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Sunday Does Not Come in Camp

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VIRGINIA UNITED METHODIST
HERITAGE

A decorative flourish consisting of a single continuous line that loops and swirls, positioned below the word 'HERITAGE' and between two horizontal lines.

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of The United Methodist Church

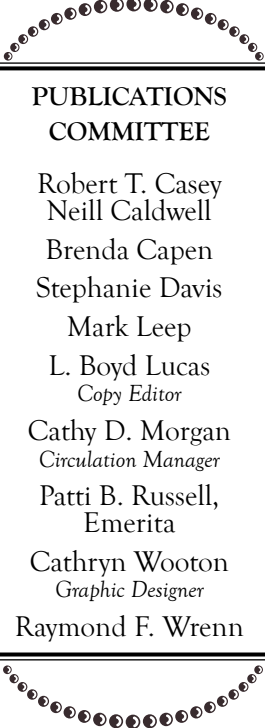
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of The United Methodist Church
Stephen S. Mansfield, president

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On the cover: "General Lee at the Soldiers' Prayer-meeting": from "Christ in the Camp or Religion in the Confederate Army", by Rev. J. William Jones, D.D.; Copyright 1887 by B.F. Johnson & Company; Copyright 1904 by The Martin & Hoyt Company, Atlanta, Georgia; page 51.



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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 were gambling, drinking, and swearing. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South 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 God's favor. Since most soldiers and civilians were confident of divine intervention on their side, it was only a matter of maintaining that favor.⁵

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 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.⁶

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?"⁷ Granbery

⁵ J. C. Granbery, *An Address to the Soldiers of the Southern Armies*, 7.

⁶ J. C. Granbery, *An Address to the Soldiers of the Southern Armies*, 8-9.

⁷ J. C. Granbery, *An Address to the Soldiers of the Southern Armies*, 8-9.



understood all too well how close they all were to danger and death. He was injured and taken prisoner while comforting a fallen soldier during the Seven Days battle in 1862.⁸

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 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.”⁹ Even for all their support of the war, church leaders 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.*¹⁰

⁸ William E. Dodd, “John Cowper Granbery,” in the John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College (Richmond, VA: Randolph Macon College, 1908), 192. According to an article in the 14 August 1862 RCA, Granbery had been released so his time as a prisoner was relatively short.

⁹ J. C. Granbery, *An Address to the Soldiers of the Southern Armies*, 10-12.

¹⁰ 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[?]).



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

The two addresses above follow the same format as many other sermons, tracts, and editorials followed 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 country. 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 lessons on the ills of drink and gambling. These men overcame temptation and by following Christian principles became successful.¹¹

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 lesson of this story was to lay aside the cards, lest they end up like Harry, regretting their broken vow.¹²

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.”¹³ Besides appearing in a circulated tract, this exact phrase appeared also in

¹¹ George W. Nolley, *Anecdotes for Soldiers Original and Selected* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers’ Tract Association, 186[?]).

¹² I. R. Finley, *The Broken Vow* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers Tract Association, 1863).

¹³ *Prepare for Battle!* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers’ Tract Association, 186- [?]).

at least two issues of the *Richmond Christian Advocate*, which proves how important this subject was to the clergy.¹⁴ 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. An article from 1863, reminding readers of the dangers of swearing, 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 that it was "contemptible."¹⁵

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:

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."¹⁶

Concerned citizens also made known their feelings on the temptations of camp life. *The Richmond Christian Advocate* reprinted from the *Hillsborough Recorder*, a North Carolina newspaper, the article "An Appeal to the Soldiers of the Confederate States," which noted, "yielding to intemperance, a foe insidious and contagious, by which it is more

¹⁴ See September 25, 1862 editorial by Reverend James Duncan and the December 11, 1862 issue of the *Richmond Christian Advocate*.

¹⁵ *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 22 January 1863.

¹⁶ *The Soldier's Guide* (Richmond, VA: Soldiers' nTract Association, 186[?]).

disgraceful to be conquered than by your Northern enemies.” The author urged the troops to treat liquor as a Yankee ally.¹⁷

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 became a weapon of the enemy. Wiatt was left to exclaim, “What a curse ardent spirits are to the world!”¹⁸

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 the army’s attitude toward 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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰

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

¹⁷ “An Appeal to the Soldiers of the Confederate States,” *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 13 March 1862.

¹⁸ Transcript of William E. Wiatt s Diary, Wednesday, October 1, 1862 December 1865, (n. p., n. d.), 25.

¹⁹ 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*.

²⁰ *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 14 August 1862.



various religious tracts and Bibles he distributed to the soldiers 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.²¹

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.²²

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 represent what many chaplains experienced and what most soldiers could expect if they were fortunate enough to belong to a regiment with adequate religious support.

The Methodist Church, as well as other denominations, had many obstacles to overcome in order to minister to the soldier. One way they measured their affect and success was through the soldiers' professions of faith. These 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.²³

²¹ Transcript of William E. Wiatt's Diary, Wednesday, October 1, 1862 December 1865, (n. p., n. d.).

²² Diary of Abner Crump Hopkins, Virginia Historical Society (Mss5:1 H7742:1).

²³ The following publications address the subject of revival in the Confederate Army: *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*



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.²⁴

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 inquiring what must they do to be saved.” Interestingly, it involved both civilians and soldiers coming together for a revival.²⁵

Two 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.²⁶ 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.”²⁷

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 a revival held for “servants”

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.

²⁴ *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 18 July 1861.

²⁵ *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 9 October 1862.

²⁶ *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 23 October 1862.

²⁷ *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 27 November 1862.



yielded 220 converts with 170 joining the Methodist Church.²⁸ The list noted information on eight more revivals occurring in the area among civilians and soldiers.²⁹

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?"³⁰ 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.³¹ 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, 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."³² In this briefest of moments Wiatt recognized that they may never have their heart's desire. Around the same time, Captain

²⁸ "Servants" in this context refers to enslaved persons.

²⁹ *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 24 September 1863.

³⁰ Reverend J. William Jones, D.D. *Christ in the Camp or Religion in the Confederate Army* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1986), 223.

³¹ Dodd, 192-193.

³² Transcript of William E. Wiatt s Diary, Wednesday, October 1, 1862 December 1865, (n. p., n. d.), 111.



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 & 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!*³³

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, many more were without this comfort. In 1864, Methodists continued to write 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.³⁴ The demand for religious services could not be met without more chaplains.

This seemed to be the story of the war's every 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. †

³³ A Spiritual Diary, Transcript of the diary of Captain Joseph Richard Manson, Virginia Historical Society (Mss 5:1 M3187).

³⁴ Letter from Reverend J. C. Granbery, *Richmond Christian Advocate*, 26 May 1864.



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