

**A VOICE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY:
THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL *LADIES' REPOSITORY*
IN THE CIVIL WAR**

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For the *Union*. For the *Christian Family*.

Together these phrases aptly describe the editorial mission of a little known national magazine published in Cincinnati, Ohio, during the Civil War. The monthly was entitled the Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*. But, contrary to what the magazine's title implied, the periodical was not aimed solely at Methodists or women. The magazine drew a large, loyal audience from a range of religious denominations across the north. Moreover, while the editors were always mindful that their *primary* audience was female, they sought a wide readership around the hearth. Children were always welcomed into the magazine with monthly offerings of games, puzzles, short stories and inspirational essays. Thus, the *Repository* was a magazine for the whole family.

Serving the entire Christian family with editorial fare appropriate to all ages and interests was difficult enough in peacetime. During the Civil War, it posed major challenges. As the editors saw it, the home front was integral to the success of the Union cause. Accordingly, the magazine had a responsibility to the Union and to the Christian family to provide editorial fare designed to keep spirits up at home, to instill the "proper" Christian inspiration even in the darkest hours of Union reverses and high casualties, to bring the family together in tasks to support the war effort, and to guide the Protestant home front to embrace the early freedom for slaves and a vigorous pursuit of the war. The Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository* was a voice for Christian family activism for the Union—with a touch of political radicalism in its truest 1861 sense.

By 1861, the *Repository* was a welcomed visitor in many Christian homes in the north. Founded in 1841 by the General Conference in the Methodist Episcopal Church, the magazine was designed to be an alternative to such sectarian fashion magazines as *Godey's Lady's Book*. The *Repository*, claimed the Conference, would be a book which would guide its gentle readers by morally uplifting readings and inspiring engravings. No fashion plate would ever broach the *Repository's* pages. As one early editor wrote,

One great object of this publication is to discourage an impure literature, by furnishing the American public, of which the female portion is every-where the star of hope, so far as purity and morality are concerned a belles-lettres monthly, which every family

can admit to its social circle with some prospect of good results and without any possibility of contamination.¹

To ensure that the “belles-lettres” were at a consistently high moral level, the General Conference elected editors who were ministers, trained in scripture but not necessarily journalism. But in spite of any shortcoming this might represent, the magazine did grow. Not only did the number of pages increase—from 32 to 64 on the eve of the Civil War, but the circulation rose as well. So quickly, in fact, that periodically the editor had to apologize for delays in delivery. The press run had not been large enough to meet the demand.² By 1852, the circulation reached 13,000,³ but that figure would soon increase dramatically when an editor with a new vision came on board. This clergy editor would refocus the periodical and redefine the intended audience.

In 1852, the Reverend Davis Wasgatt Clark, a sometime contributor to the *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, the *Northern Christian Advocate* and the *Christian Advocate Journal*, and a popular minister in the New York Conference, was elected editor. Soon *Repository* readers saw differences.

Clark saw the magazine reaching beyond its Methodist base to become a real alternative for Christian women and their families. His *Ladies' Repository* would be “Christian but not sectarian. Our aim is to furnish a pure and chaste literature, at all times impregnated with the spirit and principles of religion.” Clark promised that the magazine would not

present our [Methodist] special doctrinal views in an offensive, dogmatic, or controversial manner. We are entirely Methodistic in all our phases of religious faith, and these, of course, appear in what we write. Our patrons, outside of the Methodist Church, understand this. We sail under no false colors. But while we extend to them the broadest Catholicity of feeling, they in the same spirit, grant us the largest liberty.⁴

Clark's expanded vision of his readership was accompanied by changes within the magazine itself. Clark brought three innovations to the magazine which would have major ramifications during the Civil War. First, Clark started using fiction, short stories with uplifting moral lessons, a policy his successor would continue. Second, Clark sought experienced writers. Unlike previous editors who relied on essays written by ministers, Clark wanted a wider range of material. Clark located writers with established reputations, such as Virginia Townsend and Lydia Sigourney, and identified promising novices, such as Ohioans Alice and Phoebe Cary, to contribute *original* articles. The *Repository* no longer wanted to reprint articles that had appeared in other periodicals. Yet Clark ever encouraged

¹Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, December 1850, 411.

²Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, March 1850, 103.

³Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, January 1855, 63 and July 1864, 448. *The General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church from 1792 to 1896* (Cincinnati: Curts and Jennings, 1900), 123.

⁴Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, December, 1857, 764.

his readers to contribute—providing that they met the periodical's standards of "attractive, lively, chaste and instructive." Finally, Clark concentrated on improving the quality of the illustrations in the book, hiring J. Smilie and F. E. Jones, well-known engravers of the day, and others to provide original plates.⁵ Those innovations, Clark insisted, would produce a magazine which would be "a moving panorama of life and life pictures. . . ."⁶

Clark's editorial vision translated into dramatic increases in circulation. During the first three years of Clark's editorship, the circulation more than doubled to over 29,000.⁷ By the eve of the Civil War, that number reached almost 40,000, making it the second largest magazine published by the Methodists in the nation.⁸

That also meant that the *Repository* was the third largest women's magazine in the country. It lagged far behind *Godey's* and *Peterson's* in circulation, of course. But other commercially-based magazines such as *Arthur's Lady's Home Magazine*, *Frank Leslie's Lady's Magazine* and *Lady's Friend* all paled in comparison to the *Ladies' Repository* in circulation. Moreover, the *Methodist Repository* was the giant among religiously-based women's magazines. The Universalist monthly, also entitled the *Ladies' Repository*, never reached the popularity of its Methodist competition.⁹

Clark's performance as editor of the *Repository* so impressed the General Conference that he was elected bishop in 1864—receiving the largest number of votes of any of the ministers.¹⁰ At the same conference, the Rev. Dr. Isaac William Wiley, a minister/physician, was elected *Repository* editor and continued the editorial formula which had brought so much success under Clark.¹¹

Thus, on the eve of the Civil War, the Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository* was on strong footing. Clark had developed an editorial mixture that was very popular with a readership drawn from a wide range of Protestant denominations. Moreover, the magazine did not lose much of that readership during the war, while the other national women's

⁵Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, March 1855, 139–45; August 1855, 449; and November 1856, 704. Daniel Curry, *Life-Story of Rev. Davis Wasgatt Clark, D.D., Bishop of the Methodist-Episcopal Church* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1874), 134.

⁶Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, January 1854, 46.

⁷Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, May 1856, 320.

⁸Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, July 1864, 448.

⁹*Godey's* and *Peterson's* circulations exceeded 100,000 at the start of the Civil War. Frank Luther Mott, *A History of America's Magazines, 1850–1865* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), 102.

¹⁰Daniel Curry, *Life-Story of Rev. Davis Wasgatt Clark, D.D., Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1874), 84.

¹¹*Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol. 6 (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1888), 508.

magazines lost a large percentage of their subscribers.¹² The *Repository's* readership was already primarily in the north with the highest concentration in the midwest.¹³ The *Repository* had never had a substantial readership in the south, especially after Methodism split along sectional lines over slavery in 1844.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the *Repository* did lose a certain number of readers early in the war. As one agent reported to Clark, one father canceled his daughter's subscription —

Why he should do this, I am unable to say. I am aware that he belongs to a Class of most *bigoted* Episcopalians, but I am certainly astonished, that denominational prejudice, should make him so far forget the gentlemen.

The agent thought it more likely that the cancellation was the result of sectional bitterness. "I attribute almost every insult (and they have been many) offered me, to sectional prejudice, and that may be the reason why he refuses to accept the magazine though he condescended to give me no reason."¹⁵

But such a reaction from readers, or their fathers, was rare. The *Repository* lost only a few thousand readers early in the war and those numbers were largely made up by the end of the war.¹⁶

Part of the reason the magazine was able to recover so quickly was the participatory nature of its readership. *Repository* subscribers were not just readers, idle spectators. They were actively involved with the publication, a situation which became obvious during the Civil War. Readers helped guide Clark and, later, Wiley, in what should be included in the periodical, applauding favorite articles and submitting original material. A number of these submissions came from camp sites and from men. For example, Cyrus Ulick, assigned to Company F of the 17th Indiana Regiment, Pittsburgh Landing, TN, offered the magazine a poem, "My enemy and why I forgave him." Another reader at Camp Shiloh offered a mother's words to her son, ". . . it was written by a Mother to her Son which [sic] is now in the service of his Country."¹⁷ So extensive were such submissions that the editors could not respond individually to readers and often resorted to listing titles of accepted, and rejected, manuscripts in the

¹²Ellis P. Oberholtzer, *History of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs and Co., 1906), 231.

¹³Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, April 1864, 256.

¹⁴William Warren Sweet, *The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern Press, 1912), 40. James P. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern: Bondage, Freedom and Education of Black People* (New York: Vantage Press, 1974), 35.

¹⁵M. A. Babcock to Clark, Plymouth, Jan. 2, 1861, Clark Collection, Cincinnati Historical Society.

¹⁶The *Ladies' Repository* reported a variety of figures in the 35,000 to 39,400 range. See, Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, April 1864, 256 and December 1864, 758.

¹⁷Cyrus Ulick to Clark, May 8, 1862, Camp near Corinth and George L. Heanawatt to Clark, Camp Shiloh, April 18, 1862. Both in Clark Collection, Cincinnati Historical Society.

magazine.¹⁸ Thus, *Repository* readers helped mold the content of the magazine by submitting much editorial material—short stories and poetry—to the magazine.

The Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, given its audience and its editorial mission, approached the Civil War in a manner appropriate to the reading interests and concerns of its readership. The editors—first Clark and later Wiley—had to provide the correct “moral” guidance to their readers but, at the same time, assuring continued Union support for the war effort. But there was more to the editorial mission of the *Repository*. The *Repository* aimed to guide the *Protestant* home front to appropriate actions and opinions during the Civil War. At the same time, editors could not veer too greatly from their Methodist roots. The church offered much latitude. Clark and Wiley were operating in a religious environment which was conducive to their work. The church had already adopted an anti-slavery position and the largest portion of the membership had come to accept and support the war effort.¹⁹

From the start of the war, every department and every column aimed at adults or the children attempted to guide the reader to correct action, action to aid the Union cause. No department in the magazine was immune. In the early stages of the war, even the “Scripture Cabinet” emphasized the moral nature of the war.

In June 1861, the writer of the “Scripture Cabinet,” a department designed to interpret the Bible, emphasized the great sin of the south (slavery) and its influence on Christian men. A good “Christian” planter in Virginia whipped his slave for reading the Bible instead of working. After witnessing that whipping, the planter experienced a metamorphosis:

Struck with remorse, he [the planter] made an immediate change in his life, which had been careless and dissipated, burnt his profane books and cards, liberated all his slaves, and thenceforward studied to render his wealth and talents useful to others.²⁰

Similarly, the “New York Literary Correspondence,” a frequent column offering a selection of books worthy of reading around the fireside, emphasized that the war was a moral imperative. The reviewer could not keep his mind on current literature. “Who cares for literature while the shrill notes of the bugle are calling the frantic multitude of arms?” he asked. “Who would listen to the voice of the charmer, ‘charming never so wisely,’ while a mighty nation is convulsed to her deepest foundations with fratricidal warfare, and her very existence trembling in the balance, while as yet she is full of youthful vitality?” The war, this writer emphasized,

¹⁸See, for example, Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, September 1862, 576.

¹⁹William Warren Sweet, *The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1912), 45–46. Louis Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830–1860* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 122–24.

²⁰Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, June 1861, 369–70.

had to be fought, and fought with a full vengeance for the sake of the Union, a stance associated with the radical wing of the Republican Party. "Secession is less dangerous than *Concession* at this juncture; and the open violence of armed rebellion is less to be dreaded than secret complicity with rebellion in the high places of power."²¹

"Wayside Gleanings," snippets of news, poetry, instructional comment, and editorializing, seemed ideally suited for the goals of the *Repository* during the Civil War. In July, 1861, one writer of the "Gleanings" explained southern transgressions and false interpretations of presidential power:

STRICT INTERPRETATION—The traitors of the South smitten with a trembling of the knees in view of the tremendous military preparations of the Federal Government for self-defense, are making a wonderful outcry about the President's transcending his powers.

But the outcry would do little good. The same column included a poem for a soldier and a prayer for the country.²²

Thus, by June and July, 1861, the Civil War had infiltrated almost all the columns of the *Repository*. Each department echoed the moral imperative of the Civil War and the depravity of the south. The magazine's preoccupation with the war and Union policies continued until the peace was signed at Appomattox.

The fullest guidance for the Christian family readers came at the "Editor's Table," where Clark, and later Wiley, shared their insights with their readers.

This department was no typical editorial page. It was a special place where the two minister editors could spend some time with each reader, counseling the whole Christian family as to the proper action to be taken and the appropriate stance to assume. It was here that these two men redefined the war—explaining it in terms of moral issues, rather than political ones, issues that would be pertinent to their highly religious audience.

In this presentation of the war, the north and the Union cause were always wrapped in the robe of the Constitution and/or Christianity. The Constitution was always aligned with Christian patience, concern, and high moral values. War had been forced upon the north by an aggressive, power-grabbing south.

The mighty North, conscious of its strength and vast resources, and conscious also that these were increasing every day, scrupulously avoided every cause of irritation. In violation of the most sacred provisions of the Constitution, our fellow-citizens, without cause, were maltreated, mobbed, imprisoned and even hung and murdered in cold blood, and no official inquisition made upon the murderers by the authorities of the States where these outrages were committed. Still were we patient.²³

But continued southern aggression on northern rights forced Union action.

²¹Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, June 1861, 380, 382.

²²Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, July 1861, 439-40.

²³Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, June 1861, 384.

Such southern action should have been expected. Behind the southern rebellion were Godless men, men who lacked a Christian foundation, men who lacked a Christian heart — men who were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Even though the editor was attempting to appeal to a broad nondenominational audience, Clark hammered away at the link between southern Methodism and secessionism.

Southern Methodist papers, Conferences, and ministers have been foremost in fomenting the rebellion. We see it in their cooperation with the 'border ruffians,' who sought to overrun Kansas; we see it in their leadership of the mobs which have broken up our Conferences in Texas, pursued and killed our preachers in the highways of Missouri or Arkansas, and wasted and scattered our people in these States; we see it in the endorsement of the rebellion by their Conferences, in its unblushing advocacy by their press, and in the support given to it by the bishops and ministers of the Church South.²⁴

But in all this, Clark claimed, there might be a bright side. A Union victory would bring "true" Methodism back to the southern states. "We believe God is providentially opening the way for the reoccupation by the Church of the territory in the South wrested from her by fraud and violence." In a long account of the 1844 split in Methodism, Clark insisted that southern action was illegal and reflected the corruption that already existed in the region. Moreover, the split accelerated "the progress of demoralization" in the south. "Such is the Church South — so deeply imbued with the barbarism of the Cotton States, and so thoroughly debauched by her complicity in theory and in practice with the abomination of slavery, that very sap of life is drawn from it."²⁵

The *Repository* never acknowledged that the northern wing of Methodism had anything in common with the southern faction. To hear Clark tell it, the southern Methodists did not even share a common theological base. According to the *Repository* in 1864, the Methodists in the north had to create a Church Missionary Society. This missionary society would be "loyal to the Government and loyal to the ancient spirit of Methodism, to draw the distinct and sharp lines between loyalty and treason; between a loyalty which beats truly in every heart-throb and a *profession* of loyalty, whose thin crust serves only to cover emptiness, if not rottenness."²⁶

This is not to say, however, that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was solely responsible for this situation. According to Clark and Wiley, a moral corruption already existed in the south and that corruption infected the church. The corruption in the minds of these two editors was caused by the decadence of slavery. As early as November, 1861, Clark

²⁴Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, April 1862, 255.

²⁵Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, June 1862, 383.

²⁶Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, January 1864, 64.

was arguing for the emancipation of slaves. Either the government or slavery must die, "One or the other must perish. What shall it be?"²⁷

The corruption in southern society brought on by slavery could be seen during the war on a number of different levels. First, Christian missionary work in the south itself had been perverted. If slaves read the Bible, they stood the chance of being whipped. Second, the moral corruption also led to "unChristian" guerilla tactics. The south was willing to do anything to achieve a victory: "It will be preying upon its own vitals, and afford another illustration of the wisdom of the old heathen maxim that *whom the gods would destroy they first make mad.*"

In its various departments, news items, and short stories, the *Repository* chronicled a number of "fiendish barbarities" by rebels, "ruthless bandetti." But little else could be expected from the south or the southerners who had been pampered and pacified by the north, ever concerned with avoiding war. "The South had become a spoiled if not *ruined child.*"²⁸

Given the corruption that slavery had wrought upon the south, Clark would not abide a delay in the abolition of slavery. Emancipation had to come and come quickly. He warned, "Unless the nation retains enough of moral vitality to insure the doing away of the great crime [slavery], it will be destroyed."²⁹

Thus, Clark couched the early abolition of slavery, not as a radical political stance, but in a shroud of moral imperatives, terms designed to appeal specifically to an audience with strong religious ties. Thus, the early abolition of slavery, according to Clark, was a great moral imperative, whether it was radical or not. Clark recommended other radical political measures as well, but, in each case, these issues were redefined into moral terms. Thus, although women had no voting rights, they had a role to play. They were morally required to let their voices be heard politically.

For example, Clark never appreciated President Lincoln's less than vigorous pursuit of the war. He blamed slavery, the "crime" of the south, for the delay. The President delayed "*for the sake of preserving the institution of slavery.* If such a policy is persisted in, the country will be ruined."³⁰ Later that same year, Clark called Lincoln's policies "tenderfooted," led by "imbecile, corrupt, if not traitorous officers," who were squandering the blood of the nation's best young men. Clark's only bright point in 1862 was the Emancipation Proclamation, declared by the President more than a year after the editor had started urging the action. But still

²⁷Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, November 1861, 703-4.

²⁸Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, September 1863, 570; October 1861, 630; and August 1862, 493.

²⁹Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, October 1862, 640.

³⁰Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, March 1862, 190.

Clark was not satisfied. Emancipation would come to naught without swift military action. "Let corresponding action follow and the nation is safe."³¹

In Clark's scheme, women had special roles to play. The editor wanted his readers to be the leaders in their communities. In a long appeal to women in 1862, Clark emphasized that the women needed to check the political climate in their communities to determine if there were "covert traitors" in the area. "See if that *Shibboleth* of Southern sympathizers — '*the Union as it was*' — does not hiss from tongues," a comment, no doubt, aimed at the many peace Democrats in the midwest. Once identified, these men should not be accommodated. "Hunt them out. Make the place, the society, the neighborhood too hot for them."³²

Thus, Clark identified an active political role for women, but that role emanated from woman's moral duty to guide "proper" (as defined by the editors of the *Repository*) community sentiment.

Clark also saw a larger role for the Christian family to play during this war. Clark, and later Wiley, came up with an agenda for action which was designed to keep the entire family busy helping the Union cause.

This advice appeared throughout the magazine. From the "Scripture Cabinet" to "Wayside Gleanings" to "Literary, Scientific and Statistical Items," the *Repository* was eager to get the whole family involved. Poetry encouraged women and children to be strong and always look supportively to their husbands and fathers in the field.³³

Short stories provided patterns for bravery. One frontier wife might be threatened by southern guerilla troops but never did the woman urge her spouse to remain. Children were ever reminded to be strong — even in the face of troop movements.³⁴

But it was the practical advice which seemed to elicit the greatest reaction from the readers. As one reader wrote in the fall of 1862, "The very first thing I did after reading your appeal, was to inquire after the families of volunteers in our neighborhood. A large number of us have joined together to pay their rent as is necessary, and also supply them with victuals and clothing."³⁵

Another writing near the end of the war emphasized that the *Repository* activated her: "I never read a number of my dear *Repository* without feeling better for it — without feeling a stronger desire to do something or be

³¹Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, October 1862, 640 and November 1862, 703.

³²Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, August 1862, 494–5.

³³Luella Clark, "Our Volunteer," Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, July 1862, 434 and "Wayside Gleanings," Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, July 1861, 440.

³⁴Mrs. N. M'Conaughy, "The Frontier Wife," Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, June 1863, 362–6. Martha M. Thomas, "What a Boy Saw at Murfreesboro," Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, August 1863, 486–90.

³⁵Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, September 1862, 576.

something in the world — without feeling a renewed aspiration to live so that the world shall be better for my having lived in it.”³⁶

And what would these editors have their readers do? Women readers had responsibilities on two levels, said the *Repository* editors. As already described, women should guide the moral, “correct” political attitudes of the day, of course. But this was never to come at the sacrifice of women’s “traditional” tasks. Women were the foundation of the “home front.” As such, they had much to do within their traditional spheres.

The female readers of the magazine could follow the lead of the “Ladies of Wesleyan Female College” and help prepare for the soldiers, thereby cheering “the heart and nerve the arm of many a brave volunteer.”³⁷

Or, the *Repository* editor suggested, women might look after the families of volunteers which might lack for the necessities of life. Even a sweet song by a woman could make a difference to a seriously ill soldier.³⁸

And there was always the Sanitary Commission. Here, Wiley argued, was a women’s enterprise he could not wholly support. Certainly, it was a great cause, but it carried a taint of sinfulness — at least at the Western Fair in Cincinnati. The gambling and the dance “was a direct insult to the Christian community and Christian Churches . . . who had contributed so largely to the success of the enterprise.” But the gambling and dancing of the Western Fair aside, both editors agreed that the Sanitary Commission in its function, aim, and efficiency was an enterprise for which women could be proud.³⁹

Even in her shopping habits, woman could help assure a Union victory. In the final stages of the Civil War, Wiley urged women to carry out their everyday tasks wisely and frugally. That alone could aid the war effort, he wrote. Merchants who marked up prices should be boycotted. Women should be especially frugal at this juncture: “. . . let us save all we can, and then, to make our savings sure, let us loan them to our Government that it may be able to meet the enormous demands upon it without further issues of paper money and without fear of financial failure.”⁴⁰

In a final analysis of women’s role in the war effort, Wiley saw it as “one of the brightest in human history.” Women had softened “as far as possible the horrors of war by providing the thousands comforts for the soldier, the sick, the wounded, and the dying hero which the Government could not possibly provide . . . ,” Wiley concluded.⁴¹

³⁶Methodist Episcopal *Ladies’ Repository*, March 1865, 192.

³⁷Methodist Episcopal *Ladies’ Repository*, January 1862, 63.

³⁸Methodist Episcopal *Ladies’ Repository*, June 1865, 367–8; August 1863, 508, and September 1862, 576.

³⁹Methodist Episcopal *Ladies’ Repository*, June 1865 and February 1864, 367–8.

⁴⁰Methodist Episcopal *Ladies’ Repository*, October 1864, 640.

⁴¹Methodist Episcopal *Ladies’ Repository*, June 1865, 368.

Women, of course, were not the only ones to help the Union cause, according to *Repository* editors. Children might be small but their eager hands could be put to work. Clark emphasized that Sunday school classes were already putting together special projects for soldiers. "Soldier's Comforts," one was called. The girls in the class put together a little bag of needles, buttons, packets of ginger and tea as well as a letter and readings from scripture. The packages were sent through the Christian Commission to the troops. "We copied one of the letters for the benefit of our young readers. Can not every Sunday school and every loyal little girl help the soldiers in this way?"⁴²

The "Sideboard for Children" was the typical location for editorial fare for young readers. Offering games, puzzles, inspirational readings and essays, the department tried to appeal to a range of ages and both sexes. As the Sanitary Fairs gained popularity across the nation, young readers were especially urged to get involved. "Poor children go to the forest with teacher to collect moss and natural things to make things for fair — masterpiece a log house. When finally finished, it sold for \$16." And other young *Repository* readers could do likewise.⁴³

Beyond these practical activities, the *Repository* editors also guided their young readers via inspirational essays and prayers in the Sideboard. In this, the editors continued the same appeal made to adults, Christianity and the Union were inseparable. The Civil War was a moral crusade and children needed to pray for those in the field. "Lord, bless brother Newman; keep him from evil and don't let a ball hit him, forever and ever, Amen."⁴⁴

And there were lessons to be learned from the war. The war could be used as a theme to teach "proper" behavior. Mothers could train their sons to mind by emphasizing the military connection. As one mother told her young charges, ". . . the first duty of every soldier was to learn to *obey orders*. . . ." When the mother tried to get her "little soldiers" to do a chore, most ignored her, saying watching a baby was woman's work. Yet another boy remembered the first duty of every soldier and returned. "*Right about, face!*" said he, shouldering his fishpole and starting for home, "my company has received marching orders." The rest of his troop soon followed.⁴⁵

Thus, the *Repository* attempted to serve its Christian family audience during the Civil War. The magazine did not send correspondents or artists to the field to report battles as many other periodicals did. Nonetheless, the *Repository's* coverage of the war was no less important. The editors of the *Repository* were *redefining* the war into issues and terms that the

⁴²Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, September 1863, 576.

⁴³Mrs. Harriet E. Francis, "Working for the Fair," Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, July 1864, 441-2.

⁴⁴Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, May 1862, 314.

⁴⁵Methodist Episcopal *Ladies' Repository*, August 1861, 501.

magazine's highly religious audience would value. The editors did this in a number of different ways.

First, the editors offered fare which would appeal to each segment of their audience. For the women, Clark and Wiley offered original short stories, poetry, essays, scripture readings and editorials. But the minister editors realized that there were others around the hearth. For the children, the *Repository* offered a range of material designed to keep the children involved—from games and puzzles to inspirational essays, from suggested activities to prayers. Moreover, this content was tailored to appeal to its audience, the Christian woman and her family. The fashion plates and more sectarian editorial fare of *Godey's*, *Peterson's* and the other commercially-based magazines, might be fine for their readers; but the *Repository* subscribers were held to a different standard. This magazine's editorial fare had to instruct, to instill high moral values to its Protestant readers.

This is not to say that the *Repository* was the only publication which took such a tact. The Civil War period represented a time of strong religious sentiment across the nation. The immediate pre-Civil War period was marked by revivalism, where whole geographical areas were "energized" by religious activism, and by growth in established denominations.⁴⁶ That religious commitment often spilled over into editorial coverage and comment during the Civil War. That comment was most frequently found among the growing numbers of specialized publications of a reform or religious nature. Thus, the Methodist Episcopal *Repository* was following these trends. But, at the same time, it was peculiar in several important regards.

First, in its audience. The Methodist Episcopal *Repository* was aimed primarily at women and children. Few magazines aimed at women offered such an editorial approach. Only the Universalist *Ladies' Repository* and the didactic, reformed (and worldly) *Arthur's Home Magazine* aspired to a moral look at the war; but both paled when compared to the Methodist magazine's editorial fare.

Second, its editorial quality. The Methodist *Repository* was a top quality, nineteenth century woman's magazine. It was committed to quality writing and quality art. In these, neither *Arthur's* nor the Universalist magazine could offer a comparable package.

Third, its editorial content. The Methodist *Repository* editors searched for a balance—of domestic guidance, moral comment and political radicalism. Clark and Wiley redefined the Civil War in ways designed to appeal

⁴⁶Arthur C. Cole, "Two Separate Societies," in Hans Trefousse (ed.), *The Causes of the Civil War: Institutional Failure or Human Blunder?* (Huntington, N.Y.: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1977), 44-50; James I. Clark and Robert V. Remini, *We the People: A History of the United States* (Beverly Hills: Glencoe Press, 1975), 248-252; and Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 139-143.

to the interests, values and needs of their religious audience. They *refocused* the issues of the war. The radical political stances, of the early emancipation of slavery and the vigorous pursuit of the war were refocused and redefined from a moral perspective. These were not radical political measures. They were stances which would lead to the moral betterment of the nation. They would purify the nation of the great sin of slavery and lead to the destruction of the depravity in the south.

The radical political interpretation also explained many of the editorial stances that Clark and Wiley took during the Civil War. These editors painted the war itself in Christian terms. The north fought for right, for Christianity and for Constitution. The south fought for depravity, for corruption, and to destroy the Constitution. Thus, for fundamental Christian principles, the North had to win. For fundamental Christian principles, the whole *Repository* readership—women and children—had to get involved.

That type of editorial stance was a rarity in the women's magazine genre of the time. Few "ladies" magazines could afford to take such radical political stances, especially since women in that period were supposed to be "above" politics. A few women's magazines tried to offer a similar fare. *Arthur's*, edited by leading temperance reformer Timothy Shay Arthur, offered a reform/radical moral imperative as did the Universalist version of the *Repository*. But neither reached the readership nor offered the editorial quality of the Methodist Episcopal publication. In general, women's publications skirted the controversial political questions of the day. They attempted to shield their female readers. Thus, the editors of *Godey's*, *Peterson's*, *Leslie's* and *Lady's Friend* deplored the politics of the war and excluded much material from their magazines.

Politics aside, Clark and Wiley offered more in their periodical. They gave an agenda for action for the *Repository* readers. Short stories and poetry gave uplifting role models. Most departments gave editorial comment and practical suggests on how women and children could help the war effort. These activities ranged from putting together "soldier's comforts" to gathering moss for children, from helping with the Sanitary Fair to looking after the volunteer's family for the women. All these were in addition to the task of becoming involved politically so that the President would adopt morally correct policies such as freeing the slaves or vigorously pursuing the war.

This editorial fare seemed to meet with the approval of *Repository* readers. The small losses in circulation seem to confirm that most readers were not put off by what the editors had to say. Correspondence published in the magazine indicated that at least a few readers were following the editors' suggestions. Unpublished correspondence also suggested that the magazine played a special role in the writers' lives.

Thus, circulation figures as well as anecdotal evidence revealed in correspondence to the magazine suggests that the editorial formula of the

Repository during the war had fallen into receptive hands. The editors of this magazine used the broad nondenominational religious values of the readership to redefine the war and political issues of the period. In this moral crusade, every reader had to be involved, the entire Christian family.

Unfortunately, the magazine could not sustain its popularity in the post-war period. The *Ladies' Repository* fell on hard times. In 1876, the Methodist Episcopal General Conference voted to change the scope and character of the magazine. The *Ladies' Repository*, the voice of the Christian family during the Civil War, was silenced.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Mott, *History of Magazines*, 303.