

# North Carolina Argus.

NEW SERIES—VOL. V—NO. 16.]

WADESBOROUGH, N. C., THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 1863.

[WHOLE NO. 228.]

## AN APPEAL.

To the Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Confederate States of America, from the Chaplains in the Second Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia.

DEAR BRETHREN,—The relations which we sustain to the various branches of the Church of Christ in our country and the position which we hold in the army of the Confederate States, induces us to address you upon the important subject of the religious instruction of the soldiers engaged in the sacred cause of defending our rights, our liberties and our homes. The one universal subject of thought and of feeling is the war. The hearts of the people, with singular unanimity, are enlisted in the common cause. The object of special interest to all is the army. The political and social interests involved excite the patriotism and move the affection of all. There is little necessity for exhortation to love of country, or love to our sons and brothers who are fighting and falling in our defence. These emotions, strong in the beginning, have become more intense from the heroic fortitude of our noble army, and from the wicked designs and infamous conduct of our enemies. The history of the past two years of the war has amazingly developed and magnified the issues and strengthened and deepened the convictions under which the conflict began. Base, beyond all conception, must that heart be which does not swell with patriotic devotion to our dear and suffering country, which is not stirred with deep and righteous indignation against our cruel and guilty foes, and which is not melted with profound and tender sympathy for the privations of our soldiers and the afflictions of our oppressed fellow citizens in the invaded districts. While these emotions may exist in some adequate measure, is the religious interest commensurate with the demand of the times? Is the Church as much alive to its duty as the State. Is the Christian as active and as earnest as the citizen? Duties never conflict. Our patriotism will be all the stronger and purer when sanctified by religion. The natural sympathies require the controlling influence and the plastic power of the love of Christ for their proper regulation. To the political and social must be added the religious element. To patriotism must be added the mightier principle of faith. Let love of country be joined to love of God. Let the love of our suffering brother be associated with the love of our crucified Savior. Let the temporal interests be connected with the eternal. One duty should not be allowed to exclude another, nor one emotion crowd from the heart the holier presence of another. The Church should clearly understand and fully estimate the relation which it sustains to the man and the duty which it owes to the Army. In an important sense the cause of the country is the cause of the Church. The principles involved are those of right, of truth and of humanity, as well as of law, of constitutional liberty and of national independence. In a sense equally as true, and even more important is the fact, that the Church, to the full extent of its ability and opportunity, is responsible for the souls of those who fall in this conflict. Has she realized this solemn responsibility? Has she discharged her sacred duty? With the opportunities which we have for estimating the work to be done, and of observing what has been accomplished, we are constrained to say that she has not. Surely her whole duty has not been done. We tremble when we contemplate the results which may follow from such delinquency. To estimate correctly the work which the Church is called to perform, we must consider the vast number of our citizens who now compose the armies. All the men of the country below the age of forty are in the field. To these must be added many manly boys below, and many patriotic men above the prescribed ages. The intellectual and physical strength of the entire country is assembled in martial array. The ratio of religious instructors assigned by the bill for the appointment of Chaplains (a bill in some important respects still defective), is one chaplain for every regiment. How has this arrangement been seconded by the Church and the Ministry? How many of the five or six hundred regiments are now

supplied with faithful pastors? We have not the means of determining the number engaged in the whole service, but we give you the result as to our own corps—a body of troops commanded by that sincere Christian, Lieutenant General T. J. Jackson, who has given special encouragement to the work of supplying the corps with chaplains—not one-half of the regiments of infantry are supplied. Some entire brigades have no chaplain at all. In the artillery attached to the corps, the destitution is still greater. With these facts before us is it too much to affirm that there are not two hundred chaplains now in the field in all our armies. At the same time will not the statistics of the different Churches in the Confederate States show an aggregate of five or six thousand ministers of the gospel.

Ministerial brethren! ought this thing to be? Church of the living God, awake from your lethargy and arouse to your duty. We are well aware of the pure and lofty patriotism of the Southern ministry. We know that your hearts are as truly and deeply enlisted in the cause of the country as ours; and we are also aware of the fact that a large number of chaplains are stationed at posts and laboring faithfully in hospitals and many ministers of the gospel are serving as officers and as privates in the army. But how great is the destitution in the field? And how many of our soldiers are perishing without the bread of life?

There are no great difficulties in the way of obtaining an appointment for any suitable minister in any denomination of Christians. God has opened a wide and effectual door of access to the work. In the work itself there are no difficulties which zeal and faith cannot readily overcome. The chief obstructions are those which exist everywhere in the conflict between sin and holiness. There are no vices nor prejudices peculiar to the army which are any greater hindrances to the work of grace, than those which are to be encountered in the cities and throughout the country. Our work is a hard work and there are privations which must be endured. The fare of the chaplain is that of the soldier. The exposures and discomforts to be encountered are in striking contrast with the previous lives of most ministers of the gospel. The health of some has failed in the service, and some indeed have laid down their lives for their brethren, but to many the change of habits has been beneficial, and the feeble have come to endure hardness as good soldiers. The chaplain, however faithful, will at times be discouraged. Men will seem to take little interest in his preaching; profanity, card-playing and Sabbath breaking will be on the increase,—his presence often will be no restraint upon vice, and when he has faithfully discharged his duty he may meet with censure and ridicule. In camp life there is an indolence of mind produced and an aversion to serious thought. There is also a disposition to seek entertainment in all manner of foolish talking and jesting. On the march and on an active campaign the attention is much absorbed and time is often wanting for religious duties. The carelessness and open apostasy of professors of religion are here, as well as everywhere else, a great hindrance to the success of the gospel. The readiness with which chaplains have resigned their places, or absented themselves from their regiments is a source of discouragement to the soldiers and to their brethren who remain. In the hasty opinions and sweeping judgments of many in and out of the army, the deficiencies of some have been unjustly attributed to others, and the failure of a few regarded as the failure of all. But there, you perceive brethren, are essentially the same difficulties in a different form which the minister of God must encounter everywhere in this sinful world. Our chief ground of discouragement, however, is in ourselves. With more faith in God and more love for the souls of men, with more of the spirit of our blessed Lord, we should behold greater and more precious results.

If there are discouragements peculiar to our work, there are peculiar encouragements, also. We believe that God is with us, not only to own and bless His word to the salvation of men, but that His blessing rests upon our cause and attends our armies.

is a high privilege and a great satisfaction to preach to soldiers to whom God has given such signal victories. The moral influence of a just and righteous cause is a happy introduction to, and a good preparation for, the holier cause of religion. The objects for which our soldiers are fighting possess incalculable power in controlling the naturally demoralizing influences of war. We are thankful to God for the large number of Christian officers who command our armies, and aid us in our work. The presence of so many pious men in the ranks gives us a church in almost every regiment to begin with. The intercourse and communion of Christian brethren in the army is as intimate and precious as anywhere upon earth. It is an interesting fact that by this work ministers of the different denominations are brought into closer and more harmonious cooperation, thus promoting the unity and charity of the whole church, and greatly encouraging each other. Many of the greatest temptations to vice are excluded from the army. There is much time for profitable reflection. The near approach to death excites to serious thought. Religious reading is sought and appreciated. Many opportunities for personal kindness to the sick and the wounded on the battle-field and in the camp, bind grateful hearts to faithful Chaplains. In preaching the word, conducting prayer-meetings and Bible-classes, by circulating the Scriptures and other religious reading, and by frequent conversation in private, we have ample opportunity for doing our Master's work and laboring for immortal souls. Our greatest encouragement, however, has been from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit among us. He who has led our armies to victory, conducting them, like the hosts of Israel, with the pillar of cloud and of fire by night and by day, has also encompassed round about us, and the tabernacle of the Lord has been in the midst of our tents. We believe there have been more powerful and blessed revivals of religion in the army than out of it during the last two years. We know of a large church in which almost all the additions for more than a year have been of young men visiting their homes on furloughs from the army. At this very time, a most interesting and extensive work of grace is in progress amongst the troops stationed in and around the desolated city of Fredericksburg. The evidences of God's love and mercy are thus brought into immediate and striking contrast with the works of cruelty and barbarity of man.

Brethren, do not these movements of the Holy Ghost indicate where God's ministers should follow, and in what work they should engage? Our work, though hard, is a pleasant work; and we feel it to be a precious and glorious work. Much more has been accomplished than has been made known abroad. Comparatively few publications have been sent out by the Chaplains, but many earnest and faithful sermons have been preached, many copies of the Holy Scriptures have been put into the hands of the soldiers by Chaplains and Colporteurs, and much printed matter in the form of religious newspapers and tracts has been circulated and eagerly read; precious communions have been held and souls have been added to the Church of Christ of such as, we believe, shall be saved. Eternity alone can disclose the extent of the blessed work which faithful Chaplains have accomplished in our armies.

We have told you these things, brethren, that your interest might be increased in this cause, and in ourselves, as identified with the cause. If we have only mentioned what was before familiar to you, we desire to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. We would respectfully and in Christian love submit the following suggestions for your consideration, earnestly beseeching your cooperation, your sympathy and your prayers:

Let the Church humble herself before her Lord. Let all Christians of every name in our land engage in acts of humiliation and of prayer. The frequent calls of our excellent and pious President to this duty have been attended by evident tokens of the Divine favor. May the observance of the appointed day which is now at hand,

be followed by the signal blessing of Almighty God; and may the solemn day be kept holy unto the Lord by the army and by all the people. If ever a nation was called to prostrate itself at the foot of the cross, and to supplicate the mercy of God with strong crying and tears, it is this. God, we believe will deliver us from our enemies, but that deliverance must come in answer to prayer.

In order that our prayers may be heard, and our solemn days be not an abomination unto the Lord, we must put away sin from among us. There are sins, both of a national and individual character, which are rapidly engendered in a time like this: a spirit of recklessness and profanity, a disregard of the laws of life and of property; too great a reliance upon an arm of flesh; and it may be, under peculiar aggravations, a sinful feeling of malignant and blood thirsty revenge has been indulged. But more than all, a spirit of unhallowed greed, of unrighteous extortion. Ill gotten gains will prove a curse to the individual, and injurious to the country. It is no time for amassing wealth. Can the true patriot, can the true Christian grow rich in the hour of his country's peril? If in any proper and legitimate manner, without injury to others, money is accumulated, give it to your country; give it to the poor; give it to the suffering families of the soldiers; send a Chaplain to the army, and assist in the support of his family while he is engaged in the work. Let the Church of Jesus Christ clear herself of this sin, and let not the hidden wedge and the Babylonish garment be found in her tents. By precept and example, let the Church seek to foster a generous and self-sacrificing spirit among all classes of the people.

Brethren, send us more Chaplains. The harvest truly is great, the laborers are few. We send abroad to the churches the Macedonian cry, Come and help us. The work is an earnest, a pressing work. Now is emphatically the accepted time for the army. The cause will not brook delay. A series of battles which may speedily follow the opening of the campaign, will sweep away thousands of our brave comrades and friends—thousands of your own sons and brothers. Then come while it is called to-day. Come up to help of the Lord, to help of the Lord against the mighty, and escape the curse of Meroz. We especially appeal to the churches in their organized capacity, and ask for Conventions, Conferences, Presbyteries and Associations to set apart men of the best talent and largest experience unto this work. Such a call, coming with the potential authority of a Church of God would doubtless decide many of the ablest ministers in the country to cast in their lots with us. We cordially and earnestly invite the venerable fathers of the Church to visit the army and preach for a few days or weeks in the regiments. Such voluntary labors, in many instances, have been signally blessed. The churches should be willing to spare their pastors for this work, and seek temporary supplies from neighboring ministers; or at least, all congregations might allow their ministers to visit the army for a time, and labor for those who have gone forth in their defence. Have not the soldiers who are away from their homes and churches, the right to claim a part of the time of their own pastors? But especially do we call upon the younger men because you are strong—come take part in this sacred cause and this holy fellowship with us.

If the ministers of the gospel, below the age of forty, are exempted from ordinary military duty, are they not bound to serve their country and the army in the capacity of chaplains? Have you a right to stay away while this destitution exists? We urge no extreme or fanatical view. Let all the regiments be supplied, and still the vast majority of ministers will remain at home with their congregations. We plead only for that which is just and equal. And we feel that we but do this when we maintain that congregations should assist in the support of the families of chaplains while laboring in the army. Such an arrange-