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THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER

OF

STONEWALL JACKSON.

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Captain and A. D. C. Staff of General Jackson.

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The Religious Character of Stonewall Jackson.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is not an accident that in the impressive exercises with which you open this building, there is a place assigned for the religious character of him whose name is here to abide.

It is not only that any study of his character and career would be incomplete, but that it would be wholly unphilosophical and untruthful, without a statement of that which lay so effectively in his heart, and covered so entirely all that we know of him. It was Thomas Carlyle who said, "A man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him." And more than of any man of renown of modern times, it is true of Jackson, that his religion was the man himself. It was not only that he was a religious man, but he was that rare man among men to whom religion was everything.

It is a remarkable fact that Oliver Cromwell, the great Puritan protector, of whom Thackeray spoke as "our great king," whose whole career has been the study of historians and critics, is in our day receiving a final study in his personal religion. Eminent critics are telling us that the campaigns of Jackson will be the study and admiration of military schools for centuries to come. However true that may be, of this we are sure, the religion of Stonewall Jackson will be the chief and most effective way into the secret springs of the character and career of the strange man, who as the years go by is rising into the ranks of the great *soldier-saints* of history—Saint Louis of France, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, Oliver Cromwell of England, Stonewall Jackson of America.

In the brief address I am to make today; in the hurried sketch I am to attempt of the inner springs of life and power in the story of Stonewall Jackson, I cannot be unmindful of the laws of heredity, and the strong inbred qualities that came in the blood of a stalwart race. Nor can I forget the discipline of the hard life of his childhood, a homeless orphan boy drifting from place to place, and in the tenderest years of youth, unprotected and exposed, seeking his bread as he could find it. Certainly, I must not fail to recall that a mother of piety and love left him a little child of seven years, with nothing of religious instruction, no mother's knee at which to say his childhood's prayer,

nothing to gentle and refine, nothing to restrain and guide him into an upright manhood, save the one unfading memory of that mother's love and parting blessing. Running away from a harsh and unloving home, with an older brother boating on the Ohio, camping in hunger and cold, riding an uncle's horses on a race-course, attempting the rude work of a country constable in the mountains of West Virginia, there was absolutely no instruction, no counsel, and no ruling authority in all the young years of growth and formation.

It is marvelous indeed that out of such a youth, he came with purity and integrity, truthful, honest, modest, and writing in rude characters that first brave maxim of life, "You may be whatever you resolve to be." I can find no mark of conscious religious sentiment in all this; though I see plainly the directing hand of a Divine providence fitting for a short life as rare and disciplined within, as it was brilliant and heroic without.

The thoughts of religion began to stir in his heart under the influence of a pious friend at West Point, and were felt with some power when, a young lieutenant at Fort Hamilton, he was, of his own desire, baptized into the Christian faith, by an Episcopal clergyman. They were moving effectually upon heart and conscience, when in the City of Mexico, applauded and promoted for conspicuous bravery, with a rare candor and open-heartedness he sought instruction of a bishop of the Catholic church, of whom he was accustomed to speak with the most sincere respect. The truths of the religion of Christ found a deep and abiding place in his heart, in the more quiet and regulated conditions of his first years in Lexington, when under the ministry of the venerable Presbyterian pastor, Dr. Wm. S. White, he made a public confession of his personal faith in Christ. Acknowledging his ignorance of religious truth, he came with entire candor and simplicity to be taught as a little child. The truths he heard were not wholly clear to him, and some things he antagonized with an honesty and courage that were most admirable in the sincere seeker after truth. Only through the long process of study, reflection and prayer, was he led into a clear vision of the great essential truths of evangelical religion. As they came out, like stars fixed in the firmament of his upward gaze, he bowed his head and his heart and gave them their rightful authority over all his manhood.

The inspired Psalmist declares of the wicked man, "*God is not in all his thoughts.*" The supreme fact in the character of Jackson was, that far beyond any man of whom we read, "*God was in all his thoughts.*"

It was not one truth or another about God, or one feature of our Christian religion, rather than another, that became real and dominant to him; but God, God himself, the living, personal and present God, became the one transcendent fact, that dwelt in all his thoughts, and possessed his whole being. It was not God only as the surpassingly glorious subject of reflection, or as living and working and revealing himself in nature and in history, nor as partially known by Hebrew prophets in the childhood of humanity; but God revealed in Christ, the God of law and love, whose law is love, and whose love leads back to law.

I am careful to say this, that I may also say, the supreme thought of God gave unity to his religion and unity to his life. As it went down into the hidden nature within, it possessed the whole man with unwonted power, and made him one and the same, a man of God within and without. Unto a personal and present God he gave the undivided faith of his heart. He acknowledged his supreme authority as maker and redeemer over every part of his being, and every breath of his life, and to that authority he bowed his will implicitly. "He came nearer putting God in God's place," said Dr. Stiles, "than any man we have ever known." And in this he put himself in the one rightful place to which man belongs, the humblest and the most majestic, the strongest, the safest, and the happiest that man can ever occupy.

It gave simplicity and directness and personal humility in an uncommon degree. All things were viewed in the light of the supreme fact of God. All things were referred to it. All things were submitted to the rulings of that fact. It covered all other facts, all other truth, it ruled all action, it answered all questions of duty, and made all his life and service one and simple forever.

How inevitably came his humility. He owed all to God, all that he was, all he had attained, all he had accomplished in class-room or on battlefield, and unto Him belonged all the praise and the glory. "God has given us a brilliant victory at Harper's Ferry to-day," he wrote from the field; "Our Heavenly Father blesses us exceedingly." On his camp-bed in the Wilderness hospital, when I read General Lee's magnanimous note congratulating him on the victory Jackson had won at Chancellorsville, he replied with emotion, "General Lee is very kind to me, but he should give the glory to God!"

How unquestionable was his dependence! As he lifted his hand in the morning twilight, riding down to the field of Fredericksburg, he

said, "I trust our God will give us a great victory to-day, Captain!"

How immediately came his obedience! A friend in Lexington asked him whether he would obey, if the Lord bade him leave the home he loved and all that it contained, and go on some mission to Africa. He rose and with intense feeling and prompt decision declared, "I would go without my hat." And asked if it were required of him to give up the activity and happiness of life, the exquisite happiness of *energy*, and lie on a bed of pain, he said, "I could lie there a thousand years without a murmur, if I knew it to be the will of my heavenly Father!"

I have been accustomed to recall two notable things in the religion of Jackson: his belief in the *providence of a present* God, ruling and directing in wisdom, power and goodness in all the affairs of men; and his consequent belief in the right and *power of prayer*, to Him whose ears are always open to the cry of his children, and who is ready to hear and answer above all that his children can ask or think. He was, as all knew who were at all in touch with his daily life, a man of prayer; humble, truthful, confident prayer, from which he came as the saint comes, with unspeakable joy in his heart, and serenity in all his face and bearing.

It is an old jest, that the Puritan could scarcely be said to enjoy his religion; but if Jackson were in any sense a puritan, his personal happiness was unbroken and abiding. The performance of duty was not hard, because the fear of the Lord he loved and served was the only fear he knew. There was no asceticism in his life, because there was no gloom in his heart. "I do rejoice," he said, "to walk in the love of God."

There were not lacking those who neither knew or understood the character of Jackson, nor had the most remote conception of the truth and power of his religion. If it appeared to any that sternness and rigidity marred his character, it was only because in such rare degree among men he lived and acted from deep conviction of duty, and that was strange to us. Whatever was remarkable about his personal bearing, and was sometimes criticised or ridiculed, was due to the absolute possession of him the great things of religion had taken.

These were the things that were the strong iron of his blood; they were the constant inspiration of his gentler, simpler life in his Lexington home, and as well the animating power of his matchless campaigns that have given him undying fame.

His patriotism was a duty to God. His obedience to the State that called him to the field was made clear and plain to him, as obedience

to God. All soldierly duty was rendered as a service to his God. He loved and revered the Sabbath day with great ardor; yet on a Sabbath morning, he came from his knees in his happy home, turned away from the services of the sanctuary he loved, and buckling on his sword, took command of the Cadet corps on yonder parade grounds, and rang out clear and sharp, his first command in the Civil War, "Battalion, march!" He went without fear, without regret, without selfish ambition, to the unknown fortunes of war. Whatever was the marvelous development of soldierly qualities, of brilliant generalship, whatever the story of campaign and victory, from which he never asked a furlough, and from which he never returned, he was the same devout and single-hearted servant of the living God.

Capable of anger and indignation in high degree, he had cultivated a self-control that gave him a self-mastery that was sometimes marvelous. An officer of rank came one Sunday afternoon to the little office building at Moss Neck to urge his personal application for a leave of absence. He violated the guard, and entered General Jackson's private apartment without announcement. Never had I seen General Jackson so surprised and then so angry. His face flushed, his form grew erect, his hands were clenched behind his back, he quivered with the tremendous effort at self-control. And no word was permitted to pass his lips until his passion was entirely mastered, when he quietly explained wherein the unfortunate colonel was violating all rules and all propriety, and sent him to his quarters, the most thoroughly whipped man I ever saw.

Having strong attachment to the church of which he was a member, and positive convictions concerning what he thought was true and right, he was yet generous and catholic in his esteem of all other churches, and had sincere respect for the views of others. Ruling himself with a severe discipline in things he deemed right, he was never censorious or dictatorial. He worshipped in all churches alike with devoutness and comfort. He encouraged the chaplains of all churches, Protestant and Catholic. A Protestant and a Presbyterian of Presbyterians, he obtained the appointment of a Catholic priest to a chaplaincy.

In nothing perhaps was the reality and power of his own religion so evident as in his interest in the religious welfare of others. With an unwearying diligence he conducted his Sunday-school for colored people. Visiting at Beverly, of his own volition, he gathered the village people to instruct them himself in the truths of religion. He was pro-

foundly interested in the work of the army chaplains, and used all his great influence and opportunity to sustain them. He was accustomed to make individual friends the subject of his earnest and continued prayer. He once came walking to the camp of the Rockbridge Artillery, asking for a certain corporal, and leaving a package for him in his absence. It was a matter of intense curiosity in the camp, as perhaps containing some handsome gift or unexpected promotion for the corporal; who, when he returned to camp, found the package to contain religious tracts for distribution among his comrades.

Not at all devoid of humor was the earnest, reticent man. His fondness for Gen. J. E. B. Stuart was very great, and the humor and frolic of that genial and splendid cavalryman was a source of unbounded delight. Dr. George Junkin, President of Washington College, and father of the first Mrs. Jackson, went back to Pennsylvania, at the opening of the war, and wrote a vigorous book on the errors into which he believed the South had fallen. He forwarded a copy of his book, under a flag of truce, from General Hooker's headquarters to General Lee's. It came to us about the time of the battle of Fredericksburg, and when I opened the package, and told our General its title, "Political Heresies," he said with a grim smile, "I expect it is well named, Captain; that's just what the book contains, 'Political Heresies.'"

I remember that two young girls in a mansion on the Rappahanock were with great earnestness asking for locks of his hair. Blushing like a girl himself, he plead that they had so much more hair than he had, then that he had grey hairs, and their friends would think he was an old man. They protested that he had no grey hair, and was not an old man, when he said, "Why, don't you know the boys call me 'Old Jack?'"

The stern warrior was one of the gentlest of men. He had the tenderest affection for little children. Little Janie Corbin was a pleasure and delight to him in the afternoons of his days of office toil at Moss Neck, as she folded paper and cut lines of soldiers and paraded them on his table. He heard from me of her death with an outburst of tears and a convulsed frame.

It was complained by one of his distinguished Generals of division, in a severe paper, that ladies, mothers, wives and daughters had invaded the vicinity of our camps, and were diverting officers and men from military duty. When that paper was read to him, Jackson rose and paced the room impatiently, and to the request that he would

order the ladies to retire, he said, "I will do no such thing; I am glad my people can have their friends with them; I wish my wife could come to see me."

No one who ever entered his house or obtained access to his office at his corps headquarters can forget the marked courtesy with which he was received. His attention was the same to his guest whether he was the General commanding, or a private soldier. Your hat was taken by his own hands, and his own black stool from the mess-hall of this Institute must be your seat while you were his guest.

Are these the things that mark the gentleman? Are purity and truth, modesty and courtesy the things by which we know him? These things he had, not by conventionality, but as the constant expression of a gentle nature, and the fruit of religious principle. An English gentleman of rank, and of large touch with polite society, at the end of a week's sojourn, spent chiefly in General Jackson's room, said, "He is a revelation to me; Jackson is the best informed soldier I have met in America, and as perfect a gentleman as I have ever known!"

How surpassingly fitting it seems that the two Virginia heroes of our civil war should meet again and find their resting place in tombs so near; in this retired place among the strong mountains of the State they loved so well! How unlike they were in many things, in origin, in culture, in family tradition, in the conventionalities of society, and in knowledge of the world! How much alike they were in unselfish devotion to the same cause, in true and simple piety, and in the generous honor that each paid to the other! They who set one over against the other, and study to give either one the greater glory of this campaign or that, do an unworthy violence to their spirit, and are rebuked in the presence of their silent tombs. Two lofty peaks, they stand on fame's eternal camping-ground, each giving unfading glory to the other.

How happy and hopeful it is that here the young men of Virginia, from mountains and low-lands alike, are to be gathered in growing numbers, and to be trained for life under the pervading inspiration of names and stories, than which none in all history are more true and effulgent in all things pure and lovely and of good report. If any young man shall go out from the institutions of Lexington to anything in life that is corrupt, or unmanly, or forgetful of the honor of Virginia, he will do so against the example and the appeal of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson.

Ten years of faithful toil Jackson gave to the Virginia Military

Institute, with difficulties that have not always been well understood. Through uncounted years to come his great name will rest upon this building as a benediction! The memory of the soldier and his campaigns and victories will abide in this hall, and the spirit of the honest and God-fearing Christian gentleman will come back to speak forever of that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom, and of that simple and humble faith which is the sure and only way to enduring honor and exaltation.

In the lowly building at Guinea's Station, where he lay suffering, failing, dreaming, passing away, he spoke of a grave "in Lexington, in the valley of Virginia." And then his thoughts so easily passed to another rest, and other shades.

"What are the thoughts that are stirring his breast?
 What is the mystical vision he sees?
 Let us pass over the river, and rest
 Under the shade of the trees!

"Caught the high psalm of ecstatic delight,
 Heard the harps harping like sounding of seas;
 Saw earth's pure-hearted ones, walking in white,
 Under the shade of the trees.

"Surely for *him* it was well — it was best —
 War-worn, yet asking no furlough of ease,
There to pass over the river, and rest
 Under the shade of the trees!"