

### **(iii) Stonewall Jackson**

Another hero of America's history is Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson. Born in 1824 at Clarksburg, West Virginia, he greatly impressed those who knew him with his discipline, caliber and Christian characteristics, for which he was unsurpassed.

Jackson's lawyer father died when he was quite young, leaving his wife with two sons and a daughter to support. Mrs. Jackson is reputed to have been a woman of faith in God and of biblical understanding, bringing this zeal and fervor for Christian values into the life of young Stonewall and his siblings. Jackson never forgot his mother, always referring to her in later years with deep love and gratitude. After his mother's remarriage, Jackson and his brother were sent to live with an uncle. But receiving bad treatment from his uncle, young Jackson bundled up his belongings, hung them over his shoulder on the end of a stick, and walked 17 miles to the home of another uncle, thus demonstrating determination and character.

At the age of 19, he made application to fill a vacancy at West Point, and was accepted in July, 1842. It is recorded that he would study late into the night by the light of a fire, lying upon the floor after "lights out," in order to show himself approved in his work. After much hard work and determination, Jackson graduated 17 in a class of 70.<sup>1</sup> Although regarded by fellow students as somewhat of an oddity in manners and appearance, Stonewall soon gained their allegiance through his Christian forbearance and outgoing personality. When the war broke out in 1845 between the United States and Mexico, Jackson showed great initiative, for which he was brevetted major. In 1851, he became a professor in the Lexington Military Institute, a post he held for 10 years.

### **Civil War Fame**

The election of Abraham Lincoln to office on March 4, 1861, as President of the United States, brought an opponent of slavery into the White House. On April 13, the Confederate capture of the Federal Fort Sumter at Charleston, South Carolina, led to a state of war. The Confederates, or southerners, numbered about six million whites. The command of the sea gave considerable advantage to the

Union armies, giving them the usual benefit of an extensive base. It was thus almost impossible to completely intercept them.

On April 29, 1861, Colonel Jackson took command of 4,500 men at Harper's Ferry. On November 1, 1861, Jackson, with the rank of Major General, was appointed to the command of the Shenandoah Valley, in which position he fully realized the importance of controlling the Baltimore and Ohio Railway.

Jackson excelled in "secrecy and surprise" of which Napoleon, Hannibal and Wellington were masters. His superiority of the regulars in battle appeared in the Mexican campaign, and at the two battles of Bull Run and at Gaines' Mill. He also understood the value and importance of using initiative. His expertise in the use of cavalry, the strategic arm before battle, were: scouting, screening, pursuing, charging and perhaps raiding. Jackson made it his constant practice to study his opponent's character. He was well versed in the use of strategic positions in warfare, thereby gaining frequent advantage over his adversary.

The above reflects Jackson's tactics and exploits as a true military genius, a product of West Point Military Academy.

Following are excerpts from Jackson's personal correspondence which show the inner man and nature:

Lexington, Virginia 1852

To his Aunt

Mrs. Clementine (Alfred) Neale:

... The subject of becoming herald of the cross has often seriously engaged my attention, and I regard it as the most noble of all professions. It is the profession of our divine Redeemer, and I should not be surprised were I to die upon a foreign field, clad in ministerial armor, fighting under the banner of Jesus. What could be more glorious? But my conviction is that I am doing good here; and that for the present I am where God would have me. Within the last few days I have felt an unusual religious joy. I do rejoice to walk in the love of God.<sup>2</sup>

The above depicts his foremost adherence to the cross of Christ, having frequently contemplated "the most noble of all professions," that of becoming a full-time minister, preacher or herald of the way of salvation through Christ Jesus. He concludes that

God's perfect will for his life presently is where he stands and rejoices in his calling.

Another letter, this time to his uncle, Alfred Neale, in 1842, concerns the untimely death of his brother Warren. It shows Jackson's joyous certitude of his brother's eternal destiny being secure, at the right hand of Jesus Christ, his Redeemer. Throughout Jackson's writings, his application of the Word of God and its promises to his own life and that of his family and friends, denotes an intimate relationship with its author:

I have received no answer to my last communication conveying the sad news of my brother's premature death. He died in the hope of a bright immortality at the right hand of His Redeemer . . . As time is knowledge I must hasten my pen forward. We have received the smile of Bounteous Providence in a favorable Spring. There is a volunteer company being formed here to march to Texas, in order to assist in the noble cause of liberty.<sup>3</sup>

Jackson was a consistent Christian man. He was a constant attendant on preaching and he taught a class of black children in the Sunday school at Lexington.

After receiving news of the victory of Manassas, the Reverend Dr. White of Lexington read a letter from Jackson to the people gathered around to hear the results of the battle:

My dear Pastor:

In my tent last night, after a fatiguing day's service, I remembered that I failed to send you my contribution for our colored Sunday School. Enclosed you will find my check for that object, which please acknowledge at your earliest convenience and oblige yours faithfully,

T. Jackson <sup>4</sup>

Jackson is further reported to have prayed this beautiful prayer to Almighty God on the battlefield in Manassas:

Oh God, let this horrible war quickly come to an end that we may all return home and engage in the only work that is worthwhile—and that is the salvation of men.<sup>5</sup>

It is reported that at General Jackson's death, seven million people throughout the South went into mourning. Says Colonel R.P. Chew, Chief of Horse Artillery, Army of Northern Virginia, in his address delivered at the Virginia Military Institute on June 19, 1912:

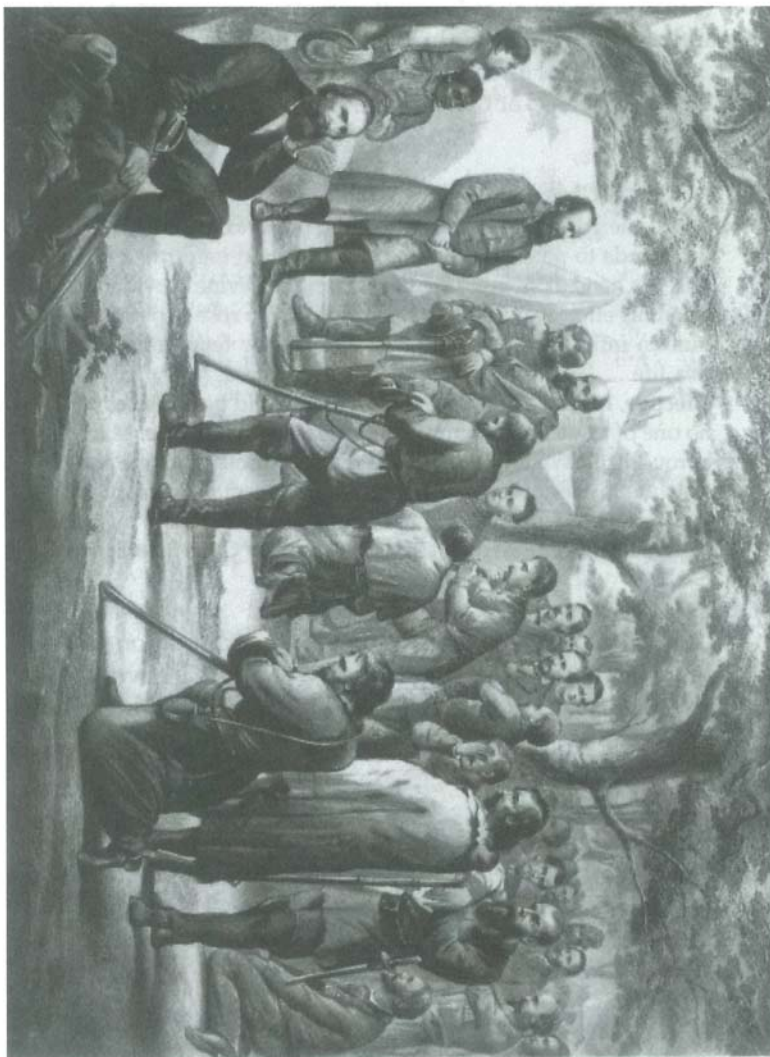
He was a Christian without fanaticism, a Christian in the open; one who did not hesitate in the presence of assembled thousands to pause on the eve of some great enterprise and raise his hand aloft, invoking the blessing of Divine Providence upon his efforts and those of his soldiers. He rose superior to human infirmity and was proof against the temptations of this life . . . while his strategy was as brilliant, his tactics as effective, he had achieved a victory that could be accorded to no one of these great commanders, (Caesar, Bonaparte, Marlborough and Wellington), he had made himself complete and absolute master of himself. Possessed of perfect poise of mind and temperament, his character adorned with every moral and manly attribute, and endowed with every Christian virtue. . . .<sup>6</sup>

General Robert E. Lee showed love and admiration for Jackson when, at the news of his death, he stated: "I have lost my right arm." Of Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson spoke thus: "I will follow General Lee blindfolded."<sup>7</sup>

### **Memorial to Stonewall Jackson**

Our National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., immortalizes the life of Stonewall Jackson with an inspiring stained-glass window. It depicts this American son kneeling on the battlefield, reading his Bible. The caption underneath reads thus:

To the glory of the Lord of Hosts whom he so zealously served and in honored memory of Thomas Jonathan Jackson, Lieutenant General C.S.R. Like a Stone Wall in his steadfastness, swift as lightning and mighty in battle, he walked humbly before his Creator, whose Word was his guide. This Bay is erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and his admirers from South and North.



Vizetelly's painting "Prayer in 'Stonewall' Jackson's Camp." Library of Congress Collection.

Such was the life and example of one of America's greatest sons. The nobility of his character, as with so many other great leaders, came from his love of God and his scrupulous adherence to His words, as has been amply demonstrated in the above narrative of Jackson's life and writings.



Washington National Cathedral stained-glass window of Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson, with inscription: "Reading the Bible." Photographer: John W. Wrigley.



THE DEATH OF STONEWALL JACKSON.

The Holy Bible, opened on a table at his bedside.