order to convince their loved one’s of their salvation. He states that “God selects for his people those modes of exit from the world by which the glory of his name is most highly promoted” and that the “calmness of the departing hour throws a radiance around which redounds to the honor of him who is the conqueror of death.” Perhaps these messages were prominent in Fincastle as well as Knoxville, and affected Nancy’s views of her own afterlife in the terms of her loved one’s deaths. See J.M. Pendleton, Short sermons on important subjects, (Nashville: Southwestern Publishing, 1860) Rare Books Collection at University of Tennessee-Knoxville.
84 Figgat Diary, December 7, 1863.
plan, unknown to her but perfected by God. In an attempt to further emphasize and re-inscribe this faith and trust, Nancy ended with the prayer, “Assist me saviour to live nearer to thee & to keep the resolutions I have formed, to live so that I may meet my darling in Heaven. Amen.” She negotiated this territory through the rhetoric of religion because it was only through faith that Nancy would be able to see her son again.85

But could this unswerving faith obscure the questions which arose as the result of Meade’s death? Could her faith erase the agonizing memories of a “few hrs before his death, [when] he would open his sweet mouth to kiss me?” She described how her son, even in the throes of death, found the strength to kiss his mother, a bittersweet example of the bond between a mother and child. Memories of Meade’s death forced her to question her relationship with God, and this entry marks a significant change in her writing style, reflecting ultimately a change in her life. No longer was she a mother to two young sons. In fact, there is no mention of her older son at all in the remainder of the diary—it is as if she could not bear to remind herself of the loss by writing anything about motherhood.86

85 Figgat Diary, December 7, 1863. This entry alludes to the fact that Nancy wrote about her son’s death after he was buried on December 8 and suggests that Nancy may have used her diary to memorialize young Meade in a form of tangible evidence of his life and death. Observing his death in this way echoes the purpose and use of antebellum postmortem photographs analyzed in comparison with photographs taken of Civil War dead by Franny Nudelman in John Brown’s Body. Along with “giving form to private memory” these pictures functioned as sentimental objects which “commemorated the dead by expressing the survivor’s desire for eventual reunion.” Nancy, like other mothers who were photographed with their dead children, commemorated Meade through her writing. Her diary functioned as a sentimental document which she could return to and re-read, just as the photographs served as memories which—according to Nudelman—represent “antebellum attitudes towards death [that] are, in this sense, wholly sentimental in that they view death as a transitional state in which the living and the dead endure a painful separation before celebrating a joyful reunion.” See, Nudelman, John Brown’s Body: Slavery, Violence, & the Culture of War, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) 111-112.

86 Despite the silence in her diary, Nancy did, however, continue to write about Thomas Godwin in letters to Charlie. Many of these mentioned visits to Meade’s grave, and on November 13, 1864, Nancy wrote to her husband that she and Godwin “paid a visit to the graveyard at his earnest solicitation...we took some very pretty flowers and laid them on ‘little brother’s and Aunt Jinnie’s graves’...I cannot realize that near a year has passed since that little hillock was made and yet I sometimes feel a longing to see within that narrow house. Can this be sinful? To cling so to the earthly tenement, and not to look, to the glorified spirit, the dear angel babe,” suggesting interdependency between mother and child during their time of bereavement. Nancy Godwin Figgat to Charles Figgat, Charles M. Figgat Papers, Library of Virginia.
After Meade’s death Nancy no longer wrote about church services either; a subject which had previously taken up much space in her writing was now obsolete, and the mentioning of her faith or beliefs also decreased significantly. News of the war and deaths within the community now overwhelmed her writing, representing a shifting focus in daily priorities and her frame of mind.

Even the way Nancy wrote about death changed. No longer did her entries exclaim the goodness of God; instead of stating “Oh! God grant that it may be for their good give them strength to bear, saying ‘the will of the Lord be done,’” she now mentioned death at any and every point with no explanation: “Tommie Woodson was buried in F died in Amelia Cty of Typhoid fever, aged 11 years.” Both statements reference the deaths of young children, but, after the passing of her own child, Nancy apparently could not bring herself to include any reference to faith in these entries. She did not limit herself to recording only children’s deaths, however. It seemed that she wrote about the passing of everyone in the community in an uninvolved and detached manner. She was not experiencing the deaths: they occurred without her and thus no personal reaction can be deciphered in her writing. But the sheer amount of space devoted to the mentioning of deaths within her community indicates that Nancy was deeply affected by the death of her own son and by death in general. Her “secret recollections” must have been present when she recorded neighborhood losses, serving as a constant reminder of her own pain and grief.

Rather than a testament to the depth of her grief, Nancy’s constant recordings of her community’s losses may have been a way for her to reach out to others and relate to

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87 Figgat Diary, January 14, 1863 and March 18, 1864. Earlier entry references the death of Maria Lewis Williams aged “just 10 yrs & 2 weeks.”
her neighbors on another plane. Deaths could have united the community in a wide-reaching “secret recollection” and Nancy’s writing could have been her own attempt to ease her bereavement. Her writing possibly served as a constant reminder of other’s grief as well as her own, and could have helped her to realize that she was not alone in her pain. While these reminders of shared anguish may have helped Nancy survive the passing of her little boy, she still avoided writing in the months of October, November, and December the year after Meade died. Possibly this seasonal reminder overcame her emotions; scattered accounts of the community could not ease her mind of the memories of the past year.

In the last sixteen months of her diary, Nancy battled these intense emotions; her grief was palpable in the last twenty-seven entries. Not until the last entry of her diary, March 5, 1865, did she resume her previous, prayerful style of writing. In an entry devoted to her husband’s homecoming, she ended the vicious cycle of questioning and disbelief. Her husband had returned home safely, having avoided capture after a grueling escape, and “Thus has a merciful God again protected and delivered him. Oh may I never doubt Him.” While Nancy does not mention any church services and only references her personal beliefs twice between the death of her son and the return of her husband, there is evidence to suggest that she continued to attend church. Short titles from eight sermons, recorded on a small piece of blue-lined paper, were tucked into the last pages of her diary. Nancy could not bring herself to record statements of her faith in

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88 Nudelman discusses the community-wide implications of death and grief through an exchange of commemorative objects. She states that this process “established mourning as an opportunity to identify with others who had experienced grief” and “bound the living to one another” through death and bereavement. See Nudelman, *John Brown’s Body*, 4.

89 Meade’s birthday was in October, and he became ill and died in November and December. Perhaps she found that writing in her diary reminded her too much of that period in her life.

90 Figgat Diary, March 5, 1863.
her diary; her distress and grief overwhelmed her emotions and the diary no longer functioned as a prayerful space. She looked for reinforcement of her beliefs elsewhere, and it was not until the safe return of her husband that the diary once again functioned as a reflection of her faith.

Fannie Fain knew that her husband’s departure was imminent when she recorded that the “last and meanest law” was passed, which served to “put in all those who had furnished substitutes,” an act which she felt was “a most complete violation of all contracts, and perfectly unconstitutional.”91 This law—extending the maximum draft age to forty-five—meant that her husband would soon leave, forced either into service or exile. A month passed before Fannie recorded that “the very thing which I so much dreaded did come upon me, my dear husband was forced to leave me and his little ones.” The fact that John Fain chose to subvert the draft and escape to conduct business in the North did not provide any comfort to his wife. It would have been unsafe for him to travel behind Confederate lines and because of this Fannie prepared herself for a long and hard separation. Fannie coped with his departure through the support of her family and her faith. She trusted that “he may be spared” and prayed that her family “may be preserved [along with] all we have.”92

John left Fannie all alone with three young children to parent, a household to run, and slaves to manage. This challenge seemed daunting to Fannie, and she noted that she felt “heartily tired [of] living in such suspense and anxiety” in her next entry, nearly nine

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91 Fain Diary, January 3, 1864.
92 Fain Diary, January 31, 1864.
weeks later. While Fannie’s previous entries are a bit scattered, this lapse of time suggests that she was in an adjustment phase, learning to navigate this newfound territory which placed her at the head of her family. Her writing continued in a sporadic fashion until late summer, when she commenced writing almost every Sunday. Perhaps Fannie was overwhelmed by her new responsibilities, and it took a while to settle into a new routine. She recorded that although the “time is flying rapidly,” “these are to me dark gloomy and uneasy days;” the stress of life without John proved to be hard and she found little time for herself or her writing.

In these months where she struggled to maintain some sense of normalcy, Fannie relied on her faith for guidance and reassurance. Each entry contained a reference to church, preaching, or prayer, signifying Fannie’s reliance on her Christian faith during this time of instability. Fannie most likely attended Blountville’s Presbyterian Church before the war broke out; her father had been a founding member and was elected a ruling elder when the church was organized in 1820. Fannie mentioned many different ministers in her writing, some of them traveling preachers and some of them local, with only a few repetitions. Blountville underwent a religious transformation with the onset of war, and many of the sermons Fannie cited came from these traveling ministers or preachers affiliated with the occupying army. This diversity of preaching led Fannie to different churches, and the lack of a consistent message must have frustrated her at times. After one particularly offensive sermon offered by a Confederate chaplain, she exclaimed, “Oh! this vile, wicked war, what a division it has made, what wickedness &

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93 Fain Diary, April 10, 1864.
unkindness it has brought about. Enough of this kind of preaching for me.⁹⁵ While she depended on preaching to restore her faith, Fannie did not indiscriminately adopt the opinions of Blountville’s ministers; she was able to pick and choose the verses and sermons which she felt were applicable to her situation, and utilized their messages as she saw fit.

On one particularly “cold & unpleasant” day, Fannie found comfort in the sermon from Matthew 21 v. 22: “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive,” finding it a “very comforting passage of scripture to the believing Christian.”⁹⁶

Seeking strength for support and answers to her questions, Fannie braved the foul weather and attended church with “very few others.” Her religious beliefs convinced her that John would return safely and that an end to the “cruel” war would surely come soon. Fannie could focus on the scripture she read and the sermons that she heard as reassurance that her life was unfolding as it should. She could trust in God, and it was through prayer that her hopes would soon meet reality. Although Fannie could not find time to write regularly in the first few months after her husband’s departure, she made sure to record the stabilities of life and hopes for her future whenever she found time to put her pen to paper.

Fannie found more and more time to write as the weeks passed and she adjusted to her new living situation. By early fall Fannie was recording events in her diary every Sunday, setting aside time in her busy day to respect the Sabbath and commune with God. As she became more comfortable with her new role, she allowed more time to record the week’s events and reflect on the circumstances of her community. Fannie’s

⁹⁵ Fain Diary, February 19, 1865.
⁹⁶ Fain Diary, April 17, 1864.
adjustment relied on her faith, and while she sometimes felt as though she “c’d not bear the separation any longer...I try to feel ‘tis for the best.” The separation proved bearable, and soon Fannie no longer included nostalgic statements of loneliness or grief in her weekly entries. Fannie replaced the language describing her loneliness with a tone of frustration and disillusionment. Frustrated with the absence of her husband, she resorted to constantly commenting on their lack of communication and supposing as to his whereabouts rather than writing exclamations about her lack of companionship. Instead of lamenting his absence, she now plainly stated the circumstances of their relationship: “I hear nothing this week from Mr. Fain, have been disappointed he had not returned from Cincinnati about ten days since, can’t hear where he is, but hope he is still living & well.” The optimism of her writing persevered while her self confidence grew; she now recognized the futility of her prior emotive writing—just because Fannie missed her husband didn’t mean that he would return any sooner. She modified her attitude about his absence and slowly became more comfortable in her newfound responsibilities.

Like many other women living in Blountville, Fannie surrendered many male relatives to the southern cause, including three brothers and multiple cousins, uncles, and family friends. These absences created holes which upset the balance of the community and the general feeling of stability within the town. Fannie confronted this instability through her religious beliefs and used prayers to combat the insecurities which arose as a result of separation from her loved ones. On a “very severe and blustery” Sunday in December, Fannie wrote that she had “much & very much to be thankful for ... but the

97 Fain Diary, December 25, 1864.
98 Fain Diary, March 9, 1864.
99 At least three of Fannie’s brothers were fighting for the Confederacy in 1864: John L. Rhea, 31, James A. Rhea, 23, and William L. Rhea, 17.
world and the perishing things thereof are rather distracting thereto, but grace I need, ‘tis grace that overcometh all these trials and vexations of life.”100 She recorded the movements of her brothers and friends across the region, and kept track of their company’s whereabouts through local routes of communication. But these reports could rarely be trusted and were hardly comprehensive, so Fannie had to “trust they may be spared until this cruel war is over [and] all will be permitted to return & unite as a happy family once more.”101 Realizing that she had no control over the course of the war and frustrated about its extensive hold on her family, Fannie depended on God and employed her faith to protect her family.

Enlistment and war casualties were not the only factors which stripped Blountville of its residents. Death came in a less extraordinary form; sickness and old age claimed a number of the city’s inhabitants. When Fannie recorded the death of her father at the age of “68 years, 3 days,” his health had been “on the decline since last Sept., but more especially and rapidly since the last of February,” and although he was ailing, he required “very little attention, only what Mother gave him.”102 He was an old man and his death, although not welcomed, was expected. With Samuel Rhea’s death, Fannie encountered a situation which she had not—and could not have—foreseen. On his deathbed, her father began to question his faith, leading Fannie to intervene as a makeshift spiritual advisor. After reading the pages her father selected out of his “Spiritual Treasury,” Rhea stated that “he could not see his way clearly,” and doubted his

100 Fain Diary, December 11, 1864.
101 Fain Diary, December 21, 1864.
102 Fain Diary, May 13, 1863.
assurance of salvation. When the text did not reassure him, Fannie performed the work her father had done as a church elder, and used confidence in him and in her own faith to comfort Rhea on his deathbed. Fannie assured her father that she had “always had perfect confidence in your piety,” and felt that his “life & example [should be] sufficient evidence” of deliverance. She gave no credence to his doubts, and reassured him that all would be well despite his worries. Fannie addressed this crisis of faith in a direct and simple way; her father had lived a good Christian life, and thus expressed no worry as he transitioned from an earthly to a heavenly existence.

Fannie again confronted the possibility of an afterlife when she recorded the “sad, very sad fact of the death of our dear brother Jimmy” after she “received a dispatch bearing the sad intelligence that he was killed in the fight at Staunton, Va.” Although it was a false report (it was discovered later that her brother was only seriously wounded) Fannie’s reaction in response to the news of Jimmy’s death represents her bereavement process in general. His supposed death—while a shock—was not entirely unexpected, and Fannie assumed that her brother had prepared himself mentally and spiritually because “surely he thought it was now at hand when in so much danger.” Instead of mourning over her brother’s death, Fannie applied a lens of optimism, and stated that she hoped and prayed “that this sad and afflictive dispensation may be sanctified to each one

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103 Fain Diary, May 16, 1863. Fannie read from the fifth, sixth, and seventh days of the “Spiritual Treasury” which failed to assure her father of his salvation. These daily meditations focused on the everlasting love of God, the importance of living a life devoted to the Lord, and the seventh meditation states “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.” These were obviously meditations specifically selected to show a doubter the way and provide comfort in the omnipotence of the Lord. See William Mason, A Spiritual Treasury, for the Children of God: Consisting of a Meditation for each Day in the Year, Upon Select Texts of Scripture. Humbly Intended to Establish the Faith, Promote the Comfort, and Influence the Practice of the Followers of the Lamb, (London, 1765) 5-7.

104 Fain Diary, May 16, 1863.

105 Fain Diary, June 6, 1864.
of us who are left." The mourning process would have served no purpose in the middle of such a "cruel and wicked war." The deaths of her friends and family served to sanctify Fannie's faith, bringing her closer to God by revealing his presence in her everyday.

Although Fannie expressed sadness over the passing of her brother and father, the intensity of this loss was experienced differently than that of her husband's absence. Fannie dealt with the deaths and grieved the loss of her brother and father in similar ways: in both situations she allowed no room for the questioning of faith. Fain had no reason to doubt her father's salvation, and although she was unsure of her brother's "thoughts and feelings in regard to an everlasting futurity," she hoped and assumed that "he had made all necessary preparation to meet death." This kind of assurance could have been a way for Fannie to deal with her own process of grief. Perhaps it eased her mind to compartmentalize their deaths, placing the experiences into a religious contextual framework of certain salvation. But this could be an example of the strength and confidence that Fannie had in her own beliefs. Although she had "been surely afflicted within the past year" Fannie was still convinced of the righteousness of her faith, and instead of calling religion into question in these times of trial, she tried to reinforce her faith by learning from these experiences. She reminded herself after the news of her brother's death that "'God moves in a mysterious way. 'Tis he who afflicts and we must submissively kiss the rod which smites' and say, 'Not my will but thine, O Lord, be done.'"

106 Fain Diary, June 6, 1864.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
The differences in Nancy and Fannie’s war-time experience led each to negotiate the bounds of their personal faith and form an individual relationship with God, which likely extended beyond the pages of their diaries into their everyday lives. The anxiety and sorrow they expressed in their writing probably diverged greatly from the reality of their days, which could explain certain stylistic forms in both women’s writing. Possibly Fannie detached herself from the deaths of her father and brother as a way to reaffirm her faith through a distanced perspective—recording the certainty of their salvation may have given Fannie the spiritual tools she required to deal with her grief. On the other hand, perhaps Nancy needed to maintain a strong appearance for Thomas and her younger siblings, and thus expressed all of her sorrow in writing as an attempt to prevent an outward emotional breakdown. By pouring her grief onto the pages of her diary, she may have reserved energy and strength in order to confront the real world. While differences in language and style evidence a divergence in personal relationship, it is telling that both Fannie and Nancy turned to their Christian beliefs in times of grief. Was this a result of years of Christian indoctrination, an immediate and unthinking reaction to hard times? Perhaps it was a personal and private coping strategy which alleviated fears of the future and convinced the writer of her eventual reunion with loved ones. Regardless of motivation, faith was obviously a significant force in both Fannie and Nancy’s lives and writing—whether it was present and addressed, or absent and unacknowledged.

While both women used their faith to deal with grief over death and loss, they used their faith differently. Nancy’s writing seemed to serve as a reinforcement of her faith, and when it suffered with the death of Jinnie and Meade, she practically stopped writing. Fannie did not encounter an unexpected eternal separation or devastating death
of a child, and so her diary functioned as a constant reflection of her religiosity. Maybe her writing would have changed with the death of young Jimmy, but Fannie had already lost her first child, Samuel Rhea a few years earlier.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps she had battled her beliefs and questioned God in the same way as Nancy, before returning to the strength of her deeply ingrained Christian convictions. Despite the difference in the intensity of their losses, God and religion occupied a large part of both women’s lives. While Nancy and Fannie relied on their faith to ease their bereavement, their writing evidenced diverse conceptions of faith and differing relationships to God—based not on strength or quality of personal faith, but on individual experiences with grief and loss.

¹⁰⁹ According to tombstone records recorded by the WPA, Samuel Rhea died on January 1, 1860 at the age of almost six months. See Tombstone Records, WPA roll 80, East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville, Tennessee. Fannie also mentions the death of her young son at the start of her diary, stating that “Sam’l Rhea Fain [was] born Aug. 4th Thursday, 8 o’clock, and he died at the age of five months...his head being all his life affected with...disease.” Fain Diary, undated first page.
CONCLUSION

As the Civil War drew to a close and the violence and carnage on the battlefields of the South came to a slow end in 1865, Nancy Godwin Figgat and Fannie Fain sought closure in their war-torn lives. Both women hoped that the end of the war would reunite them with their husbands and other loved ones, restoring the normalcy of pre-war life. The last entries in both diaries are filled with words of hope, infused with a language of sadness. In her last entry, Fannie anxiously awaited her brothers’ and husband’s return—assuming they were still alive. Confronting this idea on paper prompted a surge of confidence, and the last two sentences of the diary acutely symbolize the complicated nature of Fannie’s writing: “I have looked for Mr. Fain every day for a week. He will surely come soon.” She placed words of hope beside words of doubt, possibly to counteract her overwhelming insecurities. With a similar optimistic spirit, Nancy overcame her inner religious turmoil and concluded her diary with a prayer: “Oh merciful God, preserve and guide those near and dear to me and grant unto them a speedy return in peace, sweet peace.” While their writing echoed the depression and sorrow of the past four years, their use of words like “thankful,” “peace,” and “surely” suggested hope within their world of despondency, perhaps marking the beginning of a better life, the end to old fears, and the start of recovery for both women and their families. Indeed, a whole country would soon have to move beyond the horrors of war and the reality of disunity; both diaries mirror the start of this national attempt to heal fractured communities.

10 Fain Diary, April 23, 1865.
11 Figgat Diary, March 5, 1865.
As much as the country was altered and upset by vast conflict, so were Fannie and Nancy’s lives turned around in the years following the Civil War. Fannie gave birth to another daughter, Mamie, in 1868 after her family moved south to Jonesborough, Tennessee. John resumed his pre-war occupation in Jonesborough, and seemed to lead a prosperous life as a merchant and church elder until his death in 1873. Fannie eventually moved in with her son, John Mitchell, and would outlive two more of her children and one grandchild before her own death in 1903.\textsuperscript{112} Nancy’s life also settled on a predictable post-war trajectory; Charlie came home, resumed his post as cashier of the Bank of Lexington, and in the next twelve years they had five more children.\textsuperscript{113} Ultimately, however, Charlie’s poor investments and insatiable desire for wealth and status led him to alcohol and crime. In 1895 he fled the state after embezzling over $145,000 from the Bank of Lexington. The scandal rocked the community. It forced the closure of the bank and had an immeasurable affect on the local economy—described later as Lexington’s “Black Friday.”\textsuperscript{114} Charlie died a fugitive in Colorado a few years later, and after this incident an aged Nancy and her adult children moved to Roanoke, Virginia, where they continued to live together until her death, sometime after 1910.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112} Fannie gave birth to “Mamie” in the years after the war, and Mamie, Martha Ellen, and one grandson all preceded her in death. “Finding Aid for Fannie A. Fain Diaries,” Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, http://www.etsu.edu/cass/Archives/Collections/afindaid/a133.html
\textsuperscript{113} In the 1880 U.S. Census, Nancy and Charlie had six children: Thomas G., 19, Sandy P., 14, Jessie, 11, Janie, 7, Sue, 5, and Miles, 10 months. U.S. Census, Census of Population, Rockbridge County, Virginia, 1880.
\textsuperscript{115} U.S. Census, Population Schedules of the United States, Botetourt County, Rockbridge County, and Roanoke City, 1860-1910. According to the Rockbridge County News, Charlie fled south to Mexico, but Ollinger Crenshaw states that “on March 1, 1899... C.M. Figgat had died in Lockett, Colorado, where he had been known as ‘Charles Miles,’ and where his true identity had been established by his name in his prayerbook.” Both the Rockbridge County News and Crenshaw describe Charlie as “a drinking man” who was nonetheless well trusted within his community; he had started pilfering in the mid 1870s. See Crenshaw, “Black Friday in Lexington,” 31-2 and Rockbridge County News, February 21, 1895.
Fig. 7. “Wanted Poster for Charles M. Figgat,” 1894. This is the advertisement posted for the capture of Charles Figgat after it was discovered that he had embezzled over $145,000 during his time as the cashier at the Bank of Lexington.

Just as Fannie and Nancy’s lives took divergent paths after the war, their diaries also reflect the distinct ways each woman handled the conflict and negotiated questions of identity in a changing world. Certain factors unite them in time and place, but the coping strategies employed by both women serve to complicate the narrative of their Civil War experiences. While the end of the Civil War signaled an end to the diaries considered here, both women continued to write—a testament to their strong connection with the written word. Fannie picked up her pen to begin another diary two years later
and would continue to write until 1898, five years before her death. Nancy also
continued to write, especially in two cookbooks, although there is no record that she kept
another diary before she died, more than fifty years after the last entry in her Civil War
journal.

Like their subsequent writing—and all writing in general—these diaries served a
distinct purpose. Keeping a diary allowed both women a place to voice worry and
concern while expressing their own thoughts on the reality of the Civil War. The diaries
offer a glimpse into the ways that two Appalachian women defined their experiences and
themselves through writing, as they lived through the bloodshed, defeat, and depression
of war. This writing (despite the subjectivity to which diaries are prone) provides a way
to understand Fannie and Nancy’s lived reality of the Civil War. While today these
diaries may seem like a partial and incomplete view of life, they are a unique testament to
how Fannie Fain and Nancy Godwin Figgat conceived of their place, faith, and identity in
Civil War society.
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