

# SOUTHERN METHODIST NEWSPAPERS DURING THE CIVIL WAR

by Joseph Mitchell

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South was virtually destroyed by the Civil War. Its membership dropped by a third. Most of its schools closed. Many of its buildings were destroyed. Its treasury was virtually depleted.<sup>1</sup> One thing which enabled it to retain some kind of unity during this time of destruction and then to rise again from the ashes of calamity was its newspapers.

When the War began in April, 1861, ten weekly papers were being published under Southern Methodist auspices, nine in English and one in German.<sup>2</sup> The largest and most important of the papers was the *Nashville Christian Advocate*, with a circulation of about 12,000.<sup>3</sup> Close behind in importance and size was the *Southern Christian Advocate*, published in Charleston, South Carolina, with about 11,000 subscribers.<sup>4</sup> The Richmond, St. Louis and New Orleans papers each had about 7,000 subscribers and circulated primarily within Virginia, Missouri, and Louisiana, respectively.<sup>5</sup> The remaining five papers had even smaller circulations and served even more limited areas of the Church.<sup>6</sup> The combined circulation of the ten papers was in excess of 50,000. The membership of the M. E. Church, South was about 750,000 when the War began, so there was one paper for each fifteen church members.<sup>7</sup>

Eight of these papers suspended publication during the first year of fighting.<sup>8</sup> Only the *Southern Christian Advocate* and the *Rich-*

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<sup>1</sup> Charles T. Thrift, Jr., "Rebuilding the Southern Church," *History of American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon, 1964), II, 257-270.

<sup>2</sup> These newspapers and the abbreviations hereafter designating them are *Nashville Christian Advocate* (NCA), *Richmond Christian Advocate* (RCA), *Southern Christian Advocate* (SCA), *St. Louis Christian Advocate* (SLCA), *Memphis and Arkansas Christian Advocate* (MACA), *New Orleans Christian Advocate* (NOCA), *Texas Christian Advocate* (TCA), *Evangelische Apologete* (EA), *Pacific Methodist* (PM), and *North Carolina Christian Advocate* (NCCA).

<sup>3</sup> United States Census, 1860, Davidson County Tennessee, Schedule VI.

<sup>4</sup> The NCA for May 2, 1861 carried a report from the SCA about the latter paper's circulation. The SCA claimed 4,595 subscribers in the Georgia Conference, 3,482 in the South Carolina Conference, 1,112 in Florida, and 1,773 scattering.

<sup>5</sup> James Penn Pilkington, *The Methodist Publishing House* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), I, 386.

<sup>6</sup> United States Census, 1860, Shelby County, Tennessee, Schedule VI for circulation of 4,500 for MACA. Henry Smith Stroupe, *The Religious Press in the South Atlantic States, 1802-1865* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1956), 93, gives the circulation of the NCCA as 5,000 during the War years. I have been unable to find figures on the circulation of TCA, EA, and PM.

<sup>7</sup> James W. May, "The War Years," *History of American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon, 1964), II, 245-46.

<sup>8</sup> NCCA ceased publication in May, 1861, but resumed circulation later. NOCA, TCA, EA, and PM suspended publication in late 1861. The NCA published its last wartime issue in February, 1862 and the SLCA and MACA in April, 1862.

*mond Christian Advocate* survived that first year, but both of these papers proved to be as strong, in fact stronger, than the Confederacy itself.<sup>9</sup> The *North Carolina Christian Advocate* collapsed in May, 1861, but was reborn as the *Christian Advocate* (Raleigh), April 2, 1863, and continued to be published under a new name and editor until the end of the War.<sup>10</sup> Three months after Appomattox, two members of the Virginia Conference began an independent weekly, *The Episcopal Methodist*, so that Southern Methodists were without a newspaper for only three months during the War and the reconstruction period that followed the War.<sup>11</sup> In the following pages I will use these four papers, and the *Nashville Christian Advocate*, the "official organ" of the entire Southern Church,<sup>12</sup> to illustrate the part that church newspapers played in preserving the M. E. Church, South during the War and reviving the Church once the War had ended in defeat for the South.

The *Richmond Christian Advocate* traced its roots back to an independent Methodist paper, *The Christian Sentinel*, which had been founded in 1832 by Ethelbert Drake, a located member of the Virginia Conference.<sup>13</sup> Early in 1861, James A. Duncan, a graduate of Randolph-Macon College in 1849, became editor of the Richmond paper. He had spent the years after his graduation from college in the parish in the vicinity of Washington, D.C.<sup>14</sup> The *Nashville Christian Advocate* began its checkered career as the *Western Methodist* in 1833.<sup>15</sup> In 1858 the General Conference designated it the "official organ" of the Church and elected another graduate of Randolph-Macon College, Holland N. McTyeire, class of 1844, its editor. McTyeire had served briefly in the parish in Alabama and Louisiana and then in 1851 had become editor of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate*.<sup>16</sup> *The Southern Christian Advocate* was first published in 1837.<sup>17</sup> Chosen to be its editor in 1854 was E. H. Myers, a native of New York, who had graduated from

<sup>9</sup> The SCA continued through April 13, 1865 and the RCA through April 4, 1865. Both resumed publication later in 1865 and are still being published in 1972.

<sup>10</sup> The last wartime issue of the NCCA was published March 28, 1865.

<sup>11</sup> The first issue of *The Episcopal Methodist (EM)* appeared July 19, 1865.

<sup>12</sup> Pilkington, *op. cit.*, 385-86.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Mitchell, "The Richmond Christian Advocate: 1832-1840," *Methodist History*, October, 1963.

<sup>14</sup> Virginia Conference Minutes, 1876, and NCA, January 3, 1861.

<sup>15</sup> Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *John B. McFerrin, A Biography* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1889), 118-19. See also *Journal of General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840*, 114-15 and of 1844, 139, 158; and *Journal of General Conference of Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, 1846, 95; 1850, 211; and 1854, 361.

<sup>16</sup> Pilkington, *op. cit.*, 385-86. See also John James Tigert, *Bishop Holland Nimmons McTyeire, Ecclesiastical and Educational Architect* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1955).

<sup>17</sup> Mason Crum, *The Southern Christian Advocate: An Historical Sketch* (published by the author, 1945).

Randolph-Macon College in 1838 and then had been a circuit rider for four years before going to Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia as a teacher, and then later, as president.<sup>18</sup> The *North Carolina Christian Advocate* was the baby of the group, having been first published in 1856. Editor from 1856 to May, 1861 was Rufus T. Heflin, a native of North Carolina, who had spent a decade in the parish and on districts before assuming his editorial responsibilities.<sup>19</sup> When the North Carolina paper resumed publication in April, 1863, William T. Pell, who had previously served as its associate editor, was editor. Pell was born about 1810 and began preaching in 1833. After serving circuits and districts for about a decade, he located in 1844 but returned to the active ministry in the early 1850's, serving on circuits and as principal of a High School in Fayetteville.<sup>20</sup>

These editors knew and were known by all the leaders of Southern Methodism. Myers, McTyeire, and Duncan were three of the most respected clergymen in the Southern Church, as shown by their election to successive General Conferences and by the election of McTyeire, and near-election of Duncan, to the episcopacy.<sup>21</sup> With their degrees from Randolph-Macon College, they were among the best educated leaders of the Church. They were articulate spokesmen for, and to, Southern Methodists.

When the Civil War began in April, 1861, the four papers edited by these men were weeklies, folio, with four pages of from five to eight columns to a page.<sup>22</sup> The *Nashville Advocate*, because of a subsidy which it received from the General Conference, sold for \$1.50 a year while the other three were \$2.00 a year.<sup>23</sup>

The *Nashville Advocate* was forced to suspend publication before inflation and a paper shortage took their toll, but the other three papers suffered from both of these war-time problems. The first price increases came in April, 1863, when the *Southern Advocate* and the *Richmond Advocate* both went to \$3.00 a year and the re-established *North Carolina Advocate* announced that it would sell for \$3.00.<sup>24</sup> Six months later all three raised their price to \$5.00,<sup>25</sup>

<sup>18</sup> George G. Smith, Jr., *The History of Methodism in Georgia and Florida from 1785 to 1865* (Macon, Ga.: John W. Burke & Company, 1877), 143.

<sup>19</sup> Methodist Episcopal Church, South, *Annual Minutes*, 1868.

<sup>20</sup> See *Minutes of North Carolina Conference from 1838-1871*.

<sup>21</sup> McTyeire was a member of the General Conference in 1854, 1858, and 1866. He was elected bishop in 1866. Duncan was a delegate to General Conferences in 1866, 1870, 1874 and came within a few votes of election to the episcopacy in 1870. Myers went to the General Conference in 1858, 1866, 1870 and was a leading spokesman for change in 1866.

<sup>22</sup> The *NCA*, *NCCA*, and *RCA* had seven or eight columns to a page, while the *SCA* varied from five to seven columns.

<sup>23</sup> See any issue of the four papers for 1861.

<sup>24</sup> See any issue of the three papers for April, 1863.

<sup>25</sup> See *NCCA* for September 23, 1863; see *RCA* for October 1, 1863.

and then in early 1864 to \$8.00.<sup>26</sup> By the end of 1864, they had gone to \$20.00 a year and this was the price they were at the end of the War.<sup>27</sup>

Due to paper shortages, these papers varied in size and sometimes had to suspend publication until new supplies could be secured.<sup>28</sup> Both the *Southern Advocate* and the *Richmond Advocate* continued to be folio size during the War, but for many weeks they were two pages instead of four.<sup>29</sup> The *North Carolina Advocate* experimented briefly with a smaller size, but soon returned to the larger one.<sup>30</sup> The quality of the paper and printing varied a great deal, and at times issues were almost illegible.<sup>31</sup>

Had these papers circulated in larger areas, distribution would have presented far more problems than it did, but the uncertainty of the mails must have been a cause for almost constant anxiety.

Only the *Southern Christian Advocate* was forced to change its place of publication. It moved from the often-bombarded Charleston, South Carolina to the calmer Augusta, Georgia in April, 1862, and then, at the very end of the War, to Macon, Georgia.<sup>32</sup> The *Nashville Christian Advocate* was forced to suspend operations when Nashville fell into the hands of Federal forces in February, 1862. The *North Carolina Christian Advocate* remained in Raleigh and the *Richmond Christian Advocate* in Richmond.

The contribution of these papers to the life of the Southern Methodist Church and the Confederacy may be seen by an examination of their contents. In the first place, they were important sources of information about religious and secular affairs. Secondly, they supplied Southern Methodists with a platform for their cries against sin. Finally, they provided these Methodists with their own forum for expressing their allegiance to the Confederacy.

The information which these papers supplied their subscribers

<sup>26</sup> See SCA for January 21, 1864; NCCA for March 5, 1864; and RCA for February 25, 1864.

<sup>27</sup> See NCCA for December 16, 1864; RCA for January 12, 1865 and SCA for September 15, 1864.

<sup>28</sup> The RCA was suspended from the middle of September, 1861 until the last of October, 1861 because of a paper shortage. (See NCA, October 3, 1861) On April 16, 1863 the SCA reported that due to a paper shortage it would be compelled to issue a half sheet. On July 1, 1863 the NCCA published a single page and the editor said he was grateful to Brother Crowder for enough paper for this small edition.

<sup>29</sup> The SCA was only two pages from April, 1863 to the end of the year and then was only two pages for the early months of 1865. The RCA was only two pages from April, 1862 to the early months of 1863.

<sup>30</sup> The NCCA experimented with the smaller size for several months during 1863.

<sup>31</sup> Of course, the papers may have been quite legible when they were first printed a hundred years ago, but the paper and ink were of such poor quality that some issues are virtually illegible today.

<sup>32</sup> The first issue published in Augusta appeared April 10, 1862. The move to Macon was announced in the April 13, 1865 issue but it was June 29, 1865 before another issue of the paper appeared and it was printed in Macon.

varied from issue to issue but there were certain types of material which were almost always included. At the first of the War, they were filled with news about local churches, but the longer the War continued the less news of this type there was.<sup>33</sup> Each autumn news of the meetings of the annual conference was carried. Included in such accounts were lists of appointments, information as to whether or not one of the six bishops was present to preside, and copies of important resolutions that were adopted. When the General Conference that was scheduled for New Orleans in the spring of 1862 was cancelled, word of this action was passed by the editors.<sup>34</sup> The activities of the bishops were always news: where they were living, what traveling they were able to do, and when they had been able to meet to discuss the needs and opportunities of the Church.<sup>35</sup> Notices of school openings, graduations, and closings were carried.<sup>36</sup> At the beginning of the War, obituaries occupied part of the last page, but these had been virtually eliminated before the War ended. Of course, information about revivals among civilians and soldiers was always news.<sup>37</sup>

As the War continued, more and more space was devoted to news of a general nature. This shift reflected both the decreased church activity and the increased pace of the War. News of the various battles was carried, with maps of the battlegrounds sometimes included.<sup>38</sup> Like their secular counterparts, these church papers

<sup>33</sup> Compare any of the issues of any of these papers in 1861 with any issues of the same papers in 1865.

<sup>34</sup> The SCA for March 6, 1862 noted that the General Conference had been postponed and a week later carried a letter from Bishop James O. Andrew officially postponing the Conference.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, NCA, May 16, 1861; SCA, April 10, 1862, May 7, 1863, February 11, 1864, March 17, 1864, and May 19, 1864.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, NCCA, January 8, 1861 (Trinity Enrollment); NCA, May 9, 1861 (Schools Suffering); RCA, February 19, 1863 (Notices of Southern Female College, Farmville Female College, and of Union Academy which would be run by a man who had lost an arm in battle); RCA, March 12, 1863 (Note from B. Puryear, "I will conduct a school in my residence, at Randolph-Macon College, during the suspension of College exercises. Board, including everything except towels and lights, \$40 per month. Tuition, \$10 per month."); RCA, August 20, 1863 (a few schools for women still open); RCA, February 11, 1864 (announcements about various female institutions).

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, SCA, November 6, 1862; RCA, March 12, 1863; NCCA, April 9, 1863; RCA, April 16, 1863; RCA, April 30, 1863; NCCA, June 10, 1863; RCA, June 11, 1863; NCCA, June 17, 1863; RCA, July 30, 1863; NCCA, August 19, 1863; NCCA, September 9, 1863; RCA, Dec. 24, 1863; NCCA, March 5, 1864.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, NCA, April 18, 1861 (Surrender of Sumter); NCA, August 1, 1861 (Battle of Manassas); NCA, August 15, 1861 (large map of the war in Virginia); NCA, February 13, 1862 (letter from Nashville, indicating they are expecting an attack); SCA, March 27, 1862 (scenes of Yankee March); RCA, April 24, 1862 (Nashville occupied); SCA, May 1, 1862 (New Orleans in hands of enemy); SCA, July 10, 1862 (The Great Battle of Richmond); SCA, July 24, 1862 (The Yankees in East Florida); NCCA, September 2, 1863 (Defense of North Carolina); RCA, October 1, 1863 (War Path in West Virginia); NCCA, May 20, 1863 (The Lamented Jackson); NCCA, May 7, 1864 (The impending struggle—battles in Virginia); SCA, March 17,

tended to soft-pedal defeats and play up victories.<sup>39</sup> News from Richmond and the state capitals was not as prominent as might be expected, but none of the papers had reporters to cover what was happening in these centers of power. They had to be content with carrying the texts of various government proclamations and leave the details of political struggles to the secular press.<sup>40</sup> During the last two years of the War, when things were going increasingly badly for the South, the editors sought to present things in the best possible light and used setbacks as opportunities to remind their readers that their destiny was in God's hands.<sup>41</sup>

But these papers were not simply sources of information about the church and the world. They were pulpits from which Southern Methodists could condemn sin and the Methodist Episcopal Church. What were the sins they condemned? What charges did they level against their Methodist brethren in the North?

Two sins which these Southern Methodist papers did not condemn were war and slavery. For years the Southern Church had taken the position that slavery was a civil institution about which the Church had no right to speak, except to defend it on biblical grounds, and there was certainly no change from this position during the War. As for the sin of war, probably few Southern Methodists had ever raised the question as to whether it was Christian to fight. Certainly when their very lives and fortunes were being threatened by a rapacious enemy, they were not going to debate the matter.

What sins then did they attack? Well, there was desecration of the Sabbath, "one of the most prevalent sins of the South in peace or war. . . ." <sup>42</sup> There was the theater, which was in "full blast, as well as every other iniquity" in Richmond, "that modern Sodom." <sup>43</sup> There was dancing, which the editor of the *North Carolina Advocate* felt satisfied "as practiced universally is a sin." He continued,

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1864 (hopeful about military situation); *SCA*, August 11, 1864 (Report on prisoners at Andersonville); *NCCA*, January 24, 1865 (Historical events in the War in the Campaign of 1864).

<sup>39</sup> *RCA*, April 30, 1863; *RCA*, August 20, 1863; *NCCA*, May 7, 1864; *SCA*, September 8, 1864.

<sup>40</sup> For example, see *RCA*, July 30, 1863 (Proclamation of the President of the Confederate States); *NCCA*, September 16, 1863 (Proclamation of Governor of North Carolina with regard to conscription and payment of taxes); and *NCCA*, December 9, 1863 (Governor's Proclamation of day of fasting and prayer).

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, *SCA*, January 26, 1864 (Doctrine of Providence); *NCCA*, January 10, 1865 (Word of Encouragement); *RCA*, January 12, 1865 (Only Faith can Win War); *NCCA*, January 17, 1865 (Can be Victorious Only Under God); *NCCA*, February 14, 1864 (Present Suffering Contrasted with Future Glory); and *RCA*, February 23, 1865 (Never Give up the Ship).

<sup>42</sup> *NCCA*, June 3, 1863.

<sup>43</sup> *RCA*, May 13, 1863.

A nation baptized with the blood of her noblest sons—a young nation heaving under the gigantic throes of a mighty revolution, passing through a furnace of tribulation and blood; and yet, horrible to relate, some of her daughters and sons, frittering away their lives amid the disgusting scenes of a ball-room, making a mad carnival of mirth and drunkenness amid the groanings of wounded neighbors, the lamentations of bereaved and desolate hearts, the piteous cries of orphan children, the agonizing sighs of widows, and the groans of dying brethren.<sup>44</sup>

Earlier, the *Richmond Advocate* rebuked Mrs. Lincoln for giving a ball while the country was at War,<sup>45</sup> and in February, 1863, the same editor called dancing and play “unseasonable amusements,” saying “we surely thought that the bloody garments of Virginia were hardly fit for dancing robes. We supposed that a decent respect for the noble men who have died for us would suppress such unseasonable merry making.”<sup>46</sup>

Drinking, or at least drunkenness, was a matter of great concern. The *Southern Advocate*, in early 1862, wrote about drunken soldiers “disgracing the Army,”<sup>47</sup> and later about “Drunken Army Officers.”<sup>48</sup> At one point, one of the editors suggested that one reason for high food prices was the use of grains in whiskey instead of for food.<sup>49</sup> In late 1863, the editor of the *Richmond Advocate* admonished soldiers to read the Bible, to refrain from playing cards and not to “indulge in drinking strong drink, unless honestly believing it indispensable to health.”<sup>50</sup> The same editor summarized those things which he opposed in an article entitled “A Worldly Spirit.”

To play the part of fast young men and fast young ladies; to drive gay horses at full speed, killing dumb beasts for pleasure; to spend their surplus money in tickets to the theatres and in extravagant ornaments to bedeck their persons, while the poor starve, and the defenders of the land lack for the precious Word of Life; to walk worthy of fashion and court the transient applause of boon companions—this is the world.<sup>51</sup>

Of course, these were the sins which Methodist ministers had spoken against for years and were not peculiar to war time. Occasionally, however, the editors showed their awareness of sins

<sup>44</sup> NCCA, October 28, 1863.

<sup>45</sup> RCA, April 24, 1862.

<sup>46</sup> RCA, February 19, 1863.

<sup>47</sup> SCA, February 20, 1862.

<sup>48</sup> SCA, July 24, 1862.

<sup>49</sup> SCA, February 20, 1862.

<sup>50</sup> RCA, October 1, 1863.

<sup>51</sup> RCA, October 1, 1863.

which were peculiar to the times. In early September, 1863, the *North Carolina Advocate* editor commented on the "sin of desertion" which, to his shame, existed even among North Carolina troops. He suggested that religion was the cure.<sup>52</sup> The same paper published the editor's conviction that the "worst enemies of the South, are those who are guilty of hoarding up and extorting upon the necessaries of life. They seem determined to bring the country to the brink of ruin for the sake of making money."<sup>53</sup> The *Richmond Advocate* had the "final name" for such people in an editorial entitled "Liability of Men to Selfishness in Times of Public Dangers." "Yankee" could best describe "speculators, depreciators of currency, extortioners in trade." The editor continued,

To be selfish at any time is a meanness, but to be selfish while men are giving up home, comfort, and life itself for the common good, is a crime against the country as well as a shame upon those who indulge in it.<sup>54</sup>

These church editors, as far as I have been able to determine, never said anything about the sexual practices that have historically been a part of war. Their failure to write about these matters—prostitution, venereal disease, rape, illegitimate children—was not due to their unawareness of them, but rather because they believed such subjects were not proper topics for their family-centered papers.

Not as numerous as the attacks upon personal sins but no less vigorous when they did appear were the attacks which these editors made against the Methodist Episcopal Church. In late 1861 the *Nashville Advocate* carried an article by Bishop James O. Andrew in which he not only defended the South and the Southern Church's support of the southern cause, but asserted that the "Northern Methodist" papers and some "Northern Methodist" preachers, especially Charles Elliott, editor of the *Western Christian Advocate*, had outdone themselves in fanaticism.<sup>55</sup> The editor of the *North Carolina Advocate*, in May, 1863, wrote, "May God ever preserve the Southern Church, not only from all connection or contact with it, but also from the baleful influences which have maddened and destroyed genuine Methodism in the North."<sup>56</sup> In March, 1864, the *Southern Advocate* carried an article on "The Methodist Church, North and the War." Among other things, the editor wrote,

<sup>52</sup> NCCA, September 9, 1863.

<sup>53</sup> NCCA, September 23, 1863.

<sup>54</sup> RCA, April 16, 1863.

<sup>55</sup> NCA, September 19, 1861.

<sup>56</sup> NCCA, May 6, 1863.

There is nothing in this whole wretched war, more astonishing or more to be deplored, than the course pursued by the professing Christians of the North. The Churches have been converted into places of political and especially military exhibitions, where on the Sabbath crowds attend, not to worship the God of peace and purity, but to listen to excited fanatical harangues in favor of war and rapine; and ministers of God, who at God's altar have solemnly taken upon themselves a sacred vow, to promote peace and love among all Christian people, stand in God's sacred pulpit, and denounce us as rebels, because we claim the right to choose our own government and rulers—the very right which our Revolutionary Fathers secured with their blood and treasure.<sup>57</sup>

Six months later, Duncan, who had just received a copy of *Zion's Herald*, an independent, liberal Methodist paper published in Boston, which told of the meeting of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in May, 1864, wrote that

time would fail to tell of all the patriotic fanaticism which those reverend divines mixed up with General Conference business; how they preached it, prayed it, sung it, and spake about it, and how they pleased their souls unto edification with congratulating themselves on their loyalty to Abraham Lincoln, and poured out vials of wrathful prophecy against the "rebels."

He then commented about the "miscegenation resolution" which called for the sending of delegates to the African General Conference which was in session in the same place and requesting the latter body to send delegates to take seats in the white General Conference. He concluded, "It will take either a terrible and bloody revolution among themselves or the workings of fifty years to bring such mad men to their senses on the subject of slavery."<sup>58</sup>

Three months before the War ended, Duncan, having seen a copy of the *New York Christian Advocate*, the most important paper published by the Methodist Episcopal Church, wrote,

We think, after reading the paper, that there are no signs of sanity yet on the subject of slavery; a good deal of strain in the effort to glorify Yankee military achievements; a total misconception still of the moral and political spirit of the Confederacy; a very large portion of insolent and absurd talk about the "rebels." This is to us exceedingly laughable—a Yankee calling us rebels against himself. It is as if an ass should claim the right to get on his master's back. They—who had to import foreigners and impress negroes to help them against a com-

<sup>57</sup> SCA, March 3, 1864.

<sup>58</sup> RCA, September 8, 1864.

parative handful of Southerners, and then after four years of war stand held as by bit and bridle—talk about “rebels.”<sup>59</sup>

One action of the Methodist Episcopal Church led to widespread dissatisfaction among Southern Methodists. In November, 1863, the Secretary of War issued an order to the generals commanding the Departments of Missouri, the Tennessee, and the Gulf to place at the disposal of Bishop E. R. Ames of the Methodist Episcopal Church “all houses of worship belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in which a loyal minister, who has been appointed by a loyal Bishop of said Church does not officiate.”<sup>60</sup> Before the end of the year similar orders went to the Department of the South in behalf of Bishop Janes and to authorities in Kentucky and Tennessee in behalf of Bishop Matthew Simpson. While these orders were later amended and never enforced to the full letter, their enforcement was the cause of hard feelings, and was called by the editor of the *North Carolina Advocate* “Northern Sacrilege.”<sup>61</sup>

At the same time that these Southern Methodist editors were attacking the “Northern Methodists” for their support of the War and for their patriotic fanaticism, they were urging the Southern Methodists to support the Confederacy and were virtually equating the Southern cause and Christianity. Only two months after the War began, the editor of the *Richmond Advocate* did both of these things in an article entitled “Preachers and War.” Duncan wrote that preachers are gone to war

not because of a desire to kill but because they feel a necessity is laid on them, in the providence of God, to uphold a cause that is interwoven with the progress of Christianity and the salvation of men, and they enter the lists not so much from a purpose to injure the invader as to identify themselves with those who suffer for right and virtue, and, if need be, to be offered up as witnesses for the truth.<sup>62</sup>

In this single article, Duncan managed to equate the Southern cause and the cause of Christianity, to describe the people from the North as “invaders” and to affirm that Southern ministers were prepared for “martyrdom.”

Throughout the War these editors urged their fellow ministers to enter the military chaplaincy, suggesting that this was a place where they might render important service.<sup>63</sup> Virtually the only

<sup>59</sup> RCA, January 12, 1865.

<sup>60</sup> James W. May, *op. cit.*, II, 249.

<sup>61</sup> NCCA, March 19, 1864.

<sup>62</sup> RCA, June 13, 1861.

<sup>63</sup> RCA, June 11, 1863, for one such example.

criticism I have found of the chaplaincy was one editor's comment that a few chaplains were spending too much time with officers and not enough with enlisted men.<sup>64</sup> Towards the end of the War, two issues with regard to ministers and the War resulted in editorial criticism of proposed governmental actions. In September, 1863, the editor of the *North Carolina Advocate* spoke to the issue of who should accredit chaplains.

The State in this Protestant and Christian country, has acted wisely in our judgment, in not arrogating to itself the prerogative to say what shall constitute the qualifications of those who take upon themselves the ministerial office. We hope that day will never come when the State will thus dishonor God and be guilty of so great wickedness. It properly leaves the designation of God's ministers to God himself, and to the several churches to ratify or send them forth, to which they may belong; and neither assumes for itself nor allows any one Church, of the many it recognizes, to assume the right to say who shall be God's ministers or who shall not.<sup>65</sup>

In August, 1864, the same editor asked the question, "Should Ministers be liable to Military Duty?" and answered with a resounding, "No."

The disposition, therefore, on the part of individuals, to force ministers of the Gospel into the War is infidel in its character, and opposed to the authority of God. Moreover, it is in close imitation of the godless, fanatical and devilish authority which sways the Lincoln administration in the Northern States.<sup>66</sup>

In January, 1865, Pell sounded the same note again, with greater emphasis upon this as a sin present in the North.

In all Christian countries the clergy have been exempted from military service. Nowhere except in Lincolndom, have ministers been declared liable to military service. We regret there are found in the Confederate Congress imitators of the semi-infidelity of Lincolndom.<sup>67</sup>

These Southern editors believed that the Church should supply not only chaplains for the military; they believed that men in the service should be given religious literature, especially the Bible and the *Advocates*. All the editors noted that they were sending large numbers of their own papers to soldiers and urged their readers to buy subscriptions for soldiers. In August, 1863, the Southern Methodist Church issued the first copy of a semi-monthly paper written

<sup>64</sup> SCA, May 15, 1862.

<sup>65</sup> NCCA, September 30, 1863.

<sup>66</sup> NCCA, August 12, 1864.

<sup>67</sup> NCCA, January 10, 1865.

especially for soldiers. Called simply the *Soldier's Paper*, it contained stories, essays, editorials, letters, secular and religious news, obituaries, and poetry. This paper continued to be distributed free of charge to soldiers until April, 1865, and the *Advocates* regularly promoted its distribution.<sup>68</sup>

On one occasion, the *Richmond Advocate* carried a story about how a soldier had been saved by the Bible in his pocket.

After a battle, a soldier found that a musket ball had lodged in his Bible, which was in a side pocket, upon such a part of his body, that, but for the Bible, it must have killed him. . . . The circumstances led to his conversion. The bullet of an enemy had been made to point him to God, and his soul was saved.<sup>69</sup>

These editors were not simply concerned with the role that the Southern Methodist Church might play in the War. They were articulate advocates of the Southern causes. In an article on "The Denominational Press in the Confederate States," McTyeire wrote that not only did the ability with which these papers were conducted compare favorably with the secular press, but in support of the Southern cause the church papers were superior to the secular ones. "They all talk of war, more or less, and give it news." They did this because the readers asked for it.

Very early they took their stand for the Southern rights and independence; and as moral questions were involved, the religious press of the South, in proportion to its numbers and circulation, has done more than the secular press to shape the course and hearten the patriotism of the Southern Confederacy. They were ahead of the politicians on the merits of abolitionism and the faith and covenants of the abolitionists. They have steadily infused into public movements the spirit of morality and insisted on the conscientiousness of this war. They have done much to make it a holy war, and thus far to insure its success. A full history of this revolution could be gathered from the files of our religious exchanges. They are true to the land, showing, though edited by ministers, that the ministry are in sympathy with the people; and that the Church has no interest at war with the interests of a free country, which cannot be said of the Romish press and the Romish Church, ever the apologists of power and centralization.<sup>70</sup>

McTyeire may have claimed too much for the denominational press, but that they were firm supporters of the Southern cause there can be no doubt.

<sup>68</sup> May, *op. cit.*, 237-38. See notice of publication in *RCA*, August 20, 1863.

<sup>69</sup> *RCA*, August 27, 1863.

<sup>70</sup> *NCA*, December 12, 1861.

There were three aspects of the Southern way of life about which these writers wrote a good deal: Slavery, States Rights, and God's Providential concern for the South.

Long before the War began, Southern Methodists had made known their position on slavery. After all, the Methodist Episcopal Church had divided over slavery in 1844.<sup>71</sup> Two weeks before the War began, McTyeire summarized the Southern Methodist position.

We have no two sentiments on the subject of slavery. We all agree that the institution is under the control of the civil government, and is not a proper subject for Church legislation. We take the New Testament ground, and preach Christ to the master and his slave.<sup>72</sup>

A month after the War began, the *Richmond Advocate* reprinted, with a certain amount of pride, a note from the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* which claimed that William A. Smith, president of Randolph-Macon College, a member of the Virginia Conference, was the "first man of any note" who "boldly and publicly took the position that slavery was right."<sup>73</sup> In the same issue was a comment from the *North Carolina Advocate* about abolitionism.

Southern Methodists, perhaps, know better than any other portion of the South, the terribly oppressive and hard-hearted character of the demon of Abolitionism. They have tested it fully, and found it to be heartless, inhuman and Christless.<sup>74</sup>

In May, 1861, the *Nashville Advocate* carried a letter from "J.E.E.," a Virginia correspondent, in which the claim was made that "if Northern fanaticism were to prevail in this contest, the more direful calamities that could befall a race would come upon the slaves of the South."<sup>75</sup> In a word, slaves were far better off as slaves than they could be as free men.

In early 1862, another correspondent, in the *Southern Advocate*, shifted the basis for defending slavery, saying that the "Constitution forbids the stealing of Southern property; therefore it is a crime to plead (as the North does) national sentiment in justification of the oppression."<sup>76</sup> A year later the *North Carolina Advocate* carried a letter from Bishop James O. Andrew, whose slaveholding had been at the center of the General Conference of 1844,

<sup>71</sup> Joseph Mitchell, "Traveling Preacher and Settled Farmer," *Methodist History*, July, 1967. For another interpretation of this division, see Norman W. Spellman, "The Church Divides," *History of American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon, 1964), II, 47-85.

<sup>72</sup> NCA, March 28, 1861.

<sup>73</sup> RCA, May 2, 1861.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> NCA, May 9, 1861.

<sup>76</sup> SCA, February 27, 1862.

in which he said that the pretensions of the North that they were fighting for "Union" and "Constitution" were now played out and they were now

beginning boldly to avow, what has no doubt been their aim all along, the destruction of the white population of the South, and to turn the blacks loose to live or starve after the whites are murdered. Now the real object of the Yankee is not to benefit the slaves, but to ruin his master.<sup>77</sup>

By the middle of 1864, yet another shift of attitude towards slavery could be detected in the writings of Myers, editor of the *Southern Advocate*. In May, 1864, he wrote an article on "The Future of Slavery."

The great question is to regulate slavery for the mutual benefit of all parties concerned, and to bring the institution under the most favorable conditions, political, social and moral; and instead of a few vast, overgrown slaveholders, to institute a policy that will give ten moderate slave-holders where we now have one. In a word, we need restriction on the one hand, and distribution on the other.<sup>78</sup>

Myers was not only saying that slavery was an issue on which the Church ought to say something, but he was calling for a kind of redistribution of the wealth. In modern terms, he would be called, by some, part of the "Pink Fringe" of Methodism.

Later the same year, Myers indicated that he knew the South must face the fact that there was going to be a change in, or away from, slavery. Claiming that it was clear that the War was being waged by Northern abolitionists against the right of southerners to "hold property in slaves," he said that it should

be the constant aim of every Southern man to show to this dependent race that their masters are their natural, their truest, and their best friends. There is no greater injury which we can bring upon our cause than, by undue servitude, to alienate our servants, and render them discontented and refractory.<sup>79</sup>

He was preparing his readers for a new day.

But the *Advocates* were not simply pro-slavery papers. They were pro-South. The editor of the *Nashville Advocate* put it this way in the first issue after the War began.

<sup>77</sup> NCCA, October 28, 1863.

<sup>78</sup> SCA, May 12, 1864.

<sup>79</sup> SCA, September 8, 1864.

As the North is one, so let the South be. We must meet the issues now and quit ourselves like men, or be slaves hereafter. We must fight for our altars and firesides—fight, that is the word.<sup>80</sup>

The editor of the *North Carolina Advocate* used virtually the same words, but added some suggestions for those who would not unite in the common cause.

The War is upon us. It is of the first importance that the South be united to a man. If there be those among us, whose opinions if uttered, would be damaging to our cause, let them hold their peace and sustain the cause of the South. If they must speak, and divide the South, let them go over to the enemy.<sup>81</sup>

In modern rhetoric, this would come out, "Love it or leave it."

Not surprisingly perhaps the editor of the *Richmond Advocate* claimed that Southerners were fighting for the same things for which their fathers fought the British.

We do not think that in the present movement of the Southern States we have what properly may be termed a revolution. It is rather a reassertion of the principles and policies of government which have always been held by the Southern States, and comprehending the vital interest for which our fathers struggled against the British crown. The south is only maintaining, by separation from a corrupt sectionalism, that liberty and dignity which has become impossible in the United States. None of the signs of a revolution are visible in the seceded States.<sup>82</sup>

In one of the last editorials he wrote before Federal troops captured Nashville and he fled to Alabama, McTyeire wrote about what he believed was at stake in the War. He was convinced that the North was bent on subjugation of the South, and if this happened,

A new leaf would be turned over in the history of despotism. Never did haughty Turk lord it over prostrate Jews, as the Yankees would lord it over us. Insatiable tax gatherers would swarm; insolent officials would parade our streets; northern censors would supervise our "provincial" press, and see that all its utterances were "loyal": imported schoolmasters and schoolmarms, with Northern books, would have charge of our education . . . and men of easy, plain virtue, would fill our judgeships; creatures like them would be our governors and magistrates, and make up the semblance of a legislative body, provided even that were allowed us; New England and Ohio soldiers

<sup>80</sup> NCA, April 25, 1861.

<sup>81</sup> NCCA, April 29, 1861.

<sup>82</sup> RCA, June 13, 1861.

would be placed in our garrisons and forts to suppress the first motions of "rebellion"; every article worn would be the badge of our servility, and every article produced would be taxed to subsistence point, for the aggrandizement of Northern master.<sup>83</sup>

McTyeire was a better "prophet" than he realized, for many of the things which he predicted did happen.

These Southern Methodist editors then believed that the Southern cause was right and that defeat of the South would be a disaster.

Not only did they think that the Southern cause was right. They were convinced that God was on the side of the South. Duncan put it this way,

In this great struggle every element of national life is in motion. It is a conflict that essentially interests every one. The preachers of the Gospel feel that, to a large extent, the most important moral issues are involved, and regard the physical fight with all the deeper concern because of its bearing upon the christianization of the continent. They cannot help perceiving that the religious life of the North is, to an alarming extent, projected upon false doctrine, and has developed a wild and fanatical zeal that bodes no good to the Church and the Kingdom of Christ among men.<sup>84</sup>

Six months later, he said that patriotism was not demonstrated by declamation but by decisive deeds "and personal piety, not as displayed by profession, but as defined in zealous labor, is the practical religion demanded. He that is on the Lord's side must not only say it, but by his actions prove it."<sup>85</sup>

In early 1863, the *Richmond Advocate* carried a letter from "Alpha" in which it was claimed that the great majority of the Southerners were actuated "not only by patriotic fever and devotion, but by a confidence in the wisdom and beneficence of a superintending Providence that smiles upon our causes, undaunted by the numbers and resources of the foe, and unshaken even by defeat."<sup>86</sup> Later in 1863, after the South had suffered additional military defeats, Bishop George Foster Pierce suggested that one reason for the defeats was that the Confederacy was not Christian enough. His solution was to change the Constitution so that there were specific references to the God of Jesus Christ.<sup>87</sup> In the middle of 1864, the editor of the *North Carolina Advocate* wrote that tidings of recent victories came opportunely, but that these victories

<sup>83</sup> Reprinted in *SCA*, March 6, 1862.

<sup>84</sup> *RCA*, September 12, 1861.

<sup>85</sup> *RCA*, April 24, 1862.

<sup>86</sup> *RCA*, February 19, 1863.

<sup>87</sup> Reported in *NCCA*, September 9, 1863.

must not stop and "the enemy must be driven out in the strength of Jehovah."<sup>88</sup> Lincoln certainly spoke of the Methodists when, in his second inaugural, he said, "Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes his aid against the other."

By early 1865, these editors were seeking, indirectly, to prepare their readers for defeat. In January, Myers wrote that one of the many lessons which the War had taught was the "necessity for the instruction of the Church in the cardinal doctrine of Providence,"<sup>89</sup> and Duncan said that "faith alone" could win the War.<sup>90</sup> About the same time, Pell wrote that while many people were despondent, he believed they were where they had always been, in the hands of God.<sup>91</sup> Only two weeks before Appomattox, he affirmed that slavery *per se* was neither a national nor individual sin, but it was an institution of Divine sanction and authority.<sup>92</sup> On April 6, 1865, Myers said that there was only one refuge "against the dangers arising from the peculiarity of the times, and these assaults of the adversary" and that was the "word" of God. He admonished his readers to "stay their minds and hearts upon the promises of God."<sup>93</sup>

After equating the cause of the South with the cause of Christianity for almost four years, these editors, like many men before and since, were compelled, after Appomattox, to conclude that God's Kingdom did not finally depend on the existence of any human kingdom. Having merged the mission of the M.E. Church, South with the rise of the Confederacy, they now had the task of helping to rebuild Southern Methodism within the United States of America.

The last wartime issue of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* was published March 30, 1865, of the *North Carolina Advocate* on April 4, 1865, and of the *Southern Christian Advocate* on April 13, 1865. The *Southern Advocate* appeared again June 29, 1865, but did not begin regular publication until August 31, 1865. The *Richmond Advocate* published its first post-war issue September 7, 1865. The *North Carolina Advocate* did not resume publication until 1867.

But before these well-known Methodist papers could resume publication after the War, two members of the Virginia Conference, John E. Edwards and D. S. Doggett, started an independent paper, *The Episcopal Methodist*. The first issue appeared July 19, 1865.

<sup>88</sup> NCCA, May 7, 1864.

<sup>89</sup> SCA, January 26, 1865.

<sup>90</sup> RCA, January 12, 1865.

<sup>91</sup> NCCA, January 17, 1865.

<sup>92</sup> NCCA, March 28, 1865.

<sup>93</sup> SCA, April 6, 1865.

It was four pages, folio size, with six columns to a page. It sold for two dollars for six months.<sup>94</sup>

Two articles in this first issue suggest the tightrope which Southern Methodist ministers had to walk as they sought to lead an institution which had been virtually destroyed along with the Confederacy which it had supported so enthusiastically. Edwards wrote an article on the "Divinity of Slavery," in which he replied to a charge that was making the rounds that he had used the sentence, "I fully and sacredly believe in the divinity of slavery; and if I were to be called to appear before my judge, Jesus Christ, the next hour, I would without any mental reservations whatever preach up the divinity of slavery." Edwards claimed that what he had actually said was, "If I were to appear before my Judge before this sentence closes, I would say that I honestly believe slavery to be a Bible-sanctioned institution."<sup>95</sup>

The more important statement was from Bishop James O. Andrew. Although he was not the senior bishop of the Southern Church (that honor belonged to Joshua Soule), Andrew provided the real episcopal leadership for the Southern Church during the War.<sup>96</sup> Andrew's communication was a "pastoral letter" for Southern Methodists. Noting that the events of the last three months had placed the country under greatly altered circumstances, Andrew called for Southern Methodists to "acquiesce quietly in what Providence seems to have ordained for us." He admonished the people not to carry on "bushwhacking or guerrilla warfare" because these tactics were wrong in "principle and practice." He suggested that they be civil towards the Federal soldiers stationed in their midst. Combining Christianity and common sense, he rebuked some of the "estimable ladies" who took pains to express in the "bitterest terms of reproach" their "contempt" for the "Yankees."

Now, this is unwise as well as unchristian. To sum up all in a few words, God seems to have ordained that we should live together in civil compact with the North as formerly, and the sooner we can bring about a state of kind feeling between the two sections, the better for all concerned.

He concluded with a prayer

... for the country and its rulers, that God may overrule and direct

<sup>94</sup> Doggett was born in Virginia in 1810 and admitted on trial in the Virginia Conference in 1829. In addition to parish appointments, he taught at Randolph-Macon College and was editor of the *Southern Methodist Quarterly* for eight years. In 1866 he was elected a bishop. Edwards was born in North Carolina and admitted on trial in 1835. He served the most important pulpits in Virginia and was a member of all the General Conferences from 1858 through 1878.

<sup>95</sup> *EM*, July 19, 1865.

<sup>96</sup> There were six active bishops in the M. E. Church, South when the War began.

them both in their legislative and executive acts. This is necessary if we desire to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all goodness and honesty before God.<sup>97</sup>

In the ensuing months, *The Episcopal Methodist* kept Southern Methodists informed of the state of the Church and of plans for rebuilding in the future. In its July 26th issue it carried a detailed article on the damage done to Virginia Methodist property during the War. Included in this piece was the news that the *Richmond Christian Advocate* office had been destroyed by the fire which swept through Richmond on April 3rd.<sup>98</sup> In several issues it sought to give guidance to ministers and laymen about their changed relationship with the "colored" population of the South.<sup>99</sup> In the late summer and early fall it reported the resumption, or plans for the resumption, of other Methodist publications.<sup>100</sup> In the fall, large segments of each issue were taken up with news about the meetings of various annual conferences, some of which, it was reported, were meeting with a bishop for the first time since the early months of the War. One of the important items from each of the annual conferences was the names of the men elected to attend the General Conference which had been called for the spring of 1866. By early 1866, the *Episcopal Methodist* had reported that *Advocates* in St. Louis, Richmond, Nashville, New Orleans, Arkansas, and South Carolina were once again being published. Doggett and Edwards took this not only as a sign of life in the Southern Church, but were concerned that perhaps too many papers were competing for the attention, and money, of the financially poor Southern Methodists.<sup>101</sup>

Doggett and Edwards sought to refrain from commenting about "secular affairs" in a way that would bring them into conflict with the Federal authorities. In March, 1866, they reported that they had received a request to forward a copy of the paper to Major

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The Senior Bishop was Joshua Soule, who was seventy-nine when the War began; he spent the war years on a small farm near Nashville. Bishop John Early was seventy-five and he rarely moved out of his home state of Virginia. Even though Bishop Andrew was sixty-six, he travelled extensively during the War. The remaining three bishops, all younger than these three, remained close to their homes during most of the War. Bishop Robert Paine had a large plantation outside Aberdeen, Mississippi and Bishop George Foster Pierce, a smaller farm near Sparta, Georgia. Bishop H. H. Kavanaugh was in Kentucky most of the time, behind Federal lines. (See May, *op. cit.*, 246.)

<sup>97</sup> *EM*, July 19, 1865.

<sup>98</sup> *EM*, July 26, 1865.

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, the issues for August 2 and August 9, 1865.

<sup>100</sup> The August 23, 1865 issue carried a note that the St. Louis paper was about to resume and the September 13, 1865 issue carried the news that *RCA* and *SCA* were back.

<sup>101</sup> February 28, 1866.

General A. H. Terry under an order requiring "that copies of newspapers published in this department containing sentiments of disloyalty and hostility to the Government, in any of its branches, be forwarded for his information and action." Denying that they had violated this order, the editors indicated that they had complied with the request.<sup>102</sup>

Both Edwards and Doggett were elected to the General Conference of 1866. During their absence in New Orleans, their paper was edited by Thomas E. Bond of the Baltimore Conference.<sup>103</sup> At the General Conference, Doggett was elected one of the four new bishops and arrangements were made to move the *Episcopal Methodist* from Richmond to Baltimore, with the revived *Richmond Christian Advocate* serving the Virginia Conference.<sup>104</sup>

Probably the M.E. Church, South would have survived without its *Advocates*, but certainly these papers provided important connecting links for the institution. Furthermore, without them our knowledge of the Church during the War would be limited to the information we might cull from a few diaries and the official minutes of the annual conferences.

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<sup>102</sup> March 7, 1866.

<sup>103</sup> March 14, 1866.

<sup>104</sup> June 6, 1866.