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Putting on the armor of the Lord : the role of Virginia Methodists during the Civil War

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ABSTRACT

Putting on the Armor of the Lord: The Role of Virginia Methodists During the Civil War

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This thesis covers the involvement and influence of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in Virginia during the Civil War. Because the Methodists were the largest religious denomination in the South at the onset of the war, the Church was in a position to offer support and to shape the opinions of the Confederate people. Using sermons, religious tracts, newspapers, and letters, this study demonstrates that the majority of the Church supported the Confederacy and its aims. It begins with a brief overview of Methodism in the United States and the Schism of 1844 and then explores the interaction of the clergy with soldiers and civilians, as well as Methodists ministers' justification for the war. The thesis also tracks the changing opinion of the Church on the issue of slavery, which moved from grudging acceptance of the institution to the belief that it was sanctioned by God.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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PUTTING ON THE ARMOR OF THE LORD: THE ROLE OF VIRGINIA METHODISTS DURING THE CIVIL WAR

By

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INTRODUCTION

Sanctified by justice and sustained by a virtuous people, let me reverently invoke the God of our fathers to guide and protect us in our efforts to perpetuate the principles which by HIS blessing they were able to vindicate, establish and transmit to their posterity, and with the continuance of HIS favor, ever to be gratefully acknowledged, let us look hopefully forward to success, to peace, and to prosperity. – Jefferson Davis's Inaugural Address, 1861.

We, the people of the Confederate States, each State acting in its sovereign and independent character... invoking the favor and guidance of Almighty God do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Confederate States of America. – Preamble of the Confederate Constitution.

The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be, wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party - and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose. – Abraham Lincoln, 1862

The American Civil War was as much a religious war as it was a war to preserve the Union or end slavery. Christians of the North and South imbued the war with great religious significance and invoked God constantly in the their rhetoric. Both sides felt righteous in their cause and that victory would prove God was on their side. The leaders of these two nations were no exception as each appealed to God or tried to divine God's will. This is evidenced in the quotations above and through actions such as proclamations of days of prayer and fasting for their respective countries.

Deeply religious people pervaded both sides of the conflict; however, Southerners appeared to cleave more closely to religion during the war. Lincoln's quote above, and others such as his meditation on God's motive in his 1865 inaugural address, suggest that

the was not sure the will of God was consistent with what either the North or South were trying to accomplish.[1] Southerners, however, felt righteous in their cause and attributed their victory or defeat in a battle to God. They were confident that God was with them, guiding the outcome of all events. If they were humble and penitent enough, God would surely lead them to victory. The Methodists of the Confederacy were as sure of a divine presence influencing the war as anyone else.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, comprised the largest denomination in the Confederate States with a total membership of 749,072.[2] Church accommodations from the 1860 census show that the Methodists boasted approximately 2.1 million worshippers in the eleven states that would eventually become the Confederacy.[3] Methodists also supported 47% of the 938 chaplains in the Confederate Army.[4] Virginia presents a good case study for Methodism during the war as it contained the largest number of Methodist congregations in the South, it was the largest religious denomination in the state and a great number of battles were fought on Virginia soil.[5] Also, Richmond became the center of power and activity for the Confederacy and consequently became the center of activity for the Methodist Church.

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[1] Quote from Lincoln's 1865 Inaugural address that demonstrates how Lincoln struggled with determining the will of God and recognizing that it is an impossible task: *"Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes."*

[2] John W. Brinsfield, William C. Davis, Benedict Maryniak, James I. Robertson, Jr., eds., *Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003), 61.

[3] Data obtained from 1860 census and includes all races and the number of persons attending the Methodist Church is based on aggregate church accommodations, which includes both members and nonmembers. Per *Faith in the Fight*, the Methodist Church in the South during 1855 claimed 2.7 million worshippers based on church accommodations.

[4] Brinsfield, 61.

[5] According to the 1860 US census there were 1,403 Methodist churches in Virginia.

Owing to the large presence of Methodists in both the civilian and military population in Virginia, the natural question is how did Methodism affect the thoughts and feelings of Confederates? Did the clergy shape public opinion during the war or were their thoughts merely a reflection of public sentiment? Also pertinent is how Southern Methodists reconciled their feelings on the issue of slavery when the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, abhorred the institution. A majority of Southern Methodists clearly favored slavery and felt it was worth fighting for, but they also revered Wesley.

This study will examine the Methodist Church's influence on public opinion. The most compelling evidence on how the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, exerted this influence involves the circulation of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* (*RCA*) and religious tracts. The *RCA*, a weekly publication run by the M.E. Church, South, and published in Richmond, ran throughout the war. It devoted its pages to pro-Confederate editorials, letters, and news. The Reverend James A. Duncan transformed the publication from a thoroughly religious paper to a source of secular news and religious instruction for a country in the grip of war. He edited the paper for the duration of the war. As one historian put it, "Duncan was in a position both to mold and to reflect public opinion."[6]

Just how focused the publication became on the war is evidenced in one subscriber's objection to the wartime format. The subscriber decided to discontinue his subscription feeling there was too much on the war and not enough about religion. Reverend Duncan, of course, disagreed, contending that religion was injected into all the

[6] Henry Lee Curry, III, *God's Rebels: Confederate Clergy in the Civil War* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, Inc., 1990), 14.

articles pertaining to war. [7] According to Reverend Duncan, this reader was the only one of over 6,000 subscribers to complain about the content. This comment must not have disturbed Reverend Duncan too much. As demonstrated in the course of this study, he continued to print articles in the same vein.

Reverend Duncan stated late in the war that ministers had an obligation to address the war and explain what the people of the South were fighting for. A war platform was "not merely a secular, but a moral question, and therefore [I] do not think we exceed the limits of what is appropriate to the religious press in calling attention to it." [8] Clearly Reverend Duncan and his counterparts felt completely justified in commenting on the war because to them it was a religious cause.

The church also was responsible, through its Soldiers' Tract Association, founded in 1862, for the distribution of millions of religious tracts to Confederate soldiers. Within the first few months of its inception, the Soldiers' Tract Association circulated nearly 800,000 pages of tracts and by the end of the war pages distributed reached into the millions.[9] An in-depth analysis of these sources will form the basis of this study.

In addition to the *RCA* and religious tracts, letters, diaries, church histories, and publications by contemporaries of the events help to flesh out the overall picture of Methodist involvement in the war. Letters and diaries often provide the intimate thoughts of persons, sometimes giving voice to their deepest anxieties and great hopes about the

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[7] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 17 April 1862.
[8] "Have We a War Platform?" *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 7 January 1864.
[9] William W. Bennett, D. D., *A Narrative of the Great Revival Which Prevailed in the Southern Armies during the Late Civil War Between the States of the Federal Union* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1877), 76.

conflict surrounding them. They are useful in finding out what ministers were thinking and feeling that they might not reveal publicly.

Church histories provide the "official" account of an individual church's participation during the war. Often these histories are written decades after the event. Most of the church histories used in this study were written on the occasion of the church's 100th anniversary. Some of these works reflect stories passed down through churches that became a part of the fabric of their history and identity. A great example of this is the history of the Broad Street Methodist Church. A story that is told time and again in official church histories is that Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee both attended services at this church and when Richmond fell, the pastor of the church, James Duncan, was given a place in Davis's carriage as they fled the city. Church histories may be colorful and selective in their memory, but still they offer insight into activities of the congregations and what was important for them to remember.

Also crucial to the understanding of the thought process of ministers during this time is the examination of their sermons. Sermons open a window onto the issues of the day. Ministers spoke on subjects that were foremost on their minds and those of their congregation. Slavery and war were major issues and ministers were not lacking for opinions on these subjects, backed by what they believed was biblical justification. By analyzing the sermons one can see how the justification for war and slavery formed and changed during the course of the war.

This thesis is structured to highlight several aspects of the Virginia Methodist Episcopal Church, South's position on slavery and its involvement in the war effort. First

is an overview of the events that led to the breakup of the Methodist Church in 1844 and the results of that schism. It is important to understand these events because the schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church and later the Baptist Church were precursors to the Civil War. It is also important because of the evolution of how ministers, especially Virginia ministers, viewed slavery. They move from feeling it is a dreadful institution that they must endure because it was part of their society to believing it was the divinely-sanctioned order of life. Many ministers in 1844 described themselves as neither for nor against slavery, but in the span of seventeen years, those same ministers fully come to embrace slavery. The seeds of that change were planted during the schism of 1844.

Second, this study focuses on how ministers in Virginia felt about secession and then how they prepared for and entered the war after Virginia left the Union. Ministers were faced with many obstacles in ministering to the people. Shortages of funds, materials, and manpower needed to be surmounted in order to guide soldiers and civilians alike through war successfully. Also they had to overcome reservations people had when it came to men of the cloth expressing opinions or offering counsel on the war.

The third chapter covers the specific challenges soldiers and ministers faced in the camp and how the chaplain's main task was to provide comfort and spiritual guidance to men whose fate was uncertain. The fourth chapter examines how ministers helped their civilian charges. This group has been overlooked in many histories on religion during the Civil War. The church did not ignore the civilian population during this time. In fact, ministers would have had a more difficult time supporting their troops if they had not had the help of civilians. This chapter also covers fast days, an important instrument in

drawing the people of the Confederacy together as well as the problems that threatened to tear them apart: speculators, extortionists, and doomsday prophets known as the "croakers."

The fifth and final chapter covers the justification of the war by ministers. It focuses specifically on the *Address to Christians Throughout the War*, which was written by a Virginia minister and signed by ministers of multiple denominations. It defends their part in the war, but more importantly what they viewed as the Southern way of life.

All of these elements help to develop an overall picture of the activities and influence of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in Virginia. The church was not a bystander in the war; instead, it played an active and vital role in the Confederacy. To understand fully how and why the M.E. Church, South, found itself in sync with the Confederacy this study begins with the a watershed event in the history of the church, the schism of 1844.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GREAT SCHISM

Looking back on the events leading to the split of the Methodist Episcopal Church, one witness to those events opined that, "the drums of Gettysburg could be heard in the 1844 debate."[1] The schism in the Methodist Church, and the similar situation in the Baptist Church, foreshadowed the war to come. From the time of the formal organization of the Methodist Church in the United States until the split, tensions existed over whether the church should support the institution of slavery.

Methodism began in England with John Wesley and his brother, the great hymn writer, Charles. These sons of Samuel Wesley, a clergyman in the Anglican Church, followed in his footsteps. John Wesley struggled with his faith until his brother Charles led him to a meeting at Aldersgate in May of 1738. Charles had a transforming experience while meeting with the Moravians at Aldersgate. John too experienced a transformation of faith during the reading of Martin Luther's preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*, feeling his heart "strangely warmed." It was then that John embraced the idea of God's grace given freely, a major tenet of Methodism.[2] These revolutionary thoughts by the Wesley brothers spread throughout England and to the American colonies, fueling the Great Awakening. The idea of individual salvation and a personal relationship with God fit well with the colonial Americans who were beginning to feel their independent spirit on both a spiritual and secular level.

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[1] A quote from Nolan B. Harmon in Fern C. Stukenbroeker, *A Watermelon for God: A History of Trinity United Methodist Church, Alexandria, Virginia 1774-1974* (Alexandria, VA, 1974), 161.

[2] William H. Willimon, *Why I am a United Methodist* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 18.

Organized Methodism in the United States began in earnest in 1784, at the "Christmas Conference," in Baltimore.[3] The Conference established the rules and regulations in a document known as *The Book of Discipline*. A key issue at the conference was slavery. Slavery had been condemned by many evangelicals and was absolutely abhorrent to John Wesley.

John Wesley wrote several tracts on the subject of slavery including *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1778), which described the wretched conditions in which men and women were captured and transported to America. Wesley detailed the disfiguring torture many were subjected to, including gelding, branding, and the removal of half a foot. He singled out Virginia for its villainous law that allowed the killing of a runaway slave "by such ways and means as he [the master] shall think fit." Wesley asked that anyone involved with slavery turn from their wicked ways lest, "great GOD deal with *you*, as you have dealt with *them*, and require all their blood at your hands. And at that day it shall be more tolerable for *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* than for you!"[4]

Based on John Wesley's opposition to slavery as well as the opposition of many others in the faith, the church adopted strict rules regarding slavery. Church leaders decided that every slaveholding member must make arrangements for the freedom of their slaves within a year or withdraw from the church. The only exception was if the

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[3] *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 10-11.

[4] John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (London and Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1778), Documenting the American South, University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2005, http://docsouth.unc.edu/wesley/menu.html, 2006.

church member lived in a state where manumission was illegal.[5] This caused anger and discontent among many Methodists in the South, a place where Methodism flourished. Fear of alienating the Southern Methodists and potential converts overrode misgivings about the institution of slavery. In June of 1785, the church suspended the controversial slavery rules enacted during the first Baltimore conference.

In 1796, the Methodists revisited the issue of slavery. Weaker versions of the rules enacted in 1785 were added to *The Discipline*. These rules stated that slave families must be kept together and only remain in bondage for a limited period. Traveling preachers were to release their slaves while in states where manumission was legal. The rules also called for the annual conference to petition state legislatures for gradual emancipation if it had not already been done. John Nelson Norwood, author of *The Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church 1844*, reasoned that this revival in anti-slavery rhetoric in the church was in direct correlation to the beginning of abolition movements in American society.[6] However, as noted earlier, a strong anti-slavery undercurrent always existed in the Methodist Church, beginning with John Wesley's vehement opposition. The voracity of the church's opposition was kept in check in the United States so as not to upset Southern membership. By relaxing the rules regarding slavery, Methodism became more palatable to Southerners and the church flourished.

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[5] John Nelson Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church 1844: A Study of Slavery and Ecclesiastical Politics* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1976), 14-16.

[6] Norwood, 16-17.

By 1816 the Methodist Episcopal Church reached a compromise as seen in subsequent versions of *The Discipline*.[7]

> Quest.: What shall be done for the extirpation of the evil of slavery? Answ. We declare that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery: therefore no slaveholder shall be eligible to any official station in our Church hereafter, where the laws of the state in which he lives will admit of emancipation and permit the liberated slaves to enjoy freedom.[8]

This ruling implied that church members living in a state that did not allow the manumission of slaves were not barred from seeking any official office in the church. This compromise appeared to placate all parties until the fateful conference in 1844 and the controversy surrounding Reverend Francis A. Harding of the Baltimore Conference and Bishop James O. Andrew of Georgia. Most historians equate the break of the Methodist Episcopal Church to the controversy over Bishop Andrew; however, the trial of Reverend Harding in 1844 set the tone for the conference and polarized the participants.

The Trial of Reverend Harding

In 1843, the Baltimore Conference suspended Reverend Francis A. Harding because of his failure to manumit his wife's slaves. The Conference, which "would not tolerate slavery in any of its members," ruled that to be reinstated Harding must execute a deed of manumission during the session and have it carried out during the present year.

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[7] A. H. Redford, D. D., *History of the Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* (Nashville, TN: A. H. Redford, 1871), 10. This part of the study relies heavily on Redford's book as it contains transcripts of the trials of Harding and Andrew.

[8] Methodist Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1840), 195. For the complete rules on the issue of slavery, see Appendix, Document A1.

Because Harding did not comply, two ministers sponsored a resolution that moved Harding should be suspended until Annual Conference. The resolution passed and set the stage for a great upheaval in the church.[9]

Virginians had a large role to play in this trial and found themselves split on the issue. A portion of Northern Virginia fell into the Baltimore Conference and as a body that group suspended Reverend Harding. However, a Virginian, Dr. William A. Smith, a self-described anti-slavery man, but not "an abolitionist in any sense of the word," defended Harding. [10] Even though Smith claimed to be antislavery, he still believed Harding was within his right to possess slaves.

Smith presented a simple defense for Reverend Harding. The laws of the state of Maryland would not allow the "liberated slave to enjoy liberty," and so Harding did not violate the terms of *The Discipline* set forth in 1816. In addition, the slaves legally belonged to Harding's wife. An 1843 Maryland law secured any property a woman owned before marriage to her, so as to protect it from her husband. Since this law included slaves, technically the slaves were not legally his; therefore, he was unable to dispose of them. According to Harding, he promised to have the slaves sent to Liberia or a free state, but only if the slaves and his wife consented. [11]

John A. Collins, representative of the Baltimore Conference, presented a different picture. Collins disputed Harding's claim the he pledged to send the slaves to a free state. The record from his disciplinary hearing in 1843 did not indicate his pledge to send them

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[9] Redford, 14-15.
[10] Redford, 17.
[11] Redford, 20, 28.

to a free state. Collins argued that if Harding had made such an oath and carried it out within the year, he never would have been suspended.[12]

Furthermore, Collins took Smith to task on the issue of manumission in Maryland. According to Maryland's 1831 manumission law, once a slave was free he was forever free, unlike in Virginia where a freed black could be reenslaved if he remained in the state. Manumitted slaves, however, could not remain in Maryland; they must either be removed to Liberia or a free state. In the event they did not leave, the sheriff could remove them from the state. But a freed black could not be reenslaved.[13]

As for the issue of the slaves belonging to Mrs. Harding and not the Reverend Harding, Collins was incensed that "they may pass a law requiring him to obey his wife."[14] Collins surmised this law was intended "to nail slavery faster than ever and to rivet its chains more firmly."[15] He believed this caveat served to make manumission more difficult, but not impossible. Collins supposed Mrs. Harding would be more than willing to help her husband considering his position as a minister.[16] Essentially, Collins took the married property law out of the equation through this argument and, in doing so, linked Harding to the slaves. According to Collins's argument, a mere technicality of ownership should not save Harding from suspension.

Finally, Collins pointed out that Harding, in fact, was a traveling preacher. The Discipline clearly stated the church's stance on the ownership of slaves by traveling ministers:

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[12] Redford, 21-23.
[13] Redford, 72.
[14] Redford, 71.
[15] Redford, 72.
[16] Redford, 73.

> When any traveling preacher became an owner of a slave or slaves, by any means, he shall forfeit his ministerial character in our Church, unless he execute, if it be practicable, a legal emancipation of such slaves, conformably to the laws of the state in which he lives. [17]

The rule included nothing regarding enjoyment of freedom by the manumitted slave.[18] This punctured Dr. Smith's argument that Maryland manumission laws would not allow the "liberated slave to enjoy liberty." In the end, the General Conference upheld the suspension of the Harding by the Baltimore Conference by a vote of 117 to 56. [19]

The debate exposed two critical differences in the philosophy of the anti-slavery set and the abolitionists. Most Methodist ministers called themselves anti-slavery as the church was opposed to slavery as a "moral evil." However, the Southern anti-slavery ministers, like Dr. Smith of Virginia, did not consider slavery to be a sin. This posed a major and important distinction. If slavery was only a moral evil, and not a sin, the church could denounce it, but still function within the areas where slavery was legal. If it were a sin in the eyes of God, God's law would negate that of man and so the church could not condone it. As Dr. Smith stated during the course of Reverend Harding's defense:

> ...while the *Discipline* deprecates the evil of slavery, it requires the members of the church within those States to conform their actions to the rules or laws of those States in which they live. This is assuming the doctrine that though slavery is an evil and a great evil, it is not necessarily a sin.[20]

Another distinction between anti-slavery ministers and abolitionist ministers was their view of blacks. To the Southern anti-slavery minister, slaves were inferior to

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[17] *Doctrines and Disciplines*, Methodist Episcopal Church, 196.
[18] Redford, 78-79.
[19] Redford, 137.
[20] Redford, 46.

whites. Hence manumitted slaves were made to leave the states of Maryland and Virginia. A free black might put ideas in the heads of slaves. Since "inferior" blacks could not be under the control of whites, they should be sent out of state or preferably to Africa. Again, Dr. Smith's defense of Harding expressed this notion. He discussed Northern abolitionists' interference with Virginia's 1831 plan for gradual manumission and the appropriation of funds for colonization of freed slaves in Africa. The interference of abolitionists caused the plan to fail, but their meddling turned out to have a "positive" affect, as Dr. Smith explained:

> It [the North] flung the dark shadows of its coming events over the moral hemisphere of the South, and mantled all in sackcloth and mourning! The tide of colonization was arrested. . . . And yet, in the face of all this results have shown that while God never can direct any thing that is wrong, yet his hand was in this matter, in permitting the error, or the wickedness – I will not say which – to bring about a good result. [21]

According to Smith, the abolitionists halted their colonization attempts, but claimed it was really the hand of God because:

> At that very time your agents in Liberia; resident colored men, wrote back: "Stay your hand. If you are not more select in the choice of those you send here, we shall be reduced to a heathen state. Send us colonists, but send us select men. Don't send us corn-field hands – they are not fit for freedom."[22]

Smith went on to compare colonizing with "inferior" blacks in Liberia to America being overrun with the "inferior" stock of Catholic Europe. He surmised that had those groups poured into the New World during the colonial period "you never would have seen this fair Republic spring up."[23]

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[21] Redford, 48.
[22] Redford, 47.
[23] Redford, 49.

The small fissure over the issue of slavery that existed in the Methodist Episcopal Church now ruptured into a gaping chasm after the Harding debate. It was only a matter of time before this would happen given the increasing polarity of the subject of slavery coupled with the heated debate of the Harding trial.[24] The Conference sensed the wide gulf that threatened their church's continued unity and grasped desperately at a solution, which eluded them. In this emotionally heightened situation the future of the church now came to rest on the outcome of the trial of Bishop James O. Andrew of Georgia.

The Trial of Bishop James O. Andrew

Mr. Collins, the "prosecutor" in the case against Harding, asked that the Committee on the Episcopacy investigate Bishop James O. Andrew's involvement with slavery. Bishop Andrew, a benign and highly-regarded figure in the church, like Harding, became associated with slavery through marriage. Andrew explained his connection in a letter to the Committee. He gained one slave upon the death of his first wife, who died intestate. As per the laws of Georgia, manumission was not allowed and Andrew stated the slave would be at liberty to leave the State "whenever I shall be satisfied that he is prepared to provide for himself." Andrew's second wife inherited slaves from her former husband. Andrew, not wishing to be their owner, secured the slaves to his wife by a deed of trust.[25]

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[24] Norwood, 58. Norwood cites the "increased radicalism of both the abolitionist and the Southern partisans and the shifting of moderates toward the position of the former."

[25] Redford, 164-165.

Andrew acquired another slave, Kitty, from an elderly parishioner, Mrs. Powers of Augusta, Georgia. Mrs. Powers bequeathed Kitty to him with the stipulation that Kitty remained in his care until she turned nineteen.[26] At that time Mrs. Powers instructed Andrew to send Kitty to Liberia, but only if she wished to go. Kitty did not consent and remained his legal property, although Andrew assured in his letter that he derived "no pecuniary advantage from her, she is continuing to live in her own house on my lot, and has been and still is at perfect liberty to go to a free State at her pleasure."[27]

Andrew, like many other Southern ministers, was neither proslavery nor an abolitionist. He felt the institution of slavery was evil; however, he thought the results of emancipation would be more devastating than keeping blacks in bondage for the time being. As a later biographer of Bishop Andrew wrote:

> He believed that the evils of slavery—and he saw them and denounced them—were more easily managed than the evils of unrestricted freedom to a race as ignorant and degraded as the Negroes were. No man ever had a truer love for the Negro race. No man ever evinced more personal interest for their good, but he believed immediate abolition to be unwise and impracticable.[28]

Spouting pseudoscientific fact, mixed with supposed biblical justification, Southern Methodists could feel justified in keeping the institution of slavery. Some may have thought it evil, but most were convinced of the inferiority of the blacks and used this as a means to justify their continued enslavement. Over time Andrew and many of his fellow ministers in Virginia moved past their mixed feelings on slavery and came to believe

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[26] Allison O. Adams "The Methodist Schism: Kitty's Cottage and the Methodist Civil War" in *Emory Magazine*, Autumn, 2000, http://emoryhistory.emory.edu/enigmas/schism.htm, 2006.

[27] Redford, 164-165.

[28] Reverend George G. Smith, *The Life and Letters of James Osgood with Glances at his Contemporaries and at Events in Church History* (Nashville, TN: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1882), 435.

solely that black were child-like and therefore keeping them in slavery was the only humane thing to do.

Bishop Andrew's circumstances closely mirrored those of Reverend Harding with one major exception: Harding was a traveling minister; Andrew was not. According to the rules of *The Discipline* enacted in 1816, possession of slaves in a state that did not allow manumissions was not a bar to any office within the church, including that of Bishop. Of course, at the time Andrew was made a Bishop, he did not have any connection to slavery. However, this was the first time a Bishop had ever been associated with slavery in the history of the church. Consequently, it was the first time this rule was tested.

Again the Baltimore Conference took the lead. During the 1844 General Conference, Reverend Alfred Griffith from the Baltimore Conference presented a resolution requesting that "the Reverend James O. Andrew be, and is hereby affectionately requested to resign his office as one the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church." Griffith felt that it was a "settled policy" that no one be allowed to hold the office of Bishop "who was embarrassed with this great evil."[29] Had a person of less impeccable character come under fire, passion may not have been so inflamed. However, Bishop Andrew, in the minds of his Southern kinsman, was above reproach and he had not violated the letter of the law set forth in *The Discipline*. In the minds of the Northern ministers, even though Andrew was a greatly religious and moral man, his association with slavery could not be reconciled with the office he held.

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[29] Redford, 166-167.

The debate over the continued services of Andrew as Bishop gave Southern ministers the freedom to vent their anger at perceived injustices they suffered at the hands of the abolitionist North. Dr. William Winans of the Mississippi Conference, articulating the thoughts of many Southern ministers, argued if the Methodist Church took a stand against slavery this would cut the ministers off from their slave holding membership and drive them from the church. Then, not only would the church lose the slaveholders, but their slaves as well. [30] Clearly his message was better that a person be in bondage and ministered to, than to be in bondage without the light of God.

Reverend Thomas Crowder of the Virginia Conference delivered the most insightful comments regarding the fate of the church if Bishop Andrew was dismissed. All of the proceedings of the conference had been very calm, even cordial, given the sensitivity of the topic, but Crowder had the foresight to see what the outcome was to be:

> ...a civil division of this great confederacy may follow that [the dismissal of Bishop Andrew], and then hearts will be torn apart, master and slave arrayed against each other, brother in the Church against brother, and the North against the South...civil war and far-reaching desolation must be the final result.[31]

Reverend Griffith's resolution requesting that Andrew resign lost momentum after two days of debate. A new resolution was offered by James B. Finley of Ohio: "*Resolved*, That it is the sense of this General Conference that he desist from the exercise of this office so long as this impediment remains."[32] The debate continued with many more speeches in favor and against the resolution. Finally, Bishop Andrew addressed the Conference himself.

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[30] Redford, 182-183.
[31] Redford, 195.
[32] Redford, 206-207.

Andrew was anxious that these debates arrive at a conclusion, as they had been going on for a week. He took this time to explain his actions and his position as Bishop. Andrew never aspired to be Bishop, but was urged to become one by a friend who ironically thought Andrew's election would "promote the peace of the church." Andrew had hoped he would fail to be elected. He stated that the question of slavery never entered the nomination process. No one ever asked if he was a slave owner and in 1832 when he was elected Bishop he did not own any slaves. The only person to broach the subject with him was Reverend Winans. Andrew reiterated that he never sought to be a slave owner; but he would rather keep the slaves he had than to release them or have them bound to another family that would not care for him as well as he did.

Andrew never apologized for his actions. Instead, he protested against the resolution "as a violation of the laws of *The Discipline*, and an invasion of the rights secured to me by that Book." Even so, he harbored no ill will against those who called for his removal. He wanted the Conference to conclude this proceeding against him quickly because "the country is becoming agitated upon the subject."[33]

After some last minute attempts at final compromise, the Finley resolution was carried by a 111 to 69 vote. None of the members of the various Southern Conferences present voted for the resolution except one representative from Texas.[34] The Baltimore Conference representatives were evenly split over the resolution. There were some Northern conference members who sided with their Southern brethren and registered a

[33] Redford, 266-274.
[34] Norwood, 80.

nay vote.[35] Further resolutions passed that stated the action taken against Bishop Andrew be recognized as "advisory only, and not in the light of judicial mandate," and that the "final disposition of his case be postponed until the General Conference of 1848."[36]

Unsurprised by the results of the vote, the Southern Conferences presented the "Declaration of Southern members" that stated the extrajudicial proceedings against Bishop Andrew that resulted in his "virtual suspension" from office produced "a state of things in the South which renders a continuance of the jurisdiction of that General Conference over these Conferences inconsistent with the success of the ministry in the slaveholding States." In other words, the Southern conferences would not longer take direction from the General Conference.[37]

The division of the church that had loomed so large finally arrived. The General Conference of 1844 signaled the end of a unified Methodist Episcopal Church and set the country's course more firmly on the path to Civil War.[38] Debate and controversy over Southern or Northern ownership of church properties continued for many years. The legal wrangling over property did nothing to foster good will between the two sections of the church. Due to festering hostilities and Southern Methodists' feelings that they were right in keeping ties to slavery caused the Southern church to entrench itself firmly on the side of the Confederacy at the outbreak of war. In fact, as more time elapsed and the war drew closer, the Southern Methodist position changed from one of feeling slavery was a moral evil to believing it was an institution sanctioned by God. Even though a small

[35] Redford, 313-315.
[36] Redford, 318-319.
[37] Redford, 322.
[38] The M.E. Church and M.E. Church South reunited along with the Methodist Protestant Church to form the Methodist Church in 1939 (from the 1992 edition of the United Methodist *Discipline*, 13).

portion of Virginia fell within the Baltimore Conference, the group that triggered the events that caused the breakup of the church, the majority of Virginia Methodists stood firmly with the newly-formed M. E. Church, South.

The Methodist Border Wars

The years after the formal division, 1845-1849, encompasses what is known as the "Methodist Border Wars." States that later fell into the category of border states during the Civil War engaged in a struggle over whether to stay with the mother church or go with the newly-formed Methodist Episcopal Church, South. There was also the question of which church, North or South, owned the property. The Baltimore Conference, which covered potions of Maryland and Northern Virginia, was engulfed in battles over church property. Such was the case for Trinity Church in Alexandria, Virginia.

The Trinity congregation was home to both Southern and Northern sympathizers. Reverend Alfred Griffith, minister of Trinity in 1845, certainly was not a supporter of slavery and also was the one who suggested "affectionately" that Bishop Andrew resign. Upon his father's death, Griffith refused to accept any of his father's estate in slave property. His views on slavery likely caused the pro-Southerners in his congregation much discomfort.[39]

Most of the Baltimore Conference churches went with the Northern Methodist Episcopal Church, but the M. E. Church, South tried to regain a foothold in Northern

[39] Stukenbroeker, 161-162.

Virginia. In 1849, Reverend Leroy M. Lee, a prominent preacher from the M. E. Church, South, attempted to persuade the Southern sympathizers in the Trinity congregation to lead the church to the side of the Southern Methodists. As a result, Reverend John M. Jones and Reverend Ezra F. Busey, both leaders in Trinity, brought these so-called "secessionists" to trial and expelled them from the congregation. [40] Approximately 200 members of Trinity were dismissed from the congregation because of their Southern sympathies.[41] After an intense legal battle over the church property, won by the pro-Northern faction of Trinity, the expelled members began Washington Street Church across the street from Trinity.

James A. Duncan, the first pastor of the Washington Street congregation, would later rise to great prominence in Richmond during the war years as editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate*. However, it was the second minister, Leonidas Rosser, who led the charge for funds to build a proper house of worship. Rosser, who with his full beard and long white hair looked as if he had stepped out of the Old Testament, traveled throughout the South to drum up support and financing for the new church. He claimed that all Southerners, not just the Southern Methodist Church, needed to support this endeavor because "as an outpost, it should be well sustained...for if we abandon the ground, the Church North will occupy it."[42] Rosser's message struck a chord. He managed to raise $10,000 during his tour of the South. An unknown portion of the

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[40] Stukenbroeker, 164-165.

[41] *The First Hundred Years 1849-1949*. Washington Street Church, 14. The records of Washington Street Church state that approximately 200 church members were publicly "read out of the fellowship of the church" without being formally charged or tried, due to their Southern sympathies.

[42] Stukenbroeker, 165-166.

donations came from 1,000 black members of a Methodist congregation in Charleston.[43] This was ironic since the construction of the Washington Street Church was meant to be a finger in the eye of the abolitionist North.

The odyssey of Trinity and Washington Street did not end with their separation. Although services at Trinity went on largely undisturbed during the war years, it was affected nonetheless. Membership in the church dropped and Reverend Jon Cornelius reported in 1863 that morale seemed to be "flat" and that "things have been awfully blue here."[44] Still Washington Street and its Southern sympathizers suffered worse problems than falling membership. The thriving Village Chapel Sunday School organized by Washington Street collapsed shortly after the war began because so many members had gone off to war. Alexandria fell under Federal occupation in 1862, and Union authorities used Washington Street Church as a hospital. The church they had fought so hard for was now off limits. The church did not reopen until after the war.

[43] *The First Hundred Years*, 22, 25.
[44] Stukenbroeker, 169-170.

CHAPTER TWO

"ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS"

We must hope and pray for the best result, and prepare for the worst. – Reverend James A. Riddick[1]

Ministers often found it difficult to promote their own views on politics as it was thought to be outside their purview. The public believed ministers ought to keep their thoughts on the realm of heaven and not necessarily earthy pursuits. A rebuke for their involvement in worldly politics is found in a letter sent to the *Richmond Christian Advocate* (*RCA*) just before the 1860 presidential election:

> We occasionally see a minister of the Gospel of Peace condescending so low as to immerse himself his sacred office, together with all its hallowed an holy associations, into the muddy, turbid and turbulent pool of party politics, where alas naught can be expected, and naught is realized, save disgrace, contempt and degradation to this most sacred, holy and responsible office with which poor frail and mortal man can be honored...this unwise and unholy mixture (if persisted in) will be most effective and telling element in our destruction.[2]

Men of the cloth had to be careful how they approached their arguments for and against war lest they be chastised for degrading their "sacred office." Many had perfected their ability to argue delicate matters during the debates over slavery. Ministers claimed they were not lowering themselves by speaking of the debase matter of the politics of slavery. Rather, they allowed the Bible to guide them on these issues. They maintained the Bible was silent about slavery, neither for nor against. As one writer to

[1] James A. Riddick to William Gray, 8 January 1861 regarding the increasing difficulties between the North and South, William Gray Papers, Virginia Historical Society (Mss1 G7952 FA2).

[2] Letter to the editor, *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 1 November 1860.

the *RCA* put it, the doctrine of the church was to "preach Christ and Him crucified to master and servant, and teach obedience to Christ."[3]

Any position that ministers took on the coming war needed to be couched in religious terms and preferably with biblical precedent. The ministers had no shortage of examples from the Old Testament to cite. They took their cues from the Bible and melded them together with their personal beliefs. They did not fear expressing their opinions.

Some historians suggest that clergy of the major denominations in the soon-to-be Confederate States spoke out against secession until such time as their states left the Union. For example, Beth Barton Schweiger states that many Methodist preachers in Virginia, like much of the rest of the public, opposed secession, but fell in line once Virginia seceded.[4] This does not appear to be the case.

For example, a letter written by Reverend James A. Riddick to William Gray relayed news from the Virginia Conference in November of 1860:

> From all that I could gather, disunion or secession is inevitable – but it may be done without war, which I pray may be the case. The South must defend her rights and act on the defensive, which will give her great advantage.[5]

Obviously, Methodists from the recent conference spoke about the prospect of leaving the Union. Rather than speaking out against secession, it appears they were more

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[3] Letter by John B. McFerrin of Nashville, *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 7 June 1860.

[4] Beth Barton Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 97.

[5] Letter from Reverend James Andrew Riddick, 27 November 1860, William Gray Manuscript Collection, Virginia Historical Society (Mss1 G7952 FA2). William Gray of Manchester, Virginia was a tobacco shipper and manufacturer, director of the Bank of Virginia, a trustee for the Manchester Methodist Episcopal Church, a trustee for the town of Manchester, and a justice of the peace for Chesterfield County. He handled business for Riddick including the hiring out of Riddick's slaves.

concerned about leaving without starting a war. As for supporting Southern rights, Reverend Riddick, a slaveholder, would have been all for keeping their way of life.

Articles appearing in the *Richmond Christian Advocate* also presented a different picture than that supported by some historians. Several articles from the January 1861 issues of the *RCA* clearly demonstrate that support existed for secession months before Virginia departed from the Union. Early in January, only South Carolina had formally seceded, but Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana left before the end of the month. A letter printed in the January 9, 1861 issue by "Soldier" attested to the need for chaplains in the army. "Soldier" appealed to readers, stating "but we need more preaching, more earnest effort for the salvation of the men who fight our battles, and who are to fill places of trust and honor in the nation when this war shall be over, and we shall be free people, for free people we shall be, God being our help and strength."[6]

This letter offers evidence of the anticipation of the coming conflict from a soldier and lay member of the M. E. Church, South. These words do not imply reticence on the part of the author. "Soldier" recognized the impending fate of the South and chose to face it and counseled the church do its part to ensure that the religious needs of the men who would fight this war were tended to. The letter also revealed the assumption of many Southerners that God was for them in this situation.

The church was already making preparations for their coming mission. Reverend W. J. W. Crowder's January 1861 article, "Tract Work Progressing," reported that the M. E. Church, South was already gathering religious tracts and distributing them to soldiers

[6] "Letter from Soldier," *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 9 January 1861.

in Virginia and North Carolina. "Such evidence," Crowder stated, "is abundant, calling forth praise to God, and should encourage Christians and patriots to continue their donations, prayers and efforts in supplying our noble soldiery with religious truth, to help them constantly see and trust God, their refuge, strength, shield and deliverer from the great adversary of their souls, as well as earthly foes."[7]

In the same issue, the editor Reverend James Duncan, declared that "the Confederate States have shown at once a deep reverence for God, and an honest purpose to wage this war only as an essential means of securing their own rights." At the same time he urged the people of the Confederate States to get their souls in order, claiming that there was much wickedness in the homes of the Confederacy. He believed the time had come for "thorough repentance, deep humiliation and for spiritual and nation cleansing."[8] Reverend Duncan, as editor of the paper, chose also to reprint Governor Letcher's address to the Legislature in which he stated, among other things, that the North "must fulfill their Constitutional obligation in regard to fugitive slaves and fugitives from justice." [9]

In the next issue of the *RCA*, Reverend Duncan penned another editorial commenting on secession. He compared the current troubles to those the Methodist Episcopal Church encountered during the 1844 schism:

> The South made every reasonable proposition, and tried every expedient in vain. It was the "hour and power" of fanaticism, and the South "more in sorrow than in anger," separated from a section whose religion had gone stark mad over the question of slavery.

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[7] W. J. W. Crowder, "Tract Work Progressing," *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 9 January 1861.
[8] James A. Duncan, "Trust in God and Do Your Duty," *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 9 January 1861.
[9] *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 9 January 1861.

Reverend Duncan went on to condemn the preachers and abolitionist religious papers of the North, for "driving men to arms." Reverend Duncan, like most Southerners, laid the blame solely on the North for the impending war. He had no qualms about going to war since he felt the South was provoked and their cause just. At the same time he identified slavery as the only cause of the coming war. Reverend Duncan ended by paraphrasing Jesus from the Book of Matthew and pleaded, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from us."[10] This statement sounded as if their path to war had been ordained by God and only His intervention would keep it from coming to pass.

These articles do not suggest that all within the M. E. Church, South counseled caution and patience in the matter of secession. Reverend Duncan already referred to the Confederate States even though only one state had formally seceded at the time of his article. To Reverend Duncan, the secession of Virginia and others states was a foregone conclusion. Even though Virginia would not leave the Union until after Fort Sumter later that spring, some members of the church were already preparing to depart from the Union. Those ministers who favored secession wanted their congregations to get their spiritual lives in order and to help support tract distribution to the soldiers.

Reverend Duncan also chose to print articles on secular matters that would inflame readers' passion over issues such as the Fugitive Slave Act. He routinely printed tidbits having to do with the possible recognition of the Confederacy by European countries. For example, the January 31 edition of the paper included a small note about

[10] James A. Duncan, "The Present Aspect of Affairs," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 11 January 1861.

Great Britain acknowledging the Confederacy "as soon as it is regularly organized."[11] The letters, editorials, and news articles present a picture of a people who were anxious to separate from their perceived oppressors rather than persons aggrieved at the thought of departure from the Union.

As tensions rose, more and more pro-war sentiments embedded in religious rhetoric appeared in the *RCA*, much of it written by Methodist laymen in Virginia. One example, a letter by "A Son and Lover of the South," urged that before the formal formation of a Southern Republic that a fast day should be held. He pointed to how in the Old Testament King David and others observed fast days. The author feared that the Southern people trusted "too much in their own strength and bravery to undertake the task before them." He further stated that the sins of the nation had brought about the present "rupture" in the Union and conceded that the Southern people may have participated in that sin, although he does not specify what the "sins" were. Due to this alleged sin he pleaded, "Let all Christians in the South, then, unite with one voice and one heart, that God in His mercy may forgive our sins, and bring confusion to those who may seek to oppress us, or interfere with our rights." He urged everyone to make Friday, March 1 a day of fasting and asked the paper to use its resources to spread this message.[12]

The March fast day did not materialize, but the first official Confederate fast day did take place on June 13, 1861. The themes of national repentance and calling on God to aid the South as found in the letter above became commonplace in the sermons and

[11] *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 31 January 1861.
[12] Letter to the editor, *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 7 February 1861.

writings of the clergy and lay persons. Also the fast day became a fixture in the Confederacy.

Even with the numerous examples of pro-secession sentiment, it would be wrong to assume that no members of the M. E. Church, South expressed reservations about leaving the Union. One example of this line of thought was expressed by Reverend John Granbery, described as a man not given to impulse and as one who was "never swayed by his feelings."[13] At the same time other ministers were preparing for war Granbery was less certain. While serving as a chaplain at the University of Virginia during January of 1861, Granbery wrote letters to his future wife Ella about his uncertainty on the issue. He told her the slogan of the day in Charlottesville was "Critterden [sic] Compromise and no coercion or else secession."[14] Rather than discuss his own views, he made the self-deprecating statement that "what have women and preachers to do with secession and war."[15] He appeared hesitant and unsure about secession. He expressed sorrow at hearing rumors that many Virginians may move further south "if my state does not soon dissolve her connections with the North."[16]

Granbery struggled with secession, but in the end decided that he must follow his state. Once this decision was made he became a vocal proponent of the war and what the Confederates perceived as the fight to preserve their way of life. Swept up by the war fever that spread throughout Virginia, he wrote to Ella that he drilled every day with the

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[13] "Bishop John C. Granbery," *The Confederate Veteran Magazine,* Vol. 15 1907, 270.

[14] The Crittenden Compromise, proposed by Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, was a final attempt to keep the Union together. It addressed such issues as the fugitive slave act and the extent of Congressional control over slavery.

[15] John Granbery to Ella Winston, 26 January 1861, Granbery Papers, University of Virginia.

[16] John Granbery to Ella Winston, 18 March 1861, Granbery Papers, University of Virginia.

University Guard "of faculty and other gentlemen of the neighborhood." He did make clear, however, that he was not shirking his ministerial duties:

> You must not infer that I am carried away with the martial...I do not approve of minister quitting their work to be captains of camp armies. I am ready to serve my state and the good cause in any honorable and proper way...I think preachers ought to stick to their sacred calling which was never more important than now.[17]

Granbery kept his promise to stick to his sacred calling. During the Seven Days battles in 1862, while comforting a fallen soldier he was wounded and taken prisoner.[18] Many feared he was dead. He was such a beloved figure that rumors of his death and then confirmation of his survival were reported in the *Richmond Dispatch* and *Richmond Christian Advocate*. Granbery sustained an injury above his right eye and was held as a prisoner of war in Boston. Upon his return, the *Richmond Enquirer* reported, "Mr. Granbery is one of those chaplains who sticks closest to their men when the danger is greatest – always going into the battle to encourage and comfort and assist."[19] Granbery fully embraced the Confederate cause, the soldiers, and what he felt was his sacred calling.

While Granbery eventually supported the Cause, not every Methodist preacher did and some were dismissed from the church due to their so-called Union sympathies. The majority of those dismissed hailed from the Holston Conference, which covered southwestern Virginia, east Tennessee, and part of North Carolina. This area, especially, east Tennessee, was known to have deep pockets of Unionists.

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[17] John Granbery to Ella Winston, 8 May 1861, Granbery Papers, University of Virginia.

[18] William E. Dodd, "John Cowper Granbery," in *The John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College* (Richmond, VA: Randolph Macon College, 1908), 192.

[19] Reprinted in the *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 14 August 1862.

Bishop John Early, who presided over the Holston Conference, zealously sought to oust members disloyal to the Confederacy. According to Isaac Patton Martin's *Methodism in Holston*, the Conference meeting in Athens, Tennessee during October of 1862 highlighted Conference divisions. Nearly the entire meeting revolved around the issue of Union ministers. A total of twelve ministers were brought up on charges of disloyalty to the Confederacy. Similar expulsions occurred in 1863 and 1864. The division within the Conference eventually led pro-Union ministers in 1864 to create a competing Holston Conference composed of those still loyal to the Union. The Holston Conference that had managed to stay together since its inception and weather the schism of 1844 intact had finally been rent in two by the war.[20]

Even with the small pockets of Unionist ministers, many Methodist ministers were loyal to the Confederacy as in evidenced in their letters to the *Richmond Christian Advocate,* and later their programs supporting the war. They favored secession early on and encouraged their congregation to support the Confederacy. These ministers would rally their parishioners to help the troops and prostrate themselves before the Lord to ensure victory in what they were sure was a righteous cause.

Preachers and War

The traditional view of ministers as peaceful observers became an obstacle that needed to be overcome. Ministers could choose to model themselves as men of peace, just as Jesus was. However, they had many precedents from the Old Testament to select

[20] Isaac Patton Martin, *Methodism in Holston* (Knoxville, TN: Methodist Historical Society, 1954), 74, 78, 81.

from, such as King David and Elijah, to support a more hawk-like approach to war. Reverend James Duncan expounded on why preachers offered themselves as chaplains and even officers and privates in the army, explaining that Southerners had taken up arms to ward off the Northern aggressors. The ministers involved in this cause did not enlist in the war effort to shed blood, but rather they felt the cause was right, just, and above all, Christian in its purpose. They wanted to be in battle to "offer up as witnesses for the truth."[21]

Ministers also knew their country would need them more than ever during this trial to be responsible for keeping Southerners grounded in a spiritual foundation. Reverend Shannon Butt of Monroe County, Virginia (which later became a part of West Virginia) counseled his son, Leonidas, also a Methodist minister, to do just that:

> The whole country is now in a ferment, and will be worse. Many, very many, will be carried off with the excitement; and will be needing all the pious council they can get. O my dear Son, lead them on to victory. Point them to the better land, where war shall never exist.[22]

Reverend Shannon Butt for all his spiritual instruction, however, ended his letter on a defiant and decidedly less religious note when he added, "A united South will teach the Yankees a lesson they will remember for some time."[23]

Ministers also rationalized the nation's and their own involvement in the war using justification from the Bible itself. Reverend Robert Newton Sledd used such a method during a sermon preached before Petersburg soldiers leaving for battle. Sledd began by extolling the virtues of the peacemakers and pronouncing that Christianity was

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[21] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 13 June 1861.
[22] Shannon Butt to Leonidas Butt, 8 May 1861, Shannon Butt Letters, Virginia Historical Society.
[23] Shannon Butt to Leonidas Butt, 8 May 1861, Shannon Butt Letters, Virginia Historical Society.

ultimately a pacifist religion. However, should the individual ever be encroached upon in such a manner that his pursuit of happiness was endangered, and that the cause of equity and religion be imperiled, are they not called upon by God to defend themselves? Using text straight from 1 Chronicles, Sledd asserted, "God, by his providence, if not by His word, bid us buckle on our armor, and behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God."[24]

Sledd supported this supposition by citing examples. He contended that the Jews were ruled by a theocracy for much of their history. Even so, they were often engaged in warfare at God's behest. When the Jewish people called for a king, the king was divinely chosen and still the people battled whenever they were encroached upon. King David was a warrior and also "a man after God's own heart." Sledd interpreted this to mean that a people could do battle and still be virtuous and moral in God's eyes. If the ancients of the Old Testament were justified in their fights, then surely the Confederates were also. Sledd insisted that all they hold dear was in jeopardy: "You go to avenge not

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[24] Robert Newton Sledd, *A Sermon Delivered in the Market Street, M.E. Church, Petersburg, Va.: Before the Confederate Cadets, on the Occasion of their Departure for the Seat of War, Sunday, Sept. 22d, 1861* (Petersburg: A. F. Crutchfield & Co., 1861) 5-7, Documenting the American South, University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004, http://docsouth.unc.edu/sledd/menu.html.
It is worthwhile to mention the context of the verse from 1Corinthians. King David sent a delegation to the Ammonites after the passing of their King. Hanun, the King's son, believing that David's men were actually spies, humiliated the delegation by shaving them and cutting their garments at the buttocks. Realizing their mistake and knowing David was angry, the Ammonites hired the Arameans and started a war against David. David's general Joab split his force in two to fight the enemy, and uttered the words "Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The Lord will do what is good in his sight." It is interesting to note that this war began because of humiliation done to another. The Confederates felt something akin to humiliation because of the treatment they have received at the hands of the North. This led them down the path of war as well.

merely private injuries. Your country's freedom, her dearest privileges and richest blessings, her God-given rights are in danger."[25]

The clergy of the M. E. Church, South may have established the legitimacy of the war, but that did not make their job any easier. They had a difficult path to traverse in bringing religious instruction to the troops. The largest obstacles the church faced spreading the Gospel were lack of materials, funds, personnel, and the seeming indifference of the Confederate government to fulfilling the religious needs of the troops. Church leaders had to find ways to cope with and overcome these challenges. Virginia ministers often led the way in finding solutions.

According to the church, the soldiers were hungry for the word of God, but religious materials were scarce. Reverend W. J. W. Crowder of Virginia informed the *RCA* that there were "many pious daily reading the Bible and praying to God." Even so, most of the literature in camp was of a secular sort and the soldiers desperately needed more suitable reading material. He claimed the soldiers were most anxious for religious tracts due to their brief, pointed messages and easy portability. Tracts ranged in size from a few pages to as many as twenty-plus, which made them easy to carry and read. Supplies of tracts were low now that they were cut off from Northern supplies, but tract distribution needed to continue.[26] Eventually the M. E. Church, South formed the Soldiers' Tract Association to meet this need.

In an effort to secure funds to print the religious tracts, members of the church made regular calls for donations. A useful tactic to gather donations was to print stories

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[25] Sledd, 8.
[26] W. J. W. Crowder, "Tracts for Soldiers," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 27 June 1861.

about donations by soldiers. The idea was that if a soldier in the field could contribute money for the cause, so could the civilians at home. C. W. Pertherbridge of Virginia, an agent for the Soldiers Tract Association, submitted a story on such an occurrence. The anonymous soldier donated a sum of $10 to aid the printing of religious tracts which, according to him, were most sought after in camp. Pertherbridge encouraged others to make similar donations, as they were able: "We must all do something for the cause; and perhaps the only means by which many can do so is by their money."[27]

Chaplains also wrote letters to the *RCA* thanking readers for generous support. Chaplain William Gaines Miller of the 46th Virginia Volunteers Regiment thanked readers for their ample donations based on his last appeal in the paper. Using the same theme as others, Miller called the tracts important tools in the work of saving souls and bringing comfort to those who fight.[28]

W. W. Bennett of Virginia, the head of the Soldiers Tract Association, sent another appeal on the heels of Miller's, urging readers to share what they had during the Christmas holiday including having the "little boys and girls send their Christmas money."[29] The Christmas appeal obviously worked as a January issue of the *RCA* reported that a young Boydton boy sent $5. This gesture prompted the boy's father to contribute $15.[30]

As the war progressed and Confederates began to feel the pinch in the pocketbook, requests for money continued. The requests were not just for the Soldiers'

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[27] C. W. Pertherbridge, "A Noble Offering by a Soldier," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 18 September 1862.
[28] *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 18 December 1862.
[29] *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 25 December 1862.
[30] *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 8 January 1863.

Tract Association either, but also money to supply issues of the *RCA* to soldiers. The *RCA* employed the additional tactic of printing a weekly list of donor names and amounts. In 1862, scarcely an issue of the *RCA* went by that did not print a list of contributions to the Soldiers' Tract Association. These contributor lists demonstrate the wide circulation of the *RCA*. The donations arrived from all areas of Virginia and other states. For example, one list noted a $750 donation collected by Alabama and two donations from the South Carolina M. E. South Conference totaling nearly $100.[31] The group certainly put these funds to use. Reverend W. W. Bennett reported in February of 1863 that since December 1 over 500,000 pages of tracts had been printed and approximately 400,000 of those pages had been distributed.[32]

Based on the appeals for funds that appeared in the *Richmond Christian Advocate* throughout the war, readers sent donations regularly, but they never seemed to be adequate to sustain the Soldiers' Tract Association. Each plea was more desperate than the last and the request really exploited the readers' sense of religious duty to aid the soldiers and save souls. The Soldiers' Tract Association could boast of the number of tracts printed and distributed, but the constant petitioning for cash proved that even with all the donations received it was never enough.

Finding enough Bibles to fulfill the army needs proved to be another hurdle. According to an article in the *RCA*, the American Bible Society (ABS), a Northern-based organization had been supplying Bibles to the Confederacy. Unfortunately the strictness of the blockade made it impossible for the ABS to continue filling orders. The article

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[31] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 26 February 1863.
[32] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 19 February 1863.

also served to correct a misconception circulating in the South that the ABS had cut off supplies to the Confederacy intentionally, not because of the blockade. The article stated that a Bible found on the body of a Yankee soldier bearing the inscription, "To the defenders of their country," had been provided by the New York Bible Society, not the ABS.[33] Apparently it caused quite a bit of outrage among the Southerners to believe the ABS had sided against them instead of remaining impartial as had been their position thus far.

The church met the challenge of providing Bibles to troops by aiding in the creation of a Confederate Bible Society. The multidenominational convention that established this society expressed kindness toward its Northern counterpart and its neutrality, but had harsh words indeed for the United States government:

> But the hope here expressed was destroyed when the United States Government engaged in an unholy crusade against all that the Southern people hold sacred. In no long time, it was found that we were even denied the privilege of importing the word of God, bought at the Bible House. The South had no option, but to look to her own resources for the Book of Life.[34]

Even though the Bible Society of the Confederacy tried to ensure an adequate supply of Bibles, there never seemed to be enough. According to Reverend William Bennett of the M. E. Church, South, the Methodists and other denominations tried desperately to put Bibles in the hands of all who asked for one, but were thwarted due to the blockade and the lack of quality printing facilities in the South. Civilians were asked

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[33] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 11 July 1861.

[34] *Proceedings of the Bible Convention of the Confederate States of America, Including the Minutes of the Organization of the Bible Society, Augusta, GA. March 19th-21st, 1862; and also a Sermon Preached Before the Convention by the Reverend George F. Pierce, D.D. Bishop of the M.E. Church, South* (Augusta, GA:1862), 4, Documenting the American South, University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004, http://docsouth.unc.edu/biblconv/menu.html.

to send spare copies of the Bible to the troops. Some even parted with treasured family Bibles.[35] Even the valiant efforts of the Presbyterian minister Moses D. Hoge fell short. Hoge went to England on behalf of the Virginia Bible Society to purchase Bibles. He managed to procure 10,000 Bibles, 50,000 New Testaments, and 25,000 portions of the Psalms and Gospels. These were shipped back in small quantities, but sometimes they were captured by the blockade. Unfortunately these numbers were not sufficient to provide for everyone in need.[36]

A reprint of an article that first appeared in the *Southern Christian Advocate* attested to the difficulties of procuring Bibles for the troops, especially later in the war. The article reported that while no one purposely tried to deprive soldiers of the Bible, but that there were few to be had. A shipment from Nassau had been blocked and it was unknown how many Bibles fell into enemy hands. It is probable that these were Bibles that Reverend Hoge had purchased in England that he was trying to slip through the blockade. The article entreated the people to pray for a quick ending to the combat so that the soldiers could go home and read from their family Bible.[37]

Once the Methodist Church acquired Bibles and religious tracts to distribute, it needed people to carry these to the soldiers. Chaplains were the obvious choice to disperse these items, but they were not numerous enough to spread these materials to the entire army. The church enlisted the service of colporteurs to aid in the dissemination of religious materials. In the same update from Reverend Bennett that told of the thousands

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[35] Bennett, 46, 48.
[36] W. Harrison Daniel, *Southern Protestantism in the Confederacy* (Bedford, VA: Print Shop, 1989), 105-106.
[37] *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 21 April 1864.

of pages of printed tracts produced in a short time, he also lamented the inadequate supply of men to distribute these items. Even though they lacked the number of personnel to distribute all their materials, he assured readers that they had faithful people working in Chimborazo, Camp Lee, Danville, Lynchburg and part of western Virginia to provide religious comfort and instruction to the soldiers.[38]

Some members of the army took it upon themselves to be colporteurs in their camps. J. T. Lucas of the Lunenburg Rebel Artillery was one such individual. His unit had been without a chaplain, and feeling that it was "a fatal mistake in our government" not to ensure adequate supplies of chaplains, he decided to take matters into his own hands. He feared the degeneration of the men around him since they were without the influence of women and society. The monotony of camp life and demoralizing influences led them away from prayer and religion. Lucas remedied the situation in his unit by acting as camp colporteur and distributed religious material to help the men find their way back to religion. [39] While Lucas regretted his inability to give the same glowing report that came from others, his letter probably accurately reflected the reality of many camps.

Methodist Churches in the Richmond area tried to rise to the challenge of supporting colportage. A member of Centenary Church penned a challenge to the members of Centenary, Broad Street and Trinity Churches. Printed in the *RCA*, the author encouraged the membership of these churches to take on more responsibility and send out colporteurs to the army. The Baptists were already doing this and the author thought they

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[38] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 19 February 1863.
[39] L. T. Lucas, "Letter from Camp," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 30 July 1863.

should follow the example. Apparently a little interdenominational rivalry would go a long way in prompting the Methodists to step up to this challenge. The author already had someone lined up for duty and all that was needed were the funds to support him.[40] Also appearing in the same issue of the paper was a call for all Methodist ministers to come to the *RCA* office "in order to concert measures for a system of Army Colportage."[41]

While many soldiers greatly desired religious instruction, the reality was that there were not enough chaplains or colporteurs to go around. Even so, the Methodist Church, eager to do its part for the war effort, supplied more chaplains than any other denomination, 448 in all.[42] The church did its best to remedy the lack of chaplains. Since there was no set way to become a chaplain, the different denominations came up with their own recruiting methods. The Virginia Conference of the M.E. Church, South during its 1862 meeting resolved to encourage the appointment of chaplains to the army. A motion was raised and passed for Richmond area ministers to constitute a committee "to ascertain the wants of the army in respect to chaplains, and to recommend suitable men for such positions."[43]

Chaplains still remained in short supply and haphazardly organized despite the best efforts of the Methodists and other denominations. A letter from a soldier in the field highlighted just how desperately the men wanted and needed chaplains. The soldier

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[40] "To the Members of Centenary, Broad Street, and Trinity Churches," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 6 March 1862.
[41] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 6 March 1862.
[42] Brinsfield, 62.
[43] "Notes from the Virginia Conference of the M. E. Church, South," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 11 December 1862.

noted there was a drastic shortage of chaplains and that many regiments had "gone almost entirely without that religious instruction to which they have been accustomed. It is one of their greatest wants." He railed against the indifference of their commanders to their needs in this area. He felt those in the government should see to the staffing of chaplains, as it was a "duty which they owe to the soldiers, and which should be their last to neglect."[44] Based on this letter and others sent in to the *RCA* a pattern emerges that demonstrated a yearning for religious instruction existed among the troops, but the scarcity of chaplains made it impossible fulfill their spiritual needs. The soldiers did not blame the church for this shortcoming, but rather the Confederate government.

Chaplains were not a high priority for the Confederate government. They did not have a formal organization and were without an authorized uniform, insignia, rank, or prescribed duties.[45] It seems odd that since the Confederacy put such stock into the notion that God was on their side, the government might have made a greater effort to ensure an adequate number of chaplains with a defined purpose. Some historians suggest the reason for this is because members of the Confederate government had conflicting ideas about chaplains. Some officials had little respect for chaplains, believing they only "worked one day a week." [46] Jefferson Davis was rather apathetic toward chaplains as he did not have a high opinion of them based on his time at West Point or while he was

[44] "Chaplains Wanted," *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 4 September 1862.
[45] Herman Norton, *Rebel Religions: The Story of the Confederate Chaplains* (St Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1961.), 22.
[46] Norton, 23.

Secretary of War during the Mexican War. Both Davis and his Secretary of War, James Seddon, felt it was more important to fill the ranks with soldiers than chaplains.[47]

Both Methodist and Baptist chaplains in Virginia experienced difficulties relating to officers and soldiers. This was partly because the ministers were twice as likely as the officers to have attended college, making them more educated than the average officer and vastly more so than the average soldier. Ministers were also older on average than the soldiers; the average age of a chaplain was 30. These chaplains also wished to be the social peers of the officers, but most of the officers were Presbyterians or Episcopalians and did not consider Methodists or Baptists on their level.[48] The chaplains' stance on the use of alcohol and gambling also did not endear them to many of the officers.

Poor pay also limited the number of chaplains and created a barrier for some who may have considered this calling. Early in the conflict, chaplains received $85 a month for their services. This amount was cut to $50 at one point and finally stabilized at $80. Later in the war they were provided with extra benefits including rations, stationary, and forage for their horses.[49] Even with these compensations, the men were hard pressed, especially if they had a family to support.

Methodist Bishop James Andrew may have had a hand in helping the salary rise. In February of 1862 he wrote a column in the *RCA* charging that the Confederate government deceived the people regarding its assurance that each regiment was entitled to a chaplain and the chaplains were paid the sum of $80 a month. He stated the

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[47] Brinsfield, 54-55.
[48] Schweiger, 98-99.
[49] Norton, 25.

government promptly dropped the salary to $50, which was not adequate to support a family. Andrew did not wish to assign blame, but wondered if the government would have considered making the same cuts to their own salary. In a rare criticism of the Confederate government by the Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop Andrew leveled a stunning rebuke:

> Now all these things all indicate a perfect indifference to the moral and religious interest of the soldier on the part of government and yet we glorify Government and Congress as being quite a God-respecting people. Verily we are greatly in need of improvement before we can boast much on this point.[50]

By the time Andrew wrote this letter it was becoming apparent that the war was going to last longer than most had anticipated. A short war would have lessened the need for a large contingent of chaplains. A longer fight meant civilians and the military would need the comfort of religion to see them through the conflict. Bishop Andrew recognized this, hence his chastisement of the government for its seeming indifference to spiritual needs and the livelihood of those who tended to those needs.

Even with these limitations, members of the Methodist Church in Virginia did all they could to rally support for the war and do their part to ensure success. The ministers, of course, preached sermons related to the war. Lectures on the progression of the war and related topics also were given. Churches opened their doors to groups who needed a facility in which to meet. Broad Street Methodist Church in Richmond is an excellent example of a church that provided space for many activities related to the war. One group that met at Broad Street Church was The Ladies Defense Association, formed in the wake of the *Pawnee* scare. On April 21, 1861, the city was sent into a panic because

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[50] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 27 February 1862.

of rumors that the Federal warship, the *Pawnee*, was steaming upriver to attack the city. The rumors were false, but women of the city decided action must be taken. They formed their association with the primary purpose of raising funds to build ironclad gunboats to patrol the James River.[51] The group met in the Lecture Room of the Broad Street Methodist Church with the full support of the current minister, Reverend James Doggett. Notices of meetings appeared several times in the *Richmond Daily Dispatch*.[52]

Other events, both secular and religious, were also held at Broad Street Church. The Young Men's Christian Association met there to hold prayer meetings to "supplicate Almighty God in behalf of our country."[53] Lectures were given on several topics, from the suffering of residents of Hampton due to Federal occupation to a lecture by a former prisoner of war. This church, as well as others, hosted numerous events in support of the war or to raise awareness.

Ministers of the Methodist Church expended much time and effort to supply the Confederacy with the spiritual tools it needed to fight and win the war. Even though they were often faced with shortages, be it of materials, money, or manpower, the church managed to provide firm religious support. This firm support, however, was stretched very thin indeed when it came to servicing the needs of the soldiers.

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[51] Edna Susan Barber, *"Sisters of the Capital": White Women in Richmond, Virginia, 1860-1880* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1997), 190.

[52] Issues of the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* advertising meetings of the Ladies Defense Association, also known as The National Defense and Aid Association include March 23, 24, and 27 of 1862.

[53] *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 9 May 1864.

CHAPTER THREE

"SUNDAY DOES NOT COME IN CAMP"[1]

I took up the patriotic and other songs of camp life, and soon settled down into the general idolatry of other young soldiers . . . .– John T. James[2]

Of utmost importance to the clergy was ensuring that the soldier gave his life to Christian principles. The camp where soldiers spent most of their time was fraught with as many perils as the battlefield, chief among them gambling, drinking, and swearing. The M. E. Church considered all of these camp pastimes more damaging to the spiritual life of a soldier than any bullet could be to the mortal life. If soldiers gave in to immoral behavior in camp, their souls were unprepared for the afterlife if they were killed. An address given by Reverend Granbery, later reprinted as a tract for the Soldiers' Tract Association, summed up the feeling of the clergy as to why soldiers needed to be Christian.

First, Granbery insisted that in order to secure God's favor soldiers and civilians must embrace Christianity. "Deep in the breasts of our soldiery and civilians rests the conviction that the Lord of hosts, the God of battle, the Ruler of the nations, is on our side and that in this fact lies our safety against all the craft and all the power of the Northern army." Embracing the principles of Christianity would please God and ensure

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[1] Letter from Bishop Andrew, *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 27 February 1862. Bishop Andrew made this comment when he heard rumors that whiskey was given as a ration instead of coffee. He also despaired of swearing among the soldiers

[2] John T. James, *Four Years of Methodist Ministry* (Staunton, VA: 1894) 19. James recounts his experience in the Confederate army where he returns to his religion after backsliding. He became a minister in the Baltimore Conference of the M. E. Church, South after the war.

God's favor. Since most were sure of divine intervention on their side, it would be a matter of maintaining that favor.[3]

Secondly, by upholding Christian values a soldier insulated himself from the "immorality and utter irreligion to which temptations abound in the camps." Granbery knew the demoralizing influence war had on all, especially the troops. However, he was convinced that the body of the army was made up of "respectable classes of the community and also the church of God." Even though the troops were largely missing the positive influence of the their pastor, their fellow believers, and the "influences of home and of female society," they were not forsaken if they had a firm foundation in Christianity.[4]

Granbery's final two reasons for being Christian in time of war were because soldiers needed the consolation of religion to deal with the privation and suffering of army life and because they were subject to sudden death at every turn. Life in the army was very difficult. Soldiers were away from home, and alternately subjected to heated battle and then long, dull stretches in camp. All these things took their toll. Death, by a bullet or disease, was the ultimate worry. Granbery questioned, "The sting of death is sin. Friend, are you prepared to die and appear before God?"[5]

Granbery used this fear of unknown death to persuade the men to "seek the Lord while He may be found." He relayed stories of men who lay on their deathbed too overcome by pain or fever to be able to contemplate the state of their soul. Others died

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[3] J. C. Granbery, *An Address to the Soldiers of the Southern Armies*, 7.
[4] J. C. Granbery, *An Address to the Soldiers of the Southern Armies*, 8-9.
[5] J. C. Granbery, *An Address to the Soldiers of the Southern Armies*, 8-9.

on the field unable to ask the chaplain to pray for them or died so suddenly that an utterance for God to forgive them for their sins was not even possible. Granbery did not want the men in his charge to suffer such a fate and instead implored them to take account of their sins now and get right with God. Granbery finally pleaded that his fellow soldiers enlist "in a nobler cause than even that of Southern independence. Fight the good fight of faith."[6] Even for all their support of the war, the leaders of the church steadfastly believed their first priority was always to lead others to salvation.

Reverend W. H. Christian gave a similar sermon in Richmond about the importance of being a Christian soldier. He followed the same line of thought as Granbery, but interjected a few additional benefits. He believed it made men more useful and obedient soldiers. Reverend Christian also cited the numerous Christian soldiers in history who were very successful: Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and George Washington. He strongly encouraged officers to become Christians as they could set a good example and exert their influence over the enlisted men. And, like Granbery, Christian could not express enough how important it was to give one's life to God with death a constant threat. In ominous verse he warned:

> Death rides on every passing breeze,
> And lurks in every passing flower;
> Each season has its own disease;
> Its peril, every hour.[7]

Ministers took every available opportunity to remind soldiers of the imminent peril and how important it was to address the state of their soul.

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[6] J. C. Granbery, *An Address to the Soldiers of the Southern Armies*, 10-12.

[7] W. H. Christian, *The Importance of a Soldier Becoming a Christian, A Sermon given at Union Station, Richmond, Virginia* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers' Tract Association, 186- [?]).

The two addresses above follow the same format as many other sermons, tracts, and editorials did over the course of the war. The authors wanted to make emotional appeals to the people to prostrate themselves before God for the sake of this fledgling county. Many of the writings took on the big three threats to the soul of the soldier: gambling, swearing and drinking. The ministers felt soldiers may not have participated in these behaviors during their civilian life, but the camp was rife with temptation. They wanted the men to know that just because their situations had changed, they still needed to maintain Christian values now more than ever.

One method used to keep soldiers on the correct path was to share anecdotes about famous persons who were also Christian. *Anecdotes for Soldiers Original and Selected*, a tract written by Reverend George W. Nolley, recounted stories of famous people respected by the Confederates. Stories about Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and John Marshall taught lesson on the ills of drink and gambling. These men overcame temptation and by following Christian principles became successful.[8]

A more pointed story that circulated, *The Broken Vow*, recounted the actions of a soldier named Harry, who came from an upstanding family and studied law. Harry was in the midst of a card game when the call to arms came. He made a vow to God in that moment that if he were spared he would never gamble again. Harry survived the battle, but soon forgot his vow. Finally, Harry sustained a mortal wound. His physical pain was great, but according to the author, not nearly so great as the pain of his broken vow. The

[8] George W. Nolley, *Anecdotes for Soldiers Original and Selected* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers' Tract Association, 186- [?]).

lesson of this story was to lay aside the cards, lest they end up like Harry, regretting their broken vow.[9]

The tracts also took on one of the most common traps for a soldier: swearing. It was easy for a soldier when taken away from "civilized" society to slip into the profane, but the church would not have this as "no swearer or profane person shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven."[10] Besides appearing in a circulated tract, this exact phrase appeared also in at least two issues of the *RCA*, which demonstrates how important this subject was to the clergy.[11] Indeed, the volume of writing on this particular vice suggests that the clergy were more concerned about this than any other temptation facing the troops. For example, an article from 1863 reminded readers of the dangers of swearing. The article expressed the opinion that perhaps people have forgotten God's rule upon the subject and hoped they would take this reminder to heart. It denied that swearing was "manly," but rather it was "contemptible."[12]

Another tract circulating in the camps, *The Soldier's Guide*, was supposed to be a reprint of a letter written by a father to his son in camp. The father above all charged his son to remain a Christian and to eschew the dangerous practices of camp. He reminded his son, "I need not caution you against strong drink, as useless and hurtful; nor against profanity, so common among soldiers. Both these practices you abhor. Aim to take at once a decided stand for God." The father warned his son about hanging around the wrong type of soldier:

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[9] I. R. Finley, *The Broken Vow* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers' Tract Association, 1863).
[10] *Prepare for Battle!* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers' Tract Association, 186- [?]).
[11] See September 25, 1862 editorial by Reverend James Duncan and the December 11, 1862 issue of the *Richmond Christian Advocate*.
[12] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 22 January 1863.

> Some men love to tell extravagant stories, to indulge in vulgar wit, to exult in a swaggering carriage, to pride themselves on their coarse manners, to boast of their heroism, and give utterance to feelings of revenge against the enemy. . . . If you admire such things you will insensibly imitate them, and imitation will work gradual, but certain detriment to your character."

He instead encouraged his son to seek out those of similar values. He wished his son to be brave and courageous, but not boastful. Above all, he wanted him to be a humble Christian. If he could find like-minded people to model himself after he would "return from the dangers of camp life without a blemish on your name."[13]

Concerned citizens also made known their feelings on the temptations of camp life. The *Richmond Christian Advocate* reprinted an article from a North Carolina newspaper the *Hillsborough Recorder*, "An Appeal to the Soldiers of the Confederate States," which noted "yielding to intemperance, a foe insidious and contagious, by which it is more disgraceful to be conquered than by your Northern enemies." The author urged the troops to treat liquor as a Yankee ally.[14]

This citizen may have been disconcerted to learn all did not necessarily heed his warning. Chaplain William E. Wiatt of the 26th Virginia Infantry recorded in his diary an incident that took place in April 1863. Colonel William B. Tabb and his soldiers successfully took a Yankee camp at Whitaker's Mill near Williamsburg without losing a single man. However, after entering the camp, some 15 to 20 soldiers "were made drunk on Yankee liquor and thus fell into the hands of the enemy." In this case, alcohol literally

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[13] *The Soldier's Guide* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers' Tract Association, 186- [?]).
[14] "An Appeal to the Soldiers of the Confederate States," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 13 March 1862.

became a weapon of the enemy. Wiatt was left to exclaim, "What a curse ardent spirits are to the world!"[15]

There was a great deal of alarm over the lack of restraint when it came to strong drink among army officers. Bishop Andrew was especially concerned, believing that sobriety extended only to the enlisted men, not the officers. In an 1862 letter he scolded those who allowed the lives of the soldiers to be scarified "to the whims of a drunken General." He further stated that an enlisted man could be punished by death for falling asleep on watch or for inadvertently firing his weapon, while an inebriated general could cause the death and wounding of hundreds without retribution. He alluded to a "distinguished General" who allowed McClellan to escape. [16] To deflect any criticism about a Bishop involving himself in political matters, he closed with a statement asking readers to overlook his straying into "territory, which does not properly lie within my province." However, he felt duty bound to make his feeling known as a citizen of the South.[17]

Although religious instruction may not have been able to keep up with the demands of camp life, chaplains did their utmost to assist the soldiers. Reverend William Wiatt detailed in his diary his efforts as a Chaplain of the 26th Virginia Infantry. Nearly every entry told of the various religious tracts and Bibles he distributed to the soldiers

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[15] Transcript of William E. Wiatt's Diary, Wednesday, October 1, 1862 – December 1865, (n. p., n. d.), 25.

[16] The "distinguished general" that Andrew alluded to was probably General John Magruder and his behavior during the Seven Days battle in July of 1862. Multiple accounts state that Magruder acted irrationally, and appeared agitated and out of control. This behavior fueled rumors that he was drunk during the battle. According to Peter Carmichael, Magruder was probably suffering from the effects of stress, lack of sleep, and an allergic reaction to medication. For further information on Magruder and his behavior during the battle, see Peter S. Carmichael, *The Richmond Campaign of 1862: The Peninsula and the Seven Days*.

[17] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 14 August 1862.

and the prisoners of war. He often commented about the soldiers' eagerness to receive this heavenly literature. Wiatt also described the efforts to build a proper chapel for the camp in 1863, a task that was ultimately successful. It is not clear whether Wiatt fought in the battles, but his diary indicated he was always with his unit and in close proximity to all the action. [18]

Another Virginia regiment was also lucky enough to have an abundance of religious tools at their disposal. Presbyterian Chaplain Abner Crump Hopkins of the 2nd Virginia Infantry mentioned in his diary religious activities occurring in his camp. According to Hopkins, by January of 1863 his brigade had erected a chapel and each regimental chaplain alternately used it for different denominational services, including Methodist. By February, there were two church services and a Bible study class. Hopkins also noted there are at least 70 copies of various religious papers circulating in the camp.[19]

The diaries of Hopkins and Wiatt provide a picture of the ideal for camp: ample access to chaplains and religious literature as well as buildings for worship. A variety of ministers also delivered sermons in their camp. These two accounts were representative of what many chaplains experienced and what most soldiers could expect if they were fortunate enough to belong to a regiment with adequate religious support.

It is obvious the Methodist Church, as well as other denominations, had many obstacles to overcome in order to minister to the soldier, but one way they could measure their effect and success was through the professions of faith by the soldiers. These

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[18] Transcript of William E. Wiatt's Diary, Wednesday, October 1, 1862 – December 1865, (n. p., n. d.).
[19] Diary of Abner Crump Hopkins, Virginia Historical Society (Mss5:1 H7742:1).

professions were most often manifest in the camp revival. Historians have documented the great swell in revivals that took place in the Confederate Army beginning in late 1863 and peaking in early 1864. It is generally accepted among historians that this wave of revivals was brought about by the realization that the war was lasting much longer than anticipated. Soldiers were turning to religion as a means to cope with the stress of war. However, revivals began in the camps as early as 1861. Perhaps the way to account for the early revivals is through the efforts of groups, such as the Methodists, trying to establish a religious foundation for the soldiers and for the war itself.[20]

The first revival mentioned in the *RCA* occurred on July 9, 1861. The article was actually a reprint from the *Richmond Daily Dispatch.* The article speaks of the religious activities of the 19th regiment of the Virginia Volunteers. The sounds of prayer and praise could be heard rising nightly from the tents. The article even mentions the admission of three officers to their first communion.[21]

The revival spirit began to take hold in hospitals for the wounded soldiers. One example occurred in October 1862, after two ministers from Blacksburg, Virginia, one Methodist and one Presbyterian, came together with a wounded soldier who had also been ministering to soldiers, to hold a large revival. The three held the revival at a local hotel and converted 25 individuals and reported how "a large number are anxiously

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[20] The following publications address the subject of revival in the Confederate Army and were used in this thesis: *God's Rebels: Confederate clergy in the Civil War*, by Henry Lee Curry, *Rebel Religion: The Story of Confederate Chaplains*, by Herman A. Norton, *Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains*, edited by John W. Brinsfield, et al., *Religion and the American Civil War*, edited by Miller, Randal M. et al., *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* by Beth Barton Schweiger. *Christ in the Camp or Religion in the Confederate Army* by Reverend J. William Jones. See the bibliography for full publication details.

[21] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 18 July 1861.

inquiring what must they do to be saved." Interestingly, it involved both civilians and soldiers coming together for a revival.[22]

A couple weeks later, Reverend James Duncan wrote an editorial in which he praised the "extensive revivals" taking place throughout the country, specifically mentioning the revivals in the army hospitals and camps. Reverend Duncan believed these revivals would lead to the salvation of souls and also the country.[23] As if to confirm his assertion about the progression of revivals, Reverend Duncan printed a note from Chaplain J. R. Waggoner of the 56th Virginia regiment who reported a revival occurring among his charges. He also proclaimed "a deep religious interest [is] pervading nearly the entire army."[24]

The intensity and frequency of the revivals increased, peaking in the latter part of 1863 and may have been prompted by the terrible defeats suffered by the Confederacy at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. A September issue of the *RCA* attested to the numerous revivals occurring throughout the army. The *RCA* reported revival news in nearly every issue, but the September 24 issue carried an even greater number of reports. The revivals were occurring not only among the soldiers, but also the civilians. One report from central Virginia stated that more than 500 people had professed religion and that during a revival held for "servants" yielded 220 converts with 170 joining the Methodist Church. The list noted information on eight more revivals occurring in the area among civilians and soldiers.[25]

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[22] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 9 October 1862.
[23] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 23 October 1862.
[24] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 27 November 1862.
[25] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 24 September 1863.

An important aspect of the revival was the cooperation of the major denominations. Dr. William J. Hoge documented this phenomenon during the celebrated revival of Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade that took place in Fredericksburg: "And so we had a Presbyterian sermon, introduced by Baptist services, under the direction of a Methodist chaplain in an Episcopal church. Was not that a beautiful solution of the vexed problem of Christian union?"[26] These different denominations may have been split over issues of baptism and communion, among other things, but they temporarily set aside these issue for the common goal of converting and saving souls.

Another aspect of camp life that must be taken into account was the toll of war on the spiritual life of not only a soldier but also a chaplain. In the closing days of the war, a quiet desperation must have taken hold of some chaplains. So many believed that God was with them in this fight, yet it must have become apparent they were fighting a losing battle. Early in 1865, Reverend John Granbery confided to his fiancé that the he thought the war would soon end and that the South would not succeed.[27] In making this statement he would have to reevaluate everything he had believed. Throughout the war he had been so sure that God would grant them victory. Now he acknowledged a truth that would have been inconceivable a few years earlier.

Even the perpetually optimistic William Wiatt let a moment of doubt creep into his diary. Throughout his diary, Wiatt recorded the daily routines of camp life and interspersed were comments of his abiding faith that they would be successful. However,

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[26] Reverend J. William Jones, D.D. *Christ in the Camp or Religion in the Confederate Army* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1986), 223.

[27] Dodd, 192-193.

in November of 1864 as he observed the devastation around Richmond and Petersburg, Wiatt pleaded to the Lord that "if it be Thy will, give us our desire [peace and independence] but, if not yet, give us faith in Thee and our humble resignations." [28] In this briefest of moments Wiatt recognized that they may never have their heart's desire.

Around the same time, Captain Joseph Richard Manson of the 12th Virginia Infantry recorded desperate thoughts in his own diary while in Petersburg during the siege in 1864. Captain Manson did not reveal his religious denomination in his writings, but the Chaplain of the 12th Virginia Infantry was Peter Archer Peterson of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Manson would have been exposed either through sermons, religious tracts or other literature to the views of the Methodists in Virginia. Being a very religious man himself, Manson felt God was with them in this struggle. However, his diary revealed great anxiety. Manson reveled in the glory of God one moment and sank into a deep despair the next. The siege at Petersburg took a toll on him spiritually:

> My spirits are depressed by reason of the condition in which my lot is cast. Nothing but constant solicitude from day to day. Oh what trouble this life of constant danger & exposure gives me & and those I love. How blessed . . . if I could be with my family & enjoy peace. Oh God hear the prayers of the suffering ones & deliver us from war! Bless me with greater grace for these great trials![29]

Manson constantly prayed to God for peace for his country and his family, to deliver them all from the storm of war.

Although the revivals and religious literature of camp helped to bring many soldiers comfort and peace in tumultuous times, there were still those without this

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[28] Transcript of William E. Wiatt's Diary, Wednesday, October 1, 1862 – December 1865, (n. p., n. d.), 111.

[29] "A Spiritual Diary," Transcript of the diary of Captain Joseph Richard Manson, Virginia Historical Society (Mss 5:1 M3187).

comfort. In 1864, Methodists still wrote about the lack of chaplains in camp. Reverend Granbery sent such a letter to the *RCA* in May of 1864 in which he spoke of the extensive revivals taking place in almost every brigade in Virginia. He also stated that where chapels were available, they were overflowing and neither wind nor rain could keep the soldiers from the meetings.[30] The demand for religious services could not be met without more chaplains. This seemed to be the story of the war, demand – be it for supplies, ammunition, or religion – the Confederate army could never get enough. Despite the valiant efforts of the Methodist Church to provide for the spiritual lives of every soldier, it ultimately fell short.

[30] Letter from Reverend J. C. Granbery, *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 26 May 1864.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SINS OF A NATION

What avail will be all our fastings and thanksgivings, if they are unaccompanied by repentance and turning to the Lord? – Reverend J. C. Granbery[1]

Slavery brings the judgment of Heaven upon a country. As nations cannot be punished in the next world, they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence punishes national sins by national calamities. – George Mason, August 22, 1787[2]

While the clergy spent much of their time catering to the needs of the soldiers, they did not entirely neglect their civilian charges. Some historians of the religious aspects of the war claim there was little focus on civilians and their spiritual lives.[3] This, however, was not the case. While the leaders of the M. E. Church, South, did focus a great deal on the needs of the soldiers, they also directly engaged civilians on the issue of religion. The clergy felt it was not enough for the people to believe in God. The people had to fully trust God, give thanks, and absolutely repent of all their sins. Only then could God truly help this new county gain its independence. They could not win the war without the intervention of the Lord or so the church tried to convince the people. In addition, the church needed the support of civilians in order meet the spiritual needs of the soldiers. Without the civilian population's money and assistance many of the missions of the church could not progress.

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[1] J.C. Granbery, *An Address to the Soldiers of the Southern Armies* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers' Tract Association, 186- [?]), 8.

[2] Robert A. Rutland, *The Papers of George Mason* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 3:1142.

[3] Beth Barton Schweiger writes in *The Gospel Working Up* (p. 101) that clergy attention was focused on the army, not civilians during the war. Most of the historical analysis of religion during the Civil War focuses on religion in the camp and not on the home front. See the bibliography of this thesis for examples of works on religion in the camp.

A great number of articles in the *RCA* were aimed directly at those left at home. Reverend James Duncan, editor of the *RCA*, used his columns in the paper as a pulpit from which to spread the gospel and instruct all people on matters of faith during the war. Large numbers of the *RCA* were given to troops in the field, but the bulk of the 6,000 subscriptions belonged to civilians. Editions were passed around to friends and neighbors making the paper's reach quite large, especially when it was the only source of news for some. Reverend Duncan routinely received letters from readers praising the paper and its message. One reader asserted that "your half sheet is perhaps the only newspaper taken by many in the conference and their only means of information as to the great events which are rapidly succeeding each other in our land."[4]

Reverend Duncan probably exerted more influence over public opinion on the war than any other member of the M. E. Church, South in Virginia, or throughout the Confederacy for that matter. Located in the capital of the Confederacy, where he was editor of the *RCA* as well as the pastor of Broad Street Methodist Church, he rubbed elbows with the elite of the Confederate government. Both Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee frequently attended services at Broad Street even though both were Episcopalians.[5] Duncan wholeheartedly believed in the Confederacy and its government. He used his pulpit and paper to keeps others faithful to the Cause.

At the outbreak of war, Reverend Duncan changed the focus of the *RCA* from a religious paper to a source of secular news infused with Christian morality and

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[4] "Thoughts about the War," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 6 February 1862.

[5] Fred R. Chenault, *The Broad Street Methodist Episcopal Church, South and Community House* (Richmond, VA:1923),10.

instruction. He directed many of his editorials toward the civilian population encouraging them to support the troops, but more importantly prostrate themselves before God, confess their sins fully, and lead others to God. Only through these actions could the Confederacy be assured victory. Reverend Duncan proposed in his editorial, "The Time to Do Good," that Christians take this opportunity of wartime to spread the gospel to others who may be more receptive to it now during trying times: "Let us not indulge in empty complaints about the times, but accepting the day which God has appointed, give ourselves diligently to the work His providence has assigned us." [6]

As early as February of 1862, Reverend Duncan chastised the people for their flagging commitment to the Cause. He condemned people for falling into a "disgraceful despondency," charging that it was "the duty of every man and women to contribute to the public confidence." Of course Reverend Duncan never missed an opportunity to lambaste the North as a means of reminding the public just what all this suffering was for. He denounced the North for supporting "white slavery, free love, women's rights, and Negro suffrage." He further vowed that no Christian would kneel at the feet of the "Yankee world, the Black Republicans' flesh, nor Lincolnitish representatives of the devil."[7]

Only a few weeks later, Reverend Duncan admonished the people yet again for going around looking gloomy and worried. "Have the people not yet learned that we are actually engaged in war!" proclaimed Duncan incredulously. He told the people when

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[6] James A. Duncan, "The Time to Do Good," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 27 June 1861.
[7] James A. Duncan, "We Will Never Surrender," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 27 February 1862.

worry comes they should appeal more fervently to God and they would be provided with a "David for Goliath"[8]

Reverend Duncan constantly reminded his readers to remain faithful and pious. For instance, when he heard troops described as "demoralized" after a defeat, he scoffed at anyone who would use such a term. He urged the people to remember how they felt when the war first broke out: they proclaimed "Victory or Death," not "Victory or Demoralized." He repeated his mantra that that their cause was just and that "God is with us."[9]

Throughout the war years Reverend Duncan linked Christian fortitude and piety with patriotism and the Southern Cause. One editorial in particular summed up his thoughts on how Christian Southerners should behave. He stated that all Christians were supposed to be self-sacrificing, cheerfully obedient, and willing to commit to a moral cause and added:

> If while struggling in a virtuous cause, they are called upon to suffer loss, to expose their health, to give their money, to bear heavy crosses, they, of all others, should be the last to complain. It is their honor to exemplify patience, fortitude, and the most uncompromising devotion to principle. It would be their shame to be the first to shrink from the furnace of fire when it is heated to test the sincerity of their faith.[10]

Reverend Duncan believed that the sacrifice of the Christian civilian should be as great or greater than that of the soldier in the field. Christians have a responsibility and cannot remain "indifferent spectators" at an important time in the formation of their new nation. It was their job to "cheer the faint and teach them not to grow weary in well doing." He

[8] James A. Duncan, "Cheer Up," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 6 March 1862.
[9] James A. Duncan, "Spirit of the Hour," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 1 May 1862.
[10] James A. Duncan, "Relation of Christians to the Public Good," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 24 September 1863.

charged them to be the light of the community and from the tens of thousands of Christians, "the fires of the purest and most resistless patriotism must radiate over the land." [11]

Reverend Duncan also returned time and again to the one weapon that the civilian population possessed, prayer. Prayer was essential to all things, but especially in overcoming the enemy. Earnest prayer to God surely would bring all that they wanted. Reverend Duncan thought of prayer as a duty of every citizen, which was evident when he titled an editorial, "Pray! Your Country Demands it!" He truly believed in the power of prayer and always reminded his readers the power they possessed in prayer: "While our armies go forth in battle, let us who remain at home continue in earnest prayer. Thus shall we help them and thus shall the Almighty give us the victory."[12]

Reverend Duncan was also proud of the fact that President Davis felt strongly about prayer. Reverend Duncan condemned the secular press for their "wicked insinuations and half concealed taunts about his [President Davis] confidence in prayer." Reverend Duncan countered with the statement: "We honor his firm reliance upon Almighty Goodness and believe God will display His special interposition in behalf of a Government that continues to call upon the name of the Lord."[13]

Reverend Duncan was not the only one to focus on Christianity and the war. Some were not as cheered as Reverend Duncan by the purity of Southern Christians. Several laypersons wrote letters to the *RCA* expressing their concerns over the state of

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[11] James A. Duncan, "Relation of Christians to the Public Good," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 24 September 1863.
[12] James A. Duncan, "Pray! Your Country Demands it!," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 28 April 1864.
[13] "Another Call to Prayer," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 1 May 1862.

religion. Professor Tucker, author of one letter, shared that he felt religion was being neglected. He entreated people to continue taking the religious papers even if money is tight. Tucker explained that, "in ordinary times we might do without religious papers; but the times are extraordinary." His thoughts on patriotism also were different than that of Reverend Duncan's. Duncan linked patriotism and Christianity together in his writings and sermons. Tucker argued that "Christians should be prompted by a higher motive than patriotism." Tucker finally warned that the devil was worse than Abe Lincoln.[14] He probably had a difficult time convincing many Confederates that Lincoln and the devil were not equally evil, if not one in the same. Reverend Duncan would be the most difficult to convince as he vilified Lincoln at every available opportunity.

Other letters poured into the office of *RCA*. "Daughter of the South" encouraged all to "prostrate themselves before God and cry out as one man" all their sins against God so that God may help them. She also called upon the women of the county to pray for their defenders and to help them put their trust in God.[15]

Another letter by "True Witness," pushed a theory that pervaded the consciousness of most of the Methodist clergy: defeats were not necessarily punishment from God nor were victories necessarily a blessing. The author suggested that the Confederacy could not appreciate its independence unless they suffered trials, reverses, and defeats. All their trials are needed, he argued, to help develop the county's resources, deepen patriotism and lead the people to God. The author felt these struggles were God's way of purifying the nation and that they would be granted their independence when God

[14] "The Times vs. Religion," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 13 March 1862.
[15] "In God is our Hope," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 1 May 1862.

was ready for them to have it.[16] Those who felt as "True Witness" probably likened their experience to that of the Hebrews as they wandered through the desert. They had to be made humble and worthy of all that God promised to them.

Not everyone agreed with "True Witness's" assessment of victories and defeats. Reverend Duncan reprinted a column from the *Thomasville Times* that suggested God is responsible for all the victories in the war so far. The author thought God granted these triumphs because the people had prayed for them and that soldiers who had loved ones praying for them were shielded from harm.[17] Whether God was responsible for victories and defeats became a major topic of discussion especially during fast day sermons, a topic that will be addressed later in this study.

William Irby penned a letter to the *RCA* in which he contemplated the sins of the nation. He feared that many take a "superficial view of the cause of our nation's trouble." His impetus for this statement comes from the sermons, editorials, and conversations in which he had engaged. It was true the Confederacy had experienced a remarkable victory at Manassas and had been successful despite disadvantages. However, Irby believed that the blame for their suffering could not be wholly laid at the feet of the Yankees. God's hand was in it because the county must be purged and purified. This was similar to the sentiment expressed by "True Witness." Irby claimed they suffered for their sins and their suffering was God's retribution. He imagined that some prefer "sickness to the cure," meaning they prefer sin to righteousness because it is difficult to be righteous. However, it was necessary if they expected God to deliver them.

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[16] "God Designs our Good," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 29 May 1862

[17] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 29 May 1862.

Irby's cure for their ills was for people to attend church and prayer meetings and to fast weekly to make their prayers more effective.[18]

These letters present an overarching theme of sin in the nation that must be purged in order for the country to advance. J. E. J. of Howard's Grove 57th Virginia Volunteers summed it up best: "For God blesses nations and curses them through individuals."[19] Each and every individual needed to turn from sin or else the new nation would fail. The best way people could show they were repentant and willing to turn from their sin was to participate in fast day activities.

Fast Days

Independence on our own soil, or freedom in its dust, is the only choice left to us. – Leroy M. Lee [20]

Fast days or, days of fasting, prayer, and humiliation, as they were official known, represented an important part of the wartime effort for the Confederacy. All citizens were expected to participate so as to cleanse the new nation from sin and show God humility to win His favor. Fast days were not a new idea, but the Confederates embraced the concept and employed it often. Jefferson Davis sanctioned a total of nine official fast days during the war and other governing bodies and the church declared numerous others.[21] These days were intended as a time when the whole of the people could come

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[18] *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 23, October 1862.

[19] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 6 March 1862.

[20] Leroy M. Lee, *Our Country—Our Dangers—Our Duty, A Discourse Preached in Centenary Church, Lynchburg, VA., on the National Fast Day, August 21, 1863.* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers' Tract Association, M.E. Church, South, Chas. H. Wynne, Printer, 1863), 12.

[21] James W. Silver, *Confederate Moral and Church Propaganda* (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing Company, Inc., 1957), 64.

together for reflection, prayer, and to call out together in one voice to God for guidance and protection from their foes. As James Silver concluded, no agency had more influence over the individual than the church and fast days were a way to reach the largest number of people.[22]

By November of 1861, the Confederate government had already sanctioned two national fast days. On such days Jefferson Davis made public proclamations. The *RCA* usually reprinted these speeches. During the November 1861 fast day, Davis implored "the blessing of Almighty God upon our arms, that He may give us victory over our enemies, preserve our homes and altars from pollution and secure to us the restoration of peace and prosperity."[23]

Based on subsequent fast day declarations and sermons, it would seem that the Lord responded favorably to the words of Davis and other Confederates. During 1862, fast day sermons reflected what the Confederates believed was God's intervention into the war on their behalf. Davis's declaration of another fast day on September 18, 1862, mirrored this opinion. According to Davis this was a day to thank God for "the great mercies vouchsafed to our people, and more especially for the triumph of our arms at Richmond, in Kentucky, and Manassas in Virginia." He further implored the people pray to God to guide them "safely through the perils, which surround us to the final attainment of the blessings of peace and security."[24]

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[22] Silver, 64.

[23] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 7 November 1861.

[24] Excerpts from the September 18, 1862 fast day proclamation, come from a copy in the Peyton Family Collection (Mss1 P4686 b76), Virginia Historical Society. For the complete text, see Appendix, Document A2.

As was the practice, many sermons were preached that September day, but one in particular stood out. Reverend D. S. Doggett of the Virginia Conference of the M.E. Church, South preached one of the most famous sermons given on that fast day. His sermon, *A Nation's Ebenezer*, delivered in Richmond at the Broad Street Methodist Church, was so well received it was printed and distributed in pamphlet form.

Reverend Doggett began his sermon by retelling the story of Samuel and the Israelites gathering at Mizpeh purely for religious reasons. However, the Philistines mistook this for a political gathering and moved to destroy the Israelites. The people had no way to defend themselves, so they turned to Samuel and asked him to call on God. Samuel cried out to God and with His intervention the Israelites won the day. To commemorate this victory and God's help, they erected a simple stone monument, which Samuel called Ebenezer, the stone of help.[25]

Reverend Doggett used this particular story of Samuel and the battle to represent the Confederate States. The Israelites' faith in Samuel's relationship with God saved them from slaughter even in the face of overwhelming odds. Reverend Doggett believed that this same faith by the Confederates could and has moved God to help them during their trial. Reverend Doggett reasoned that God took sides in human conflict:

> Now, if our ideas of God are correct, he must not only feel an infinite concern in what so deeply agitates the human race, but he must interfere. He must also approve, he must take sides with the right, though many of the instrumentalities employed may not be acceptable to Him. . . . God has looked down from his throne upon us with paternal solicitude, and according to the rectitude of our cause, we are constrained to conclude that His almighty hand has wrought our

[25] D. S. Doggett, *A Nation's Ebenezer A Discourse delivered in the Broad Street Methodist Church, Richmond, Virginia Thursday, September 18, 1862* (Richmond, VA: Enquire Book and Job Press, 1862), 4-5.

> deliverance, and to exclaim with equal piety and truth, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."[26]

Reverend Doggett was convinced of the righteousness of the Confederate cause and believed that God has and would continue to intervene on their behalf because they were justified in this fight.

There are several examples Reverend Doggett used to support his conclusions about the Lord's involvement on their behalf. The first was the reliance of the people upon God during the struggle thus far. He claimed that there had never been "on so large a scale, such implicit a reliance upon Divine Providence; so general an invocation of the Divine blessing, as there was, from one end of this Confederacy to the other." Because of this reliance upon God, the victories they had won thus far were from God's hands, not their own.

Reverend Doggett explained that the intervention of God was apparent because so far the Confederates had been able to triumph over a superior force. The North was infinitely better equipped with manpower and industry to turn out the machines of war, whereas the Confederacy had little more than its conviction that they were in the right. It is obvious to Reverend Doggett that because of the reliance of the people on God as well as their worthy cause, God had blessed them with victories. It could only be through God that they had triumphed because they are fighting an enemy more powerful than they are.[27]

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[26] Doggett, *A Nation's Ebenezer*, 8.
[27] Doggett, *A Nation's Ebenezer*, 9.

Now that Reverend Doggett had assessed God's involvement, he reminded the people that God must "receive his share of the honor." He warned the people against forgetfulness: "The tendency of our natures is to forget God when the miracles of His Providence have merged into the tranquil current of habitual prosperity." They must never forget what the Lord has done, lest He withdraw his favor. In addition to remembering, the people must also praise God unceasingly, worship Him, and honor the Sabbath. They must guard against the pitfall of trusting to human agency rather than the Divine. Reverend Doggett assured that if the people would do all these things then God "will continue to help us until this great contest shall have ended."[28]

Nearly a year later, ministers were still convinced of the Confederacy's divine recognition. However, instead of speaking of the glorious victories that the Lord had granted, they must instead buoy the spirits of the people and explain the suffering they now endured. Much had happened in the past year including the Emancipation Proclamation, the death of Stonewall Jackson, the defeat at Gettysburg, and the fall of Vicksburg. After being so sure that God was with them and granting victory after victory, the people must have wondered why they were seemingly forsaken. Reverend I. R. Finley provided his own insight in a sermon entitled "The Lord Reigneth," delivered August 16, 1863, just before the appointed fast day of August 21.

Reverend Finley took a great deal of time explaining the "Divine Rule," and in essence declared: first, the Lord is the ruler of all and that this fact is revealed by scripture; second, humans are too limited to understand the plan of God and because God

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[28] Doggett, *A Nation's Ebenezer*, 12-14, 17.

is righteous, just, and infinitely knowledgeable. Humans should not fear the trial that must occur and simply trust in God.[29] Reverend Finley instructed the people to have proper faith in the doctrine of Christianity. He knew that "in adversity we are prone to look to human sources alone for comfort and for re-edification." However, he warned them that "vain is the help of man." Reverend Finley asserted they must not trust in their own agency, but God's. The people must have faith no matter how "trying the occasional or even frequent reverses and disappointments" may be.[30] Here Reverend Finley must have been referring to the defeats of the past few months and with his words he hoped to comfort the demoralized people and give them hope that God was still with them.

Reverend Finely continued to portray the Confederacy as an innocent victim of the Northern aggressors. He claimed they were just and holy, but that there must be some transgression in the souls of the people. Comparing them to the Israelites, Finley contended that they "cannot stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed things from among you." The Israelites had to remove their "Babalonish garments and ill-gotten money" before they could find favor with the Lord. Finley raised the question of how was the Confederacy to succeed if the Lord "hath a controversy with us?" Again, as many Methodist ministers had implored before, he pleaded with the people to "repent individually and nationally of our sins and transgression . . . . We gain nothing and imperil everything with our delay."[31]

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[29] I. R, Finley, *The Lord Reigneth: A Sermon Preached in Lloyd's Church, Sussex County, VA. Sunday, August 16, 1863* (Richmond,VA: Soldiers' Tract Association, M. E. Church, South, Chas. M. Wynne, Printer, 1863), 3-8.

[30] Finley, 10-11.

[31] Finley, 12-14.

Now that Reverend Finley had dispensed with the typical formula of the fast day sermon exhorting the people to turn from sin and trust in God, he offered another idea. He observed that throughout history when it seemed the world was headed for terrible things, God had lifted up an individual, family, or nation to take control and save all from ruin. Reverend Finley believed the time had come again when God would lift up a nation to save all. After running through a list of candidates including the North, Great Britain, and South America, all of whom he deemed unworthy, he concluded that the Confederacy must be this nation. Nowhere else, according to Reverend Finley, was there such a convergence of natural and industrial resources coupled with a people "intelligent, chivalrous and highly endowed with the capacity for self-government." Reverend Finley proclaimed that God was lifting them up to be a light unto the world, especially for "Ethiopia."[32]

It was here that Finley stated his belief that the people were called upon to minister to the slaves and eventually to the whole of Africa. He thought that part of the reason they had been drawn into war was so they could "contend for the privilege of obeying our God-given hest." He also explained that the war had brought about a better understanding between master and slave and had placed their relationship "upon a nobler and more stable basis by the mutual discoveries of truth and duty." In short, the Lord had brought about this war to raise up and discipline the Southern people for the task of being a light and Christianizing influence for the world, especially to the Africans.[33]

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[32] Finley, 17-18.
[33] Finley, 18-19.

This particular sermon demonstrated a change on two different points. First, this exemplified the change in Southern Methodist attitudes regarding the slavery. Back when the church split between North and South. Southern ministers felt that slavery was a moral evil. Now during the war years, they advocated it as a divinely-sanctioned institution, the proper order of humanity. Second, this sermon also showed a break in the way the ministers, at least in Virginia, talked about the war.

When they were winning, the sermons were based on those battles and how God had intervened on their side. When they begin to lose more than win, the ministers, such as Finley, dealt more in abstract concepts than in concrete reality. They told their congregations that they were being prepared for something more, or were suffering to be made worthy for their ultimate triumph.

Fast days were not just a function of the civilian life, but also an important part of camp life. Robert E. Lee released a general order about the August 21, 1863 fast day that covered many of the same themes as the Methodist ministers did. He may have borrowed some these themes directly from Reverend Duncan since Lee was reported to have attended his church on many occasions. Lee wrote that:

> We have sinned against Almighty God, we have forgotten his signal mercies and have cultivated a vengeful, haughty and boastful spirit . . . . We have relied too much on our own arms for achievement of our independence. God is our only refuge and our strength. Let us humble ourselves before him.

He took these days as seriously as the ministers, even going so far as to suspend "all military duties except such as are absolutely necessary."[34] Lee, like everyone else, was

[34] Copy of General Order Number 32, August 13, 1863, Petyon Papers, Virginia Historical Society (Mss 1 P4686c 1262).

still reeling from the disaster at Gettysburg. A fast day, when they could all humble themselves before God and ask forgiveness for their sins, could help cleanse them and get the country back on track.

These fast day rituals may have been useful in drawing together the population for a day, but maintaining that spirit proved much more difficult. Just as ministers were forever trying to keep their flock from backsliding into the fires of hell between Sundays, they had a difficult time keeping them from doing the same between fast days. In the article, "Maintain the Spirit of the Fast Day," Reverend Duncan found himself admonishing those who feast and drink the day after a fast. He felt this was not the way to commune with God whose favor they were trying so desperately to gain. Reverend Duncan urged those in authority to keep people in check, to keep the Sabbath, and to "let profanity be checked by general order, as Washington prohibited in the army."[35]

Instructions on how to conduct oneself on a fast day also appeared with regular frequency in the *RCA*. Reverend Duncan often reminded readers of upcoming fast days and prompted them with instructions such as that the day "be kept with special strictness and solemnity."[36] Reverend Duncan also tried to put a positive spin on recent loses by directing citizens to

> receive in humble thankfulness the lesson which He has taught in our recent reverses, devoutly acknowledging that to Him, and not to our own feeble arms, are due the honor and the glory of victory; that from Him in His paternal providence, come the anguish and sufferings of defeat, and that whether in victory or defeat, our humble supplications are due at his footstool.[37]

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[35] "Maintain the Spirit of the Fast Day," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 6 March 1862.
[36] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 19 March 1863.
[37] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 30 July 1863.

Other faithful Methodists also sent in their own ideas about the keeping of a fast day. A letter from J. E. E. attempted to educate fellow members on how to pray during a fast day. Each individual, in addition to humbling themself and repenting, needed also to pray for the Confederacy. They should pray for the generals and that God grant them wisdom in preparing for battle and pray for the success of the army at every point. This author believed that prayer needed to extend beyond the home and to all parts of the Confederacy. Only then could they be successful.[38]

Another letter from "Layman," expressed a similar sentiment. He was angry with those who forgot during public prayer to pray for the Confederacy and its defenders. He, like J. E. E., deemed it important to pray for the entire Confederacy and not merely themselves. "Layman's" letter also demonstrated that the average person felt as confident in the power of prayer as Duncan and other ministers of the Methodist Church. "Layman" wrote, "Our cause is just and righteous, and we can confidently appeal to God to give us the power to drive our enemies from our soil and disappoint them in their wicked purpose of subjugation and desolation."[39]

A Two Front War

During the war, the South was assailed by twin foes, one more obvious than the other. The Confederacy, of course, was in a desperate struggle with the North, but it also was at odds with some of its own citizens. The South faced great problems with extortionists, speculators, and croakers. Civilians and soldiers alike felt the pinch from

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[38] *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 26 March 1863.
[39] "The Duty of Praying for our Country," *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 1 May 1862.

exorbitant prices and scarcity of goods. Adding to their misery were the woeful comments and the dire predictions of the so-call "croakers." An article circulating during 1862 even classified these groups along with the United States government and its people as enemies of the Confederacy. The article labeled speculators and extortioners as "the pimps and operators in money who seek to depreciate the currency of the government."[40] Methodist ministers, rather than remaining silent on this issue, lashed out at those who made the war more difficult because of their greed and negative perspectives.

As early as 1861, an article in the *Richmond Christian Advocate* condemned the practice of extortioners. Jason Andrew of Emory & Henry College wrote an article which first appeared in the *Nashville Advocate*, speaking of the terrible price gouging that was taking place. He commented that he was "glad to see the secular press taking up the subject and hope that the religious press and the pulpit will lift up one earnest and continuous appeal against these nefarious doings till the Shylocks mend their ways or quit the country."[41] Ministers certainly railed against the acts of extortion, but as prices continued to soar it appears their tirades had little impact on this front other than to make the guilty parties squirm a little in the pew.

A fast day sermon given a few days after Finley's sermon discussed earlier in this study provides insight into how one minister chose to attack this issue. Reverend Leroy M. Lee delivered more of a bitter, political diatribe than a religious sermon. He focused less on the abstract concept of whether God was preparing the South for ultimate glory

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[40] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 10 July 1862. Article reprinted from the Memphis *Appeal*.

[41] "Extortioners Taking Advantage of the Necessities of War," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 14 November 1861.

and chose instead to focus on the enemy within. Reverend Lee laid out his displeasure in "Our County – Our Danger – Our Duty."[42] As to be expected, he was very angry with the North and the situation that had been thrust upon the South. He claimed the South was in no way responsible for the war and made no preparations for such when the decision was made to leave the Union. The South, according to Reverend Lee, was not engaged in war for territorial gain, conquest, or to infringe on the right of others, but simply wanted its independence.[43] He also advanced a state's rights argument, which would become a mainstay for post-war Southerners looking to justify their allegiance to the Confederacy. Reverend Lee maintained that the states created the government of the United States and delegated powers to it, reserving powers for themselves. He claimed that "in domestic matters it [the State] was sovereign, and independent of the United States," therefore, "any one of these States, or several of them acting in concert or all of them together, could at any time, according to their own will and pleasure, withdraw, and take back to themselves the powers they had delegated to the General Government."[44]

Reverend Lee contended that since the South did not start this war, it also could not stop it. His rationale was that only those who began the war could stop it and that "compromise would be treason against truth, county, and God. Peace, however desirable, is impossible without independence and is only to be acquired . . . from the bloody hand of war." The "unholy" aims of the North would make it inevitable that Providence would intervene on the Confederate's side. Reverend Lee proceeded to list Northern atrocities

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[43] Lee, 8.
[44] Lee, 5-6.

including the declaration of medical paraphernalia as contraband of war, the destruction of food stock, the stealing and inciting of slaves, and the North's calculation of the South's fighting population and resources with plans to exhaust both without a thought of how many of their own they kill in the process. Reverend Lee asserted these horrors would cause suffering for the noncombatant population, which basically amounted to genocide. With such evil staring them in the face, Reverend Lee concluded that only a "coward at heart, or a traitor in soul can wish for peace at any other price than war, fierce, bloody, protracted war."[45]

Thus far Reverend Lee's comments were not unexpected. He had framed his arguments and outrages against the North much as had other ministers. The most notable difference was his lack of religious context. He began his sermon with text from Nehemiah, but soon began to stray from religious commentary on current events. Usually when commenting on political or secular matters, ministers tried to do so from a religious standpoint. Reverend Lee did very little of this. He moved even further from conventional sermons when he added another twist to his discourse. He explained what he believed was the real danger confronting the South. The danger was not from the North. Reverend Lee insisted the North's resolve was weakening. This assumption was confirmed to him by the increasing ruthlessness against noncombatants and the employment of black soldiers, which he viewed as a sign of desperation. Reverend Lee surmised that the real danger was from within their ranks.[46]

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[45] Lee, 10-11.
[46] Lee, 13-14.

Reverend Lee was extremely concerned with the "accursed greed of gain which seems to have seized the entire producing and commercial population of the country." He referred to this as covetousness, which he translated in religious terms as idolatry that resulted in the worshiping of things rather than God. This was bad enough in normal times, but in times of war, this act caused "weakness and discontent" in civilians and the army and became "a political or civil crime and may be justly regarded as treason against the country."[47]

Reverend Lee cited examples of this "weakness." First men who at one time were great patriots had become blinded by greed and no longer flocked to the army as they did early in the war. This had led the government to turn to conscription. It had also led men to leave the army because their families were unable to care for themselves. Reverend Lee blamed this on the speculator and extortionists who hoarded everything from food, clothing, and munitions to create demand and then charged exorbitant prices for these items. Because of this horrendous greed, soldiers had suffered cold and hunger, but the privations of their families were more than the men could stand. All these problems were a cause of "embarrassment" to the Confederate government as it could not efficiently carry out a war with all these problems. It was unfair and unwise for the government to have to fight two wars at the same time, one against the Northern aggressors and one against those who sought personal gain at the expense of the Confederacy. Reverend Lee argued that this was not a war for the government, but rather a war for the people[48]

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[47] Lee, 14-15.
[48] Lee, 16-17.

Reverend Lee went on to chide those who had not put faith in the currency of the Confederacy and instead tried to depreciate its value: "Our currency is good enough for all patriotic and honest purposes: as good as gold as a means of defeating and destroying our foes: and better to us than gold, since it does not stimulate the thieving proclivities of our enemies as gold would do." He called it wickedness to do anything but support the monetary unit of the country and failure to uphold it could lead to their downfall.[49]

Of course the list of troublemakers would not be complete if it did not mention the press. Reverend Lee took aim at the press for "imperiling our rights and liberties." He conceded that differences in opinion exist and that during peacetime it was acceptable to express these differences. However, in times of war such dissent should not be tolerated. For better or worse, the government was the face of the people and "deserve our respect and confidence." According to Reverend Lee the war was already "a drain on the hopes and hearts of the people." Why exacerbate the their condition with attacks upon the government which do nothing more than to cause further despondency on the part of civilians. In Reverend Lee's words the press should be:

> A united and cheerful press, sustaining the government, strengthening the timid and feeble, encouraging the desponding, buoyant in its own vigorous spirit and immeasurable powers, throwing the blessed sunlight of its own valorous hope among the passing shadows of the war...hope for brighter and better times tomorrow, this is the wise policy of the press.[50]

He concluded his sermon by laying responsibility at the feet of the people.

> If we fail, it will not be from the lack of resources in our country; not from any defectiveness or inefficiency in our government; not from insufficiency or lack of

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[49] Lee, 18-19.
[50] Lee, 20-21.

> courage in our armies; nor from the want of intelligent and skillful generals to lead them to victory...our dangers are amongst ourselves.[51]

Reverend Lee believed if they lost the war it would be because of a "defective patriotism" stemming from people's selfishness and greed.[52] Covetousness, that wretched sin, would be their undoing unless they could master these impulses and have a true patriotism. In a rare mention of the deity, Reverend Lee asserted that "God has other ends in this war than to gratify the selfish lust for wealth." However, Lee, unlike other ministers, does not elaborate on what the "other ends" may be.[53]

Reverend Lee, when speaking of the demoralizing influence of the press, was not alluding to his fellow Methodist, Reverend James Duncan. Reverend Duncan used his position as editor of the *RCA* to deliver harsh criticism to those he felt were a destructive force in the county, whether because they spouted doom or profited from the misery of war. He also printed articles and letters from others who spoke out against such behavior.

In one of Reverend Duncan's more mild statements in March of 1863, he encouraged those who planted cash crops, such as cotton and tobacco, to abandon them for the time being and devote their land to food production. Reverend Duncan stated some men believed the war would be over soon and they hoped to benefit from the profit of these crops. Reverend Duncan supposed that the war might last longer than these people thought and food production was vastly more important in these times. It was

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[51] Lee, 21.
[52] Lee, 22.
[53] Lee, 22.

needed to sustain the troops as well as the civilians. He wanted those who planted cash crops to realize that there was more good in raising food than in lining their pockets.[54]

It is interesting to note that Reverend Duncan assumed the war would drag on despite his belief that God was with them and they would ultimately be victorious. He was not so entrenched in his beliefs that he could ignore the signs around him. Or perhaps Reverend Duncan was reflecting what he was hearing from the Confederate government. After all, Reverend Duncan resided in the capital city and was well connected with prominent members of Confederate society. About a week after Reverend Duncan's appeal appeared in the paper, the Confederate Senate called for action identical to Reverend Duncan's, resolving that the "President should issue a proclamation to dissuade the people of this country from further cultivation of cotton and tobacco and to enjoin upon them the production of grain by all means at their command."[55]

A few weeks after these two items appeared in the paper an event occurred which solidified some of the fears of both Reverend Duncan and the Confederate government. On April 2 1863, a group of women went before Governor John Letcher of Virginia to ask for food and aid. The women had decided this course of action the night before and also determined that they were willing to take what they needed if their request was not met. Food was scarce, prices out of control, and they needed help. The governor basically turned his back on them. Now forced to turn to drastic measures, the crowd swelled in number and quickly turned into a mob. There were likely more than 1,000

[54] "Raise Something to Eat," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 5 March 1863.
[55] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 12 March 1863.

participants in the riot, mostly women. Women, men, and children broke into stores and took food, and some stole items such as clothing and shoes. Accounts of the riot vary on whether it was President Jefferson Davis or Governor John Letcher who restored order. It is likely that both addressed the crowd at different times and the most credible accounts indicated it was Governor John Letcher who gave the crowd a five-minute warning to disperse or he would have the guard open fire.[56]

It would seem that both Reverend Duncan and the government knew this kind of riot could happen or why else would they call for greater food production? However, instead of showing sympathy for participants in the Richmond Bread Riot, civilians who under normal circumstances would never resort to crime, Reverend Duncan chose to scorn them in his newspaper. The members of the mob were of various backgrounds, but for the most part they were middle-class, law abiding women; however, Reverend Duncan identified the participants as "a few vagrant women and thieves who attempted to make the impression that they were needy people suffering for bread." He claimed they robbed only one or two stores not of bread, but of dry goods and fancy articles. He concluded by assuring that the poor of the city are amply provided for, and "nobody who deserves to live is in any danger of starving in Richmond."[57]

Reverend Duncan tried to minimize the implications of the riot to the outside world by making only a small mention of the riot and portraying its participants as the dregs of society. Rumors of the riot would surely reach other areas of the Confederacy

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[56] Michael B. Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines? A New Look at the Richmond Bread Riots" *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 92 (1984): 143-149.

[57] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 9 April 1863.

and even the North, potentially causing demoralization among the troops and civilians while confirming to the North that its tactics were working. Those who read his article might actually believe it was only a few criminals involved in the disturbance. At the same time his words also made it seem as if there was adequate supplies for the poor. The newspapers had been ordered by the military to make no mention of the riots in their publications, but the *RCA* and other publications such as the *Richmond Examiner* circumvented this demand.[58] Perhaps since Reverend Duncan was outspoken on behalf of the Confederate government and his article downplayed the seriousness of the riot, they simply overlooked his writing on the subject. John Moncure Daniel, editor of the *Examiner*, was not a proponent of Confederate administrations, but since he described the participants as "highway robbers . . . and a mob of idlers" he too helped to lessen the implications of the riot.[59]

Others ministers also noted the debilitating effects of speculators upon the morale of the troops. William Gaines Miller, a chaplain with the 46th Virginia Volunteers, stated that early in the war all were concerned with the welfare of the troops and prayed fervently. However, now "sympathy and patriotism have given away, in a great measure to speculation and extortion; and these crimes which have assumed alarming proportions, and become a national evil." His greatest sorrow was that men who previously were "leading spirits in the Church of Christ" are perpetrating these acts. He urged all of the faithful try to improve the homefront situation for sake of the soldiers' morale, as this

[58] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988) 618.
[59] Chesson, 137.

ungodliness at home has affected them greatly. He also made the obligatory request for continued support of the Soldiers' Tract Society.[60]

The soldiers in the field certainly noticed how some ruthless men took advantage of the current war. One felt it so acutely that he wrote a scathing letter to the *RCA* in which he noted he was saddened to see that so many who professed Christian beliefs had lapsed "into the indulgence of the most abominable sins and wickedness." He singled out a "certain class of men" who have "no regard to the results of this noble struggle for independence" so long as it does not interfere with their accumulation of wealth. He also scorned those who would snatch back the "bread of life" from mouths of widows and orphans "for the sake of a few dollars and cents." However, the soldier still had faith that those "thousands who have not yet bowed to the knee to Mamon, in whose bosoms burns the pure and holy fire of patriotism." It is in these persons and in the Almighty that the soldier believed they would find their way and win the war.[61]

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[60] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 25 December 1862.
[61] "The Hope of Our Country," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 11 October 1863.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WAR JUSTIFIED

Politically and ecclesiastically the line has been drawn between North and South. – James A. Duncan, *Address to Christians Throughout the World*[1]

Many times when a minister from this period made a disclaimer as to his province in a matter, he was usually about to weigh in on the subject. Such was the case with the *Address to Christians Throughout the World.* This address, written by Reverend Duncan in April 1863 and signed by ministers of various denominations, acted as the "Christian response" to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. The Confederacy had long hoped to garner recognition and support from England and France. Reverend Duncan, who routinely printed rumors of foreign recognition, cautioned at one point not to put faith in the foreign princes.[2] This was not only a reference to the belief of some that foreign recognition would save the Confederacy, but also a warning by Reverend Duncan not to place confidence in anyone but God.[3] However, this did not stop him and others from courting Christians around the world to drum up support and justify their cause.

The address did not focus on the causes of the war, but explained why the war would not succeed. These supporters of the South did not believe they could be impelled by violence to rejoin the Union. Subjugation of the Southern people would only be temporary and it would be necessary to revolt again. Reverend Duncan likened this to the American Revolution. All the Confederates wanted was to leave the Union in peace.

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[1] James A. Duncan, *Address to Christians Throughout the World*, April 1863, 3.

[2] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 13 November 1862.

[3] This is a direct reference to Psalm 118:9, "It is better to trust the Lord than to put confidence in princes." Interestingly, the next verse of the Psalm reads: "All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them." Perhaps Duncan was thinking this as he quoted verse nine in response to foreign recognition.

If the Union should then fall apart after their departure, that was none of their concern, "So Pharaoh fell but not by the hand of Israel."[4] Reverend Duncan also took a moment to applaud his home state's actions in joining the Confederacy after Lincoln's call for troops: "At once she took position with the Confederacy, preferring to battle in defense of liberty than in opposition to all her principles to invade, or suffer the invasion of the South."[5]

The real aim of the address was a defense of the Southern way of life and most specifically the institution of slavery. Reverend Duncan stated that "the recent proclamation of the President of the United States, seeking the emancipation of the slaves of the South, is in our judgment, a suitable occasion for solemn protest on the part of the people of God throughout the world." He believed that if the master were made to suffer then the slave would suffer even more. This action could culminate in the death of tens of thousands through insurrection and the subsequent call to put it down for public safety. Reverend Duncan attacked Lincoln, claiming he used emancipation as a pretext for war. He contended that abolitionists should be appalled by Lincoln's position for his exploitation of the slavery issue to fight a war. Reverend Duncan was sure that Lincoln would only free the slaves that fight for the North and no others. [6]

Reverend Duncan explained in the address that slavery was not incompatible with Christian beliefs and it was a blessing for the Africans who were brought to this country. He felt that Divine Providence was instrumental in bringing them to the new world where

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[4] *Address to Christians Throughout the World*, 2.
[5] *Address to Christians Throughout the World*, 3.
[6] *Address to Christians Throughout the World*, 4, 6.

they could find salvation. Reverend Duncan asserted that the South had done more than any people on earth for the christianization of the African race. He contended, unlike the depictions in Northern fiction, slaves were prosperous and happy. There were a few masters who would abuse slaves, but the majority deems such acts as deplorable. Reverend Duncan and the signers of this address truly believed that God sanctioned slavery and they were fulfilling God's will.[7]

This address highlighted a significant change in how members of the Methodist Episcopal Church viewed slavery and how they wished to be perceived by outsiders. In 1844 they believed slavery to be a moral evil that should eventually be ended. Now they proclaimed slavery was sanctioned by God. The address also portrayed Southerners as victims of harsh Northern aggression. By painting themselves as victims they hoped to gain the sympathy and support of the Christian counterparts in other nations. They added fuel to the fire by claiming that emancipation may cause slaves to revolt in the South, which would result in needless bloodshed. However, this stood in stark contrast to Reverend Duncan's assertion that slaves were happy in their position.

It is also important to note that Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and German Reformed ministers also signed this address. Although spearheaded by a Methodist minister, this address was a cross-denominational attempt to garner support from other Christians in the world. It also suggested that the belief slavery was an institution ordained by God was held by all the major denominations in the Confederacy. So the ministers were preaching to their members that slavery was not only the natural

[7] *Address to Christians Throughout the World*, 7-8.

order, but also the Divine order. This served to further establish the belief of white supremacy that would have far reaching implications after the war.

An argument similar to *Address to Christians Throughout the World* was offered about a month later. The Attorney General of Virginia, John Randolph Tucker, delivered a lecture before the Young Men's Christian Association entitled *The Southern Church Justified in its support of the South in the Present War.* Tucker, a Presbyterian, approached his argument somewhat differently from the Methodists, but his address was remarkably similar to Reverend Duncan's.

Like Reverend Duncan, Tucker believed they were fighting a war of "defense not of aggression." Tucker stated that where civil liberties cannot exist neither can religious liberties. He fully embraced the tenet of separation of church and state; however, the church could not stand by to watch the destruction of civil liberty. This was why, according to Tucker, in that situation the church had an obligation to involve itself in political and social matters:

> God has ordained the State Power, as the shield of His Church: and it is the right and the duty of the Church, entrusted with the interest of His religion, to sustain the State Power, when it is a shield against wrong – and to oppose it when it is a sword wielded for outrage and oppression.[8]

Reverend Duncan and Tucker were also of the similar opinion that slavery was supported by scripture and therefore part of the Divine order. Tucker blamed the fanatical abolitionist for the woes they were currently experiencing. He claimed the abolitionist stance against slavery was wrong and anti-Christian, since Peter and Paul

[8] John Randolph Tucker, *The Southern Church Justified in its Support of the South in the Present War: A Lecture, Delivered before the Young Men's Christian Association, of Richmond, on the 21st May, 1863* (Richmond, VA: W. H. Clemmitt), 1-9.

both speak of slavery and taught that slaves must obey their master, and also because Jesus did not speak against it. Tucker, like Reverend Duncan and most other Confederates, believed they were helping to save blacks from a life of barbarism. Tucker contended that the church could not be neutral in such times. If the Abolitionists had their way, four million slaves will be raised "ignorant and debased, into brutal insurrection against their masters … or stain Southern homes with murder, rapine and rape."[9]

Tucker called out to all Christians everywhere to pray for them. He believed they were doing good work in the South and were leading Christian lives. Tucker declared that God placed the African under their authority "to regulate him – to make him useful, instead of being unthrifty – industrious and not idle – Christians and not savage." Even though he felt the world was against them, God was with them and would see them through the crisis.[10]

Tucker echoed many of Reverend Duncan's ideas. Both men were on the defensive. Tucker was explaining why it was the prerogative of the church to be involved in the war and Reverend Duncan was trying to defend the church's participation thus far and both were attempting to rally Christians the world over to their cause. These two and many others assumed they were in the right, but it was obvious that they felt pressure from all sides regarding their positions. Otherwise they would not have found it necessary to lecture on these points. Ministers and members of the church had immersed themselves in the conflict, fully embracing the cause of the Confederacy and openly

[9] Tucker, 13, 23.
[10] Tucker, 34.

proclaiming that everything they held dear, including the right to own slaves, was sanctioned by God.

CONCLUSION

I invite your devout attention, on this solemn occasion: The moral and religious aspects of the present war, and the probable period of its termination. – Reverend D. S. Doggett

The hopes, fears, and beliefs of the Methodists are summed up in one sermon given by Reverend D. S. Doggett for the April 8, 1864 fast day observance. In "The War and Its Close," Reverend Doggett suggested that the end of the war was in sight. He was more right than he probably thought. He delivered this sermon almost a year to the day of Lee's surrender at Appomattox. However, where civilian support and faith flagged, Reverend Doggett and his counterparts did not believe God would forsake them. However, the outcome of the war would not be as they had expected.

Reverend Doggett's sermon reinforced all the commonly-held beliefs of his fellow Methodists and countrymen. First, he reiterated the fact that the Northern aggressors thrust the war upon them. However, since the South had no choice but to enter this conflict, it had turned it into a war of "truth, of justices, of principle." Reverend Doggett was certain that no other passion on the part of the Southerners was needed.[1]

Reverend Doggett continued on to cover the now well-worn argument regarding the divine nature of slavery. He blamed the fanaticism of the North for their mistaken conclusions regarding the condition of Africans in the South. He vehemently asserted the abolitionist position was contrary to the Bible and that the South was in tune to the will of God. Many Methodist ministers in Virginia had taken this position numerous times over

[1] Reverend D. S. Doggett, D. D., *The War and Its Close A Discourse, Delivered in Centenary Church, Richmond Virginia Friday, April 8, 1864* (Soldiers' Tract Association, M. E. Church, South: Richmond, VA, 1864), 7.

the course of the war as is evidenced in the sermons and other writings previously discussed.[2] Still, Reverend Doggett continued to drive this point home to assure his listeners that they were backed in this conflict by God and their enslavement of Africans was just.

Reverend Doggett continued to preach on the same subjects that had been expounded upon throughout the war. He chastised all those who still indulged in the shameful practices of swearing, avarice, and drunkenness. He communicated in one succinct phrase what thousands of pages of religious tracts tried to drive home: war was a serious affair and "a solemn cause requires a serious and an earnest people."[3] And like the bracing messages delivered after the tide turned against the Confederacy in 1863, Reverend Doggett assured the populace that God was with the Confederacy. From his moral and religious perspective the end of the war approached and the South would be victorious. He attributed this assertion to the surge in piety and morality in the army and because the North fought on passion not reason. The North could not possibly stand up over time in the face of a "serene and indomitable resolution."[4]

Though the resolve of the Methodist ministers in Virginia rarely wavered during the war, the resolve of their civilian charges did. Even while Reverend Doggett delivered this sermon and Reverend Duncan wrote numerous editorials about how united the Confederate people were, civilians began to turn bitter and resentful near the end. No amount of prayer or penitence would get the crops planted and put food on the table. As

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[2] Doggett, *The War and Its Close*, 8.
[3] Doggett, *The War and Its Close*, 9-11.
[4] Doggett, *The War and Its Close*, 17.

the war drew to a close ministers like Duncan and Doggett paid lip service to a dying cause. The end was coming, but they refused to acknowledge it.

The signs of the inevitable end were all around them. The *Richmond Christian Advocate* and the Soldiers' Tract Association had difficulty printing due to several factors. First, paper was becoming scarcer. Reverend Bennett ran numerous ads in the *RCA* asking women to donate clean cotton and linen rags so that they could make paper for printing religious tracts.[5] Throughout the war Reverend Duncan made continuing pleas to his subscribers to send in overdue payments. The price of a subscription kept rising as well, from $8 in 1864 to $20 in 1865. As battles raged near Richmond in May of 1864, Reverend Duncan was unable to print because the printers had been called to duty.[6] On top of all that, Reverend Duncan felt it necessary to print a story contradicting the statement that Methodism is in a "mournful condition."

> Methodism is in excellent health, is blessed with glorious and extensive revivals, is liberal and enterprising has organs, melodeons, pews, choirs, congregational singing, free seats, and is doing great and good work side by side with the other denominations of the states.[7]

The state of things was not as rosy as Reverend Duncan tried to portray it. War took its toll upon the church. Membership in the church declined throughout the war. By 1866, the total membership in the M.E. Church, South dropped from 754,421 to 508,676.[8] War also carried off much of the membership as many either enlisted or were forced from their homes and made refugees. Battles and Union occupation of various

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[5] *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 7 January 1864.
[6] *Richmond Christian Advocate,* 26 May 1864.
[7] Richmond Christian Advocate, 8 December 1864.
[8] James W. May, "The War Years," in *The History of American Methodism, Volume 2* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), 246.

areas also made it difficult to carry on normal church business. In January of 1865 the *RCA* printed a notice that the "desolation of the Shenandoah Valley have rendered it impracticable to hold the session of our Conference in New Market, VA." Instead the Baltimore Conference meeting would be held in Salem, VA.[9]

The issues of the *RCA* from early 1865 attested to the desperation felt by church members. Reverend Duncan still clung stubbornly to the belief that "the day of salvation will dawn if we as a people turn with all our heart unto the Lord."[10] Again in February he entreated the people to not give up even though Columbia, South Carolina had fallen and the enemy marched on to Richmond. He urged the people to put the cause in the hands of God and at the same time to "exhaust every human resource." Reverend Duncan related the implementation of a plan for the civilian population to pledge rations for one soldier for three to six months. He implored all his readers to participate believing this would alleviate the pressure of the enemy on supply lines.[11]

The most telling article, however, was Reverend Duncan's March 2, 1865 editorial, "We Appeal to the People." He beseeched his readers to "pray and talk in behalf of the interest of his country, but also to act out his profession by such deed of generous effort to feed the army and sustain the Government as will give strength and success to our cause." Reverend Duncan also relayed a message from the soldiers noting they told him to "go back and tell the people to stop their complaining, and quit desponding, and instead of writing to us gloomy and discouraging letters, pray for us and

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[9] "To the Preachers of the Baltimore Conference," *Richmond Christian Advocate* 19 January 1865.
[10] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 26 January 1865.
[11] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 23 February 1865.

send us words of good cheer."[12] It is quite obvious that despite Reverend Duncan and other ministers' assurance of their ultimate success, the people had given up hope.

While the Protestant denominations of the South had their theological differences the major denomination felt the war was justified, a fight for their family, home, and constitutional liberties. Chaplains in the field tried to refrain from drawing distinctions between denomination and doctrinal differences during the war.[13] Methodists of Virginia did work well in conjunction with ministers of other denominations. The Methodists had their own religious newspapers and developed their own tract society, but they did participate in multidenominational groups like the Confederate Bible Society and the Evangelical Tract Society. Ministers such as Reverend Duncan realized the importance in presenting a united front among the different religious entities of the Confederacy so that they could garner support for their cause, hence the reason for the variety of ministers who signed Reverend Duncan's *Address to Christians Throughout the World.* Generally, the various denominations in the South were in agreement with the Methodists and their views on the war and slavery.

In the end the ministers and the faithful of the Methodist Church and the other denominations were mistaken in their belief that God was with them. God did not intervene on their behalf to help them to triumph over the "Yankee aggressors." Instead they were defeated and left with an uncertain future. Even though the war was a failure, the church did experience some success despite all its limitations. The church managed to provide a spiritual network for the soldiers and boosted morale for both the soldier and

[12] "We Appeal to the People," *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 2 March 1865.
[13] Daniel, 21, 68.

the civilian for the better part of the war. As it was explained during a M. E. Church, South council meeting, the Soldiers' Tract Association turned the camp from a "school of vice" to a "school of virtue, of salvation." Many men in camp learned to read and write and became Christians.[14] Since the church measures its success in its ability to make disciples, it could take heart in knowing it brought many to God.

The Methodists of Virginia were able to organize and make do with limited supplies and manpower. The Soldiers' Tract Association, which began in Virginia, distributed millions of pages of religious tracts and the *Richmond Christian Advocate* supplied news and religious instruction to untold numbers throughout the Confederacy. Ministers such as Duncan, Doggett, and Granbery used their positions to advance not only their thoughts on God, but to inform people's opinions on the war. Misguided though their aims may have been, these men made an extraordinary effort, but learned a valuable lesson about trying to fit their agenda into a religious framework.

After many years apart, the Methodists of the North and South finally laid their differences aside and reunited, along with the Methodist Protestant Church, to form the Methodist Church in 1939. Then, in 1968, the Methodist Church and the United Brethren, merged to form what is currently known as the United Methodist Church. The church has evolved and moved past the days of supporting a hierarchy where persons of color were subjugated and now hopes to emulate its mantra "open hearts, open minds, open doors."

[14] *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 23 June 1864.

APPENDIX

Document A1

Section X of *Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1840

Quest. What shall be done for the extirpation of the evil of slavery?

Answ. 1. We declare that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery: therefore no slaveholder shall be eligible to any official station in our church hereafter, where the laws of the state in which he lives will admit of emancipation, and permit the liberated slave to enjoy freedom.

2. When any traveling preacher becomes an owner of a slave or slaves, by any means, he shall forfeit his ministerial character in our Church, unless he execute, if it be practicable, a legal emancipation of such slaves, conformably to the laws of the state in which he lives.

3. All our preachers shall prudently enforce upon our members the necessity of teaching their slaves to read the word of God; and to allow them time to attend upon the public worship of God on our regular days of divine service.

4. Our coloured preachers and official members shall have all the privilege which are usual to others in the district and quarterly conferences, where the usages of the country do not forbid it. And the presiding elder may hold for them a separate district conference, where the number of coloured local preachers will justify it.

5. The annual conference may employ coloured preachers to travel and preach where their services are judged necessary; provided that no one shall be so employed without having been recommended according to the form of discipline.

Document A2

Proclamation by the President

The following is the concluding portion of the proclamation of the President in view of the recent victories at Manassas in Virginia and Richmond in Kentucky.

I, Jefferson Davis President of the Confederate States do make this my proclamation, setting apart THURSDAY the 18th of September, as a day of prayer and thanksgiving to Almighty God, for the great mercies vouchsafed to our people and more especially for the triumph of our arms at Richmond, in Kentucky, and Manassas, in Virginia; and I do hereby invite the people of the Confederate states to meet on that day at their respective places of public worship, and to unite in rendering thanks and praise to GOD for these great mercies and to implore Him to conduct our country safely through the perils which surround us to the final attainment of the blessings of peace and security.

Given under my hand and the seal of the confederate States, at Richmond, this fourth day of September, A.D. 1862. By the President: Jefferson Davis

J.P. Benjamin, Secretary of State.

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