Domestic Tranquility

It was a cold and rainy November afternoon in Gettysburg. A crowd made up of soldiers, politicians, and locals had gathered on the site where just months before, over 50,000 soldiers lost their lives or were wounded in the Civil War's bloodiest battle. Now, they were gathered for the purpose of dedicating a cemetery for the war dead. President Abraham Lincoln's speech, lasting only about two minutes, was one of his finest.

"The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here," he said, "but it can never forget what they did here… from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave their last full measure of devotion… that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

His words embody the story of a people…We, the people….

The phrase "domestic tranquility" as put forth in the U.S. Constitution refers to the idea that a federal government has enough power and authority to quell rebellions and to prevent violent conflict between lower levels of government, such as fighting between states.

Shortly after the Revolutionary War ended and before the Constitution was written, a New England farmer named Daniel Shays led other farmer and merchants in a rebellion in western Massachusetts. Shays was angry about heavy taxes and debts, which often lead to imprisonment. The former Revolutionary War captain spearheaded an

uprising against the federal government, known as Shays' Rebellion, a movement that almost invoked civil war before its end in 1787.

With this in mind, the Constitution gave the Federal Government the authority to suppress such rebellions so that the nation would enjoy peace at home, or as the Preamble calls it, "domestic tranquility." Unfortunately, this concept was to be tested, resulting in the bloodiest conflict fought on American soil.

On October 16, 1859 an abolitionist who advocated insurrection as a means to end the evils of slavery, John Brown, led a small group of men in a raid on Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Brown attacked and captured several buildings including the town's arsenal. The government reacted by sending in the United States Marines on Tuesday, October 18 under the command of U.S. Army Colonel Robert E. Lee, the same man who later became General and commander of the Confederacy during the Civil War. In the battle that followed, most of Brown's raiders were killed or captured. Brown was tried for treason by the State of Virginia, convicted, and hanged.

When the Civil War began in 1861, Union soldiers took up Brown's abolitionist cause and honored him with a marching song, *John Brown's Body*. Union army soldier Thomas Bishop penned the lyrics, which, ironically, he set to a tune originally written five years before by southerner William Steffe of South Carolina.

While the tune was suitable for marching, the lyrics needed work. The song began with "John Brown's body lies a-moldering in the grave" which was repeated three times followed by "Glory" and "Hallelujah." Other parts of the song proclaimed that John Brown was now a soldier in the army of the Lord, and that Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy, would be hanged from "a sour apple tree!" Most historians

believe that the John Brown of the song refers to the abolitionist, while others claim it was written about a different John Brown who had served with the 12th Massachusetts Regiment. Either way, the song was popular with Union soldiers.

Songwriter Thomas Bishop's battalion was sent to Washington DC. During a public review, the troops sang this song. Reverend James Clarke, attributing it to John Brown the abolitionist, found the lyrics less than noble and suggested to a friend that she write new words for the marching song.

His friend was Bostonian and Unitarian Julia Ward Howe, the great-granddaughter of Samuel Ward, who had been a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1774, and granddaughter of Samuel Ward, Jr. a Lieutenant Colonel with the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. In the February 1862 edition of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Howe first published what would become one of the most famous wartime songs and hymns. "John Brown's body lies a-moldering in the grave" became "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord." The chorus, "Glory, glory, hallelujah" was kept.

The mixture of religion and patriotism was used as early as the American Revolution, when ministers were encouraged to deliver patriotic messages for the American cause. It continued with the American Civil War, where both sides believed their cause was righteous. Both the North and the South mixed faith with fervor, and it is therefore no surprise that northern troops would sing and march to a song that is as religious as it is patriotic.

While the phrases, "He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored" and "He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword" can be

applied theologically, Union troops also understood their patriotic undertone and saw themselves as the sword of God's judgment. The phrase "I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps" is a reference to Union troops serving as the righteous arm of the Lord. Theology and ideology are clearly combined in the original lines that read:

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me;
As He died to make men holy, let us ***die*** to make men free;
While God is marching on.

Regarding the lyric, "As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free," Union solider Robert Kellogg of the Sixteenth Connecticut wrote his parents, saying, "I honestly think it is because the nation has disregarded God's voice. We've not let the enslaved blacks go free when we had the power."

The song only highlighted northern attitudes about the war, believing it to be a just and righteous cause. The political view of southerners was quite different, but their religious views were an equal mixture of faith and patriotism. Although the famous Confederate marching song, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" does not mention God, or claim that southern troops are acting as God's appointed army, the song does contain the phrase, "The old church bell will peal with joy, Hurrah, Hurrah!" The attitude among most southerners was similar to that of the northerners, namely that God was on their side. In his second Inaugural Address, President Abraham Lincoln confronted the notion that God was exclusive to one side or the other.

Lincoln (acted monologue):

Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes.

The South then, as now, was steeped in religious conviction and patriotism. When faced with various defeats, Confederate troops took solace in spiritual renewal. One example of this took place after the Battle of Chattanooga.

Sgt. Chris Davidson (Park Ranger, Lookout Mountain, TN):

After the siege of Chattanooga and its unraveling in the route of the Army of Tennessee, the soldiers morale had plummeted. It was at its very bottom. That's when a great spiritual awakening began to visit the army on the spring of '64 as the army went into encampment in Dalton, began to rebuild, Joseph E. Johnson was appointed commander. And then small, small prayer groups began and then larger and larger they grew, record numbers of conversions were recorded, and a great spiritual atmosphere was visited upon the army, many conversions, in fact I've read some statistics of over 7,000 baptisms and professions of faith in a two month period, which is substantial.

The religious devotion of several southern leaders is well documented. General Robert E. Lee was noted for his religious dedication, and General "Stonewall" Jackson who was extremely devout, taught a Sunday School class for African American children. However, there were also several northern Generals with the same mixture of patriotism and spirituality.

One of them, General William Starke Rosecrans, was a graduate of West Point and a great-grandson of Stephen Hopkins, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. General Rosecrans was successful in the Western Theater with victories at the battle of Second Corinth, Stones River, and the Tullahoma Campaign. His defeat at the Battle of Chickamauga in 1863 effectively ended his military career.

General Rosecrans was a devout Catholic and considered to be one of the most well liked generals in the Union army. Rosecrans was so committed to his faith that he refused to fight on Sunday and often engaged his staff in theological discussions and debate. His faith extended to his family as well. Two of his daughters became nuns, his oldest son became a priest, and his brother became the first Bishop of Columbus.

During the 1864 Republican National Convention, the general's former chief of staff and future president, James Garfield, was the head of the Ohio delegation. Garfield telegraphed Rosecrans, a War Democrat, and asked if he would consider running with Lincoln as vice president in a demonstration of national unity. While Rosecrans agreed in the return telegram, Garfield did not receive it and the recommendation was not passed on to Lincoln. Believing that Rosecrans was not interested, Lincoln instead chose Democrat Andrew Johnson.

Another of the North's men of faith was General Oliver Otis Howard. In many ways, his life paralleled that of "Stonewall" Jackson. Both men were orphaned and lived with their uncle. Both were extremely religious and noted for their devotion and faith. Both were dedicated to the education of African Americans, and concerned with their plight. And, both were wounded in battle, causing them to lose an arm. Jackson, however, did not survive and died of pneumonia due to his wounds. Howard, on the other hand, quickly recovered and returned to fight in the Battle of Antietam.

> Chris Davidson (Ranger, Lookout Mountain, TN; interview):
> One of the opponents the Army of Tennessee faced here and the battles around Chattanooga and eventually through the Atlanta campaign was major general Oliver Otis Howard. Of course much is known about his work post war with the Freedmen's Bureau and the establishment of Howard University. But he was actually a graduate of Bowdoin College before he graduated from West Point. He was a contemporary of Joshua Chamberlain. He was a native of Maine. He lost his arm in the battle of Seven Pines. His soldiers dubbed him "Old Prayer Book" because he was very strict on the spiritual routines of his command. Some soldiers bulked under it, but as the bloodshed began to increase more increasing began to be turned towards it.

After the Civil War, Howard fought in the Indian Wars against the Nez Perce tribe led by Chief Joseph. The war stemmed from the Chief's refusal to go to the reservation set aside for his tribe, even though the majority of its members had already agreed to do so.

General Howard pursued Chief Joseph over 1,400 miles before securing his surrender and bringing an end to the conflict. The two enemies met late in life at the Carlisle Indian School, almost thirty years after the war.

General Howard reflected on the wars, saying, "I would have done anything to avoid the war, even to giving my life. But the time had come when we had to fight. There comes times when a fight is a mighty good thing and when it is over let's lay down all of our feelings and look up to God and see if we cannot get a better basis on which to live and work together."

Chief Joseph returned his sentiments of reconciliation. "I meet here my friend, General Howard," the Chief declared. "I wanted to kill him in that war. Today I am glad to meet him, and glad to meet everybody here, and to be friends with General Howard…When my friend, General Howard, and I fought together, I had no idea that we would ever sit down to a meal together, as today, but we have and I am glad."

The Civil War is a historic example of the United States insuring domestic tranquility, securing peace at home in the face of rebellion. During this time there was another type of *domestic tranquility* exercised by 5,000 volunteers who went to the battlefields not with cannons, guns, or bayonets, but with bandages, cups of water, and words of encouragement and hope.

Shortly after the start of the Civil War the YMCA became concerned about the physical and spiritual welfare of Union troops. On November 16, 1861, representatives of the YMCA met in New York City and established the United States Christian Commission. The goals of the Christian Commission were simple: to care for the soldiers

and sailors spiritual needs with Bibles, hymnals and other religious literature while tending to their physical and emotional needs as well. In this second purpose, agents of the Christian Commission assisted physicians, provided writing paper and envelopes, and gave troops small sewing kits and other necessities.

> John Wega (US Christian Commission interview):
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> There really is a story of heroism that has not been told as part of the Civil War history. And that's the story of the United States Christian Commission: heroes that went to the battlefield, both men and women, to serve both the spiritual and temporal needs of the soldiers. They were so loved and celebrated that at the end of the war Ulysses S. Grant said that they had alleviated much suffering in almost every battlefield and every hospital during the war. Furthermore, he went on to say that they were to his army what the army was to the citizens of this country, and that's a pretty significant statement.

Under the leadership of George Stuart, a New Yorker, the U.S. Christian Commission engaged about 5,000 unpaid volunteers called "delegates" to offer help to the Army and Navy Chaplains, doctors and nurses, and various military personnel. They wrote letters for the sick or wounded, supplied coffee and water where needed, and remained in camps and on battlefields throughout the duration of the Civil War. The Commission raised over 6.2 million dollars, nearly 1 billion dollars in today's economy, for the purchase of Bibles, packages, and supplies.

When criticized by some religious leaders for providing for more than simply the spiritual needs of soldiers, George Stuart replied that, "there is a good deal of religion in a warm shirt and a good beefsteak."

Delegates served about six weeks at a time. Dwight L. Moody, who would later become an internationally renowned evangelist, was a delegate, as was Louisa May Alcott, the novelist who wrote *Little Women*. The Commission received the praise and endorsement of President Abraham Lincoln and the Union Generals including Grant, McClellan, Meade, Burnside, and Sherman. Florence Nightingale likewise paid tribute to the Christian Commission, and the Vice Admiral of the Navy Farragut stated, "I feel satisfied that no one would bear higher testimony in behalf of the Christian Commission than myself . . ."

Among various letters and diaries of Union soldiers, historians have found several who speak of the U.S Christian Commission. One soldier was Daniel Crotty of the Third Michigan, who wrote of not having enough strength to make it back to his regiment after a fierce battle. Crotty eventually saw some tents pitched near a house. He staggered toward the gate to the yard, collapsing there. He awoke to find that what he thought were nurses tending to him were actually delegates of the Commission.

Daniel Crotty (monologue):

> The ladies of the Christian Commission left their homes and all its luxuries to come to the battlefields to minister to the soldiers there among the fighting. God bless those wonderful women, if they don't receive their reward here on earth I'm sure they'll receive it in heaven.

When Ulysses S. Grant became president of the United States, he wished to honor George Stuart and the U.S. Christian Commission:

John Wega (interview):

George Stuart was a hero. He's a national hero for what he did for these men, for the soldiers of the country, and for the people of the country. He was so well loved and celebrated and recognized and a man of renown that at the end of the war when Grant became president, he asked George Stuart to become Secretary of the United States Treasury Department. That's pretty remarkable, that's pretty renown, that's pretty well recognized. George Stuart declined due to either ill health, or his older age, or didn't want to get involved in the political world. So, President Grant being very persistent said, "I want you to become Secretary of the U.S. Navy then, if you want to serve the soldiers!" He said, "Well, I decline sir. I respectfully decline. But I will get involved with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and I want to work and volunteer in that area of service to see that these American Indians have the same love of Christ extended to them that we just extended to the soldiers that fought on the Civil War battlefields, and he did that."

Stuart did just that, continuing his legacy for peace and unity.

Perhaps one of the more colorful figures to grace a Civil War battlefield was a civilian and humanitarian named Mary Ann Bickerdyke. When she saw firsthand the

plight of wounded soldiers, she organized her own relief effort, and as told by *Heroes of Ohio* author Rick Sowash, her fiery spirit left a lasting impression on those that she served.

The Civil War was raging. Men were being killed. Men were being wounded. They had to be cared for. The word went out to send supplies so that the wounded soldiers could be taken care of. Mary Ann Bickerdyke, member of a Quaker church, volunteered to drive the wagon of supplies that her church had donated, to the battlefield to help the wounded soldiers. When she got there, she could not believe what she saw. There were no hospitals. The wounded soldiers were just laying on the ground. Nobody even seemed to care much about them. She didn't just deliver the supplies. She rolled up her sleeves and she got busy caring for the wounded.

She got the wounded soldiers who were maybe not so bad off to help round up some straw so that the badly wounded could at least lay on straw on the ground. She rounded up some soap and got those soldiers washed clean. She trimmed their hair so the bugs wouldn't so much gather in their hair. And, well, she had her hands full. Soon, her work was noticed. The officers of the army, they didn't especially like a woman coming around to help the wounded soldiers. One major asked her, he said, "By what authority are you here?" She looked him in the eye and she said, "I'm here by the authority of God almighty. Do you have anything that outranks that?"

And she kept on working, helping the wounded soldiers. She sawed barrels in half to make bathtubs to help the soldiers try to stay clean. And she did her best to see if the soldiers couldn't at least be moved into a barn or a tent or somewhere. You see,

everybody thought the Civil War would be over quickly so they didn't really bother with hospitals. Figured they wouldn't need them. Well, they were wrong, and Mary Ann Bickerdyke took matters in hand. The colonels, the generals, they did not appreciate her work. They did not thank her, but she wouldn't leave. She stayed on, helping the wounded.

Well, she had other problems, too. The healthy soldiers would come around and steal the food that she was cooking for the wounded. She tried to tell them not to do it, but they wouldn't listen. Finally, she knew something had to be done. A shipment of dried peaches came one day and then she made a plan. She mixed up some butter and cinnamon and brown sugar and frying those peaches and soon, a wonderful smell began to go out in all directions from the hospital kitchen. And the healthy soldiers started gathering around, their hands in their pockets, standing there watching to see. Mary Ann knew that they were going to try to steal the food she was making. Nonetheless, she made up those peaches into peach pies. Oh, they looked good, golden brown crusts. She set them out to dry and then she told those soldiers, "Don't you touch these peach pies! They're not for you. They're for the wounded soldiers." She went back to tend to the wounded and she told them, "Something's up. I'm playing a trick. You watch and wait and see what's going to happen." And she gave them a wink of the eye. Soon, a sound was heard, a very unpleasant sound. The sound of men throwing up. The sound of men grabbing their bellies and rolling on the ground and crying out in pain and agony. The sound of men very, very sick. She went over to those men that were so miserable and she said, "I told you not to eat those peach pies! You know why you're in such bad shape? Because I slipped a certain medicine I know into those pies, a medicine that's guaranteed

to make people throw up. But don't worry. You're not going to die. Not this time. I only hope you've learned your lesson not to steal the food I'm preparing for the wounded soldiers. And who knows? Next time you steal the food I've gotten ready, there might be rat poison in it! And then you will have something to complain about!"

Still, the healthy soldiers kept up their thievery. When Mary Ann's back was turned, they'd slip in and grab the food she had prepared. Finally, she went to the commander of the army, General William Tecumseh Sherman. Now, General Sherman called her Mrs. Bickerdyke. She stood before him, with her hands on her hips, and she called the general Bill. She said, "Bill. Something's got to be done. The healthy soldiers are stealing the food that I'm preparing for the wounded. And finally, General Sherman took an interest and he helped her out. He fired the cook and moved that cook to another part of the army, and well, things gradually got better. General Sherman named Mrs. Bickerdyke the "matron" of the hospital. And nobody was quite sure whether a matron was higher or lower than a colonel or a captain or a general or whatever, but they pretty much accepted that Mary Ann Bickerdyke was in charge of the hospital, that Mary Ann Bickerdyke was overseeing the wounded soldiers and their care.

But she didn't just hang around back in the hospital. Sometimes she would go out on the battlefield herself, carrying a medical bag with medicine and bandages and a hatchet, an axe that you chop things with. You see, sometimes battle would be fought in the wintertime, and Mary Ann Bickerdyke would take that hatchet along so she could chop the soldiers loose from puddles of their own frozen blood. That's right. The soldiers laying on the ground would be frozen to the ground in their own blood.

Chopping them loose, Mary Ann Bickerdyke would drag them back to the hospital and try to help them get better.

Finally, the war was won. The whole Northern Army gathered for one last, glorious parade. The Grand Army of the Republic, they called it. All gathered in Washington D.C., marching the streets of Washington, celebrating the victory of the North in the Civil War. And Mary Ann Bickerdyke, the "mother of the battlefield," that's what the men called her, she rode her old, bony white horse right along with the soldiers, one of the heroes of the day – a hero who helped others, a hero who did her best to help the wounded soldiers recover.

As one Union soldier observed, "the Civil War was a battle of ideas interrupted by artillery." Thankfully, there were many heroic men and women who stepped forward to advance such thinking on both sides of the conflict and to care for those who were caught in the crossfire of battle. The blessings of domestic tranquility came at a great price and forever tempered the character of our nation and its people.