

The Rest of the Story, Civil War Fort Duffield's Connection to the Beloved Hymn, "Stand Up For Jesus"



George Duffield, Jr., 1818 – 1888, was brother to Colonel William Duffield, commander of the 9th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment. This unit is credited with building Fort Duffield, in the fall of 1861, a Union earthen fortification, situated in West Point, Hardin County, Kentucky.

George Duffield, Jr. graduated from Yale University, in 1837, and from Union Theological Seminary, in 1840. Like his father and grandfather before him, he was a Presbyterian minister. A good friend and fellow minister was Reverend Stephen H. Tyng.

In the year 1858, a great citywide revival swept across the city of Philadelphia. It was called The Work of God in Philadelphia. Of the participating ministers none was more powerful than the twenty-nine year old Episcopalian, Dudley Tyng. He was known as a bold, fearless and uncompromising preacher with great influence on the other spiritual leaders around him. His father, the Reverend Stephen H. Tyng, was for many years the pastor of the large Episcopalian Church of the Epiphany in Philadelphia. After serving a short time as his father's assistant, Dudley succeeded his father in this pulpit. However, some of the more fashionable members soon became upset with their young preacher because of his straightforward doctrinal preaching and his strong stand against slavery. He resigned this pulpit and with a group of faithful followers organized The Church of the Covenant.

In addition to his duties as pastor of the new and growing congregation, Tyng began holding noonday services at the downtown Y.M.C.A. Great crowds were attracted to hear this dynamic young preacher. On Tuesday, March 30, 1858, over 5,000 men gathered for a noon mass meeting to hear young Tyng preach from Exodus 10:11 - "Go now ye that are men and serve the Lord." Over 1,000 of these men responded by committing their hearts and lives to Christ and His service; the sermon was often termed one of the most successful of the times. During the sermon the young preacher remarked, "I must tell my Master's errand, and I would rather that this right arm were amputated at the trunk than that I should come short of my duty to you in delivering God's message." The next week, while visiting in the country and watching the operation of a corn thrasher in a barn, he accidentally caught his loose sleeve between the cogs; the arm was lacerated severely, the main artery was severed and the median nerve was injured. Four days later infection developed. As a result of shock and a great loss of blood, Dudley Tyng died, on April 19, 1858. At his deathbed, when asked by a group of sorrowful friends and ministers for a final statement, he whispered, "Let us all stand up for Jesus."

The next Sunday Tyng's close friend and fellow worker, the Reverend George Duffield, pastor of the Temple Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, preached his morning sermon as a tribute to his departed friend, choosing as his text Ephesians 6:14: "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness." He closed his sermon by reading a poem of six stanzas that he had written, inspired, as he told his people, by the dying words of his esteemed friend. Reverend Duffield's Sunday School superintendent was so impressed by the verses that he had them printed for distribution throughout the Sunday School. The editor of a Baptist periodical happened to receive one of these pamphlets and promptly gave it a wider circulation. From there it eventually found its way into the hymnals and hearts of God's people across the world. George J. Webb wrote the music for the hymn.

A preacher of the gospel for 48 years, George Duffield, Jr. also served as a Christian Commission delegate at Gettysburg. He later served as a Regent of the University of Michigan.