

Curtana † *Sword of Mercy*

A Journal for the Study of the Military Chaplaincy

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Table of Contents



Fore Words

An Introduction to the Eighth Issue	3
--	----------

Articles

Chaplain Isaac Blake: Pastor, Farmer, and Civil War Chaplain by Kenneth E. Lawson	5
---	----------

A Layperson's View of USAF "Team Chapel" by John Bigos	11
--	-----------

The First Female Military Chaplain: Ellen Elvira Gibson Hobart by Robert C. Stroud	15
--	-----------

Three Looks at the Chaplaincy by Harry G. Rosenbluh	29
---	-----------

Editorials

The Passing of the Pans by Scott Jimenez	37
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Have We a Right to Criticise Jesus? by Ellen E. Gibson	39
Martial Poetry	45
James E. Martin † C.S. Lewis Julia Keyes † Wilfred Owen Laurence Binyon † Edward Shillito Ernest Hemingway † John S. Gibbons Ivor Gurney	
Book Reviews	
<i>The Power of Parable</i> Reviewed by John E. Hugus	59
<i>A Born Again Episcopalian</i> Reviewed by Kenneth E. Lawson	61
<i>Faith in the Face of Empire</i> Reviewed by Robert C. Stroud	63
Resurrected Biographies	67
William Hoback † Abram Barnhart † Safety Layton Lewis Dale † Thomas Barnett † Orange V. Lemon Morrow P. Armstrong † Arad S. Lakin Greenberry C. Beeks † John W. Smith Orville P. Boyden † Enos W. Errick John McCarty † Silas Stout † Augustus Eddy Richard D. Spellman † Reuben H. Sparks	
Curious Citations	
Describing Chaplains as Vermin by Robert C. Stroud	75

† Fore Words †

An Introduction to the Eighth Issue

Welcome to the eighth issue of *Curtana † Sword of Mercy*. If you would like to contribute an article, editorial or poetry to a future issue of the journal, please contact the editor today.

Unpacking the Contents

The four articles in this issue all look to the past. As everyone knows, understanding the past provides us with wisdom for charting a superior future.

Two articles are written by individuals who worked beside chaplains to provide crucial ministry during their own time wearing an American uniform. John Bigos served as a United States Air Force chaplain assistant back in the day when they were referred to as “chapel management personnel.” He offers recollections that will be of benefit to those serving today.

The second article is actually a reprint from a 1970s issue of *The Military Chaplain Review*. It is amazing how timely the writer’s insights remain. Harry Rosenbluh served his fellow soldiers as a Jewish Lay Leader (before such appointments formally existed). His is a fascinating story. And it will surely bring back a few memories to those of us who served in the past. Having utilized a Vietnam vintage version while serving in Korea, I appreciated his humorous suggestion that those wonderful cantonment chapels of bygone days be remodeled or retired.

The other two articles are biographies of chaplains who served during the American Civil War. They are both written by chaplains. Kenneth Lawson relates the story of a farming pastor, Isaac Blake, who answered the call to serve as a Union chaplain. His story would be similar in various ways to many other chaplains serving during that conflict. Your editor has written a biography about the first woman to serve as a military chaplain (in the United States, at any rate). She is as utterly unique as Chaplain Blake was typical. Chaplain Gibson’s fuller story is actually told across several sections of this issue.

In the editorial section, Scott Jimenez offers a personal story to which I believe almost everyone can relate. It's about rites of passage. The second offering comes from the pen of Ellen Gibson. Following the war, she became an outspoken atheist. She was fairly prominent within the "Freethinker" movement, and delivered a formal address at one of their conferences. This issue contains that controversial speech. (Controversial in terms of societally, but not in the context in which it was delivered. She spoke to an audience very supportive of her atheist doctrines.)

James Martin graces us with some poetry, which is accompanied by a number of historical pieces. We offer two book reviews and, of course, a collection of biographical notes about military chaplains.

We include three book reviews. One addresses the relationship between parables and history in the Gospels. Another is the biography of an evangelical Episcopal leader. And, finally, we review a book discussing peace in the Holy Land from the perspective of a Christian Palestinian.

In our Curious Citations section we diverge from our established method of gleaning random references to military ministry from diverse sources. I have written (edited, might be more accurate) a modest article about how military (and civilian federally funded) chaplains were regarded by the Freethinker movement. We have reproduced, from a lengthy published collection, two illustrations, along with their complete original commentaries. Although these essays were not written by Ellen Gibson, they were published by a press she actively supported, and reflect her own opinion about ending government support for military chaplains.

We hope you will enjoy this issue of *Curtana* and share it with others.



† Articles †

Chaplain Isaac Blake **Pastor, Farmer & Civil War Chaplain**

Kenneth E. Lawson

Isaac Blake (1804-1883) ministered a long time ago in my hometown in rural, northeastern Vermont. His name is all but forgotten today, but he had an enduring influence during his lifetime and beyond.

Early years

The Civil War of 1861-1865 reached into all regions of the United States. Rural northeastern Vermont was no exception. A son of the state born in Derby in 1804 would grow up to be a successful clergyman in his home area. If it were not for his Civil War service, Rev. Isaac Blake might never have seen the world outside upstate Vermont.

Isaac Blake was born to Samuel and Sarah (Atkins) Blake. They were of Irish descent. The 1870 and 1880 United States Census states that Samuel was born in New Hampshire and Sarah was born in Quebec. According to the *History of Derby, Vermont*, by Cecile Hay, life in Derby in the early 1800s was a period of dirt floors, homespun clothing, hunting and farming for survival, and attending church meetings. Dirt roads with wagon wheel ruts were the way of transportation. People married young and typically had large families. Men had various jobs depending on the time of year, while women mostly worked at home or in the fields.

We know nothing about Isaac Blake's call into Christian ministry as a boy in Derby. We do know that Isaac at age twenty-two married Azubah Caswell Aldrich. It was 1826. Azubah (1803-1872) was born in Potton, Quebec, on the west side of Lake Memphremagog near the Vermont border. Isaac and Azubah had eleven children, two of whom died in infancy. Of the nine remaining children, only two married and remained in the state, while the others married and moved west.

The name of Isaac Blake's wife Azubah comes from an obscure biblical woman in the Old Testament. In ancient Israel, Azubah was the wife of the godly King Asa and the mother of the godly King Jehoshaphat. The biblical Azubah was a respected and faithful wife and mother. Such a unique name for a daughter in the early nineteenth century meant that her parents knew their Bible well and had ambitions for their daughter to dedicate herself to a godly marriage and home. Her parents could not have been disappointed in her marriage to Isaac.

We do not know where Isaac Blake received his ministerial training. Most likely he studied under the tutelage of a local minister. We *do* know that in the early nineteenth century, many parts of America were overwhelmed with speculation that Jesus Christ was soon to return and that the end of the world was nearing. In 1818 a Baptist minister named William Miller did biblical calculations predicting the end of the world on April 13, 1843. Over the years, the speculations of this uneducated Baptist preacher and farmer from the New York-Vermont border gained wide interest. According to *Borderline Religion*, by J.I. Little, as early as 1831 Miller was preaching in the northeastern regions of Vermont. Miller and his followers gathered believers into meetings notably in Derby and across the border in Stanstead, Quebec. It was then that Rev. Isaac Blake met Miller and Blake accepted the Adventist ideas.

In the 1860 Census, Rev. Isaac Blake is listed as a fifty-four year old resident of Derby. He was married to Azubah and they had one child living at home named Isaac after his father. In 1860 young Isaac was fifteen years old and attending school locally. Rev. Blake and his wife had a meager personal estate of \$322.00 and real estate valued at \$1200.00. They were not wealthy at all.

Rev. Isaac Blake and his wife were well known in Derby. He organized the Advent Christian Church from small home meetings in 1858 in nearby Holland. Many in the congregation worked in local saw mills or were farmers, dairymen, shopkeepers, or tradesmen of various sorts. Blake's occupation as a farmer and rural clergyman was uneventful until 1861, when at age fifty-seven, he enlisted as a soldier for the Union in the Civil War.

Civil War Years

In 1861, a fervor over the departure of the Confederate States from the Union called Vermonters to war. Company B of the 8th Vermont Infantry Regiment was recruited in northeastern Vermont. In November and December of 1861 the volunteers were encamped and drilled at Derby Line. Isaac Blake was not much of a shot so he enlisted as a musician, specifically a fifer. On December 14, Company B reached its quota and travelled to Brattleboro to be mustered into federal service on February 12, 1862. The 8th Vermont then went by train to Connecticut and eventually went by steamship on rough seas for the long voyage to the Gulf of Mexico.

Isaac Blake served with the 8th Vermont through late 1862 in and around New Orleans, Louisiana. At that time Blake was both a fifer and an unofficial chaplain. As a fifer he was responsible for musically communicating the commands of his superior officers at specific times of the day. Also, with the other musicians he entertained the troops. His unofficial chaplain duties included preaching, counseling, and funeral responsibilities.

The 8th Vermont Regiment was mostly stationed at Algiers, a district of New Orleans. This was a major railroad and shipping point for the Confederacy. The Union Navy conquered this area in the spring of 1862 and the 8th Vermont troops were thereafter an unwelcome occupying army. The 8th Vermont was not at that time involved in combat operations, yet many Vermonters died of disease in the marshy, mosquito-infested hot and humid climate.

In the *History of the Eighth Regiment Vermont Volunteers, 1861-1865*, it mentions Isaac Blake's service as a common enlisted soldier, a fifer, and that he was promoted and transferred out of the 8th Regiment. The text states, "Rev. Isaac Blake, fifer, company B, to Chaplain of the Third Colored Regiment." This text also lets us know how Isaac Blake was appreciated by the soldiers of the 8th Vermont Regiment from the following statement:

The members of the [8th] Regiment will have pleasant recollections of... Father Blake, as he was familiarly called, who enlisted as a fifer in company B. He often held evening religious meetings in camp, and at Algiers [New Orleans, Louisiana] he frequently preached to the colored people. [He was] a helpful assistant in taking care of the sick and wounded, and he often said the funeral service over a dead comrade. When "Father" Blake was promoted to the chaplaincy of a colored regiment, all felt that it was a merited compliment to a faithful soldier and a noble man.

Service as a Chaplain

In late 1862 or early 1863 Isaac Blake became the Chaplain of the 3rd Infantry Regiment Louisiana United States Colored Troops, originally called the 3rd Louisiana Regiment Native Guard Infantry. (The unit was also known as the 75th United States Colored Infantry.) When Chaplain Blake arrived the 3rd Louisiana was preparing for a bold attack on Port Hudson, Louisiana. The regiment was composed of white officers and black soldiers who were mostly former slaves. In late May the 3rd Louisiana proved itself in combat against entrenched Confederate forces. Their courage removed the stigma some people wrongly held that Black soldiers could not fight well in actual combat. Twenty percent of the 3rd Louisiana became casualties in this unsuccessful assault. The unit was commended for its bravery. Chaplain Blake had extensive work to do in comforting the wounded and burying the dead.

An anecdote from Chaplain Blake's ministry with the 3rd Louisiana Colored Infantry has survived. While serving with his Black soldiers in Louisiana, Blake was with the regiment while under fire from Confederate artillery. When the Union artillery did not reply, Father Blake went to the artillery captain and stated that this was one of those times that it was more blessed to give than to receive. The artillerymen took the hint and with a cheer for the old chaplain, the Union fired and silenced the Confederate cannons.

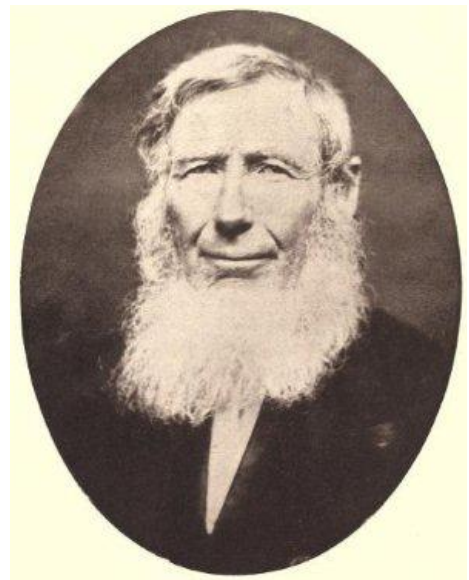
Rev. Isaac Blake served with the 3rd Louisiana for eight months. This was difficult duty, always marching through marshy terrain, frequently skirmishing with the enemy, fighting disease, or maintaining monotonous guard and patrol duties in the harsh Louisiana climate. Chaplain Isaac Blake easily won the favor of his soldiers and was respected by the white officers.

As with thousands of northern soldiers, Chaplain Blake got sick in Louisiana. Military records state that he was released from military service on July 12, 1863 under the category "dis/dis" meaning discharged from a disability. For two years he served as a Union soldier, first as a fifer and then as a chaplain. He then returned home to his wife in Holland, Vermont.

Later Years

The return to the tiny town of Holland in northeastern Vermont improved Rev. Blake's health. A vigorous man, his military service in the deep south did not permanently affect his health. He returned as pastor to a group of Adventist Christians without a church building, and resumed farming. He came home from war at age sixty and ministered in Holland until death at about age eighty in 1883.

In the 1870 Census, Isaac Blake is listed as a sixty-six year old minister in Holland, Vermont. The value of his real estate had plummeted to \$650.00 and his personal estate was valued at a measly \$250.00. Yet his civilian ministry expanded. The Census stated that Azubah was "keeping house" at age sixty-nine and that there were no children still living at home.



The peak years for the Adventism movement were in the 1840s. When prophecies related to the return of Jesus and the end of the world did not transpire, the movement floundered. Fledgling groups of Adventists in northeastern Vermont disbanded or joined other protestant denominations. Isaac Blake's group was an exception. Blake was able not only to keep the group together after his Civil War service, but the group prospered.

In 1887 they constructed their first church building in Holland, three years after Rev. Blake died. Further, in 1871 Blake had organized the Evangelical Advent Church in nearby Morgan with eighteen members, while still at the Holland church as pastor. This building is still standing today in Morgan at the corner of Route 111 and Toad Pond Road.

The 1880 Census lists the seventy-six year old Isaac Blake as a “clergyman.” His first wife Azubah had died in 1872 and Isaac was remarried in 1873 to Lucy S. Rowell. They were married in Barnston, Quebec, just over the border from Holland. The 1880 US Census says Lucy was age forty-nine, Isaac was seventy-six. She is listed in the Census as “keeping house” with no others at home with her and her husband. Lucy was born in 1831 in Quebec, as were both her parents.

Theologically, Isaac Blake held to several Adventist principles which are common among many protestant denominations today. Without accepting the emotional extremes evident in some expressions of Adventism, Blake agreed with the basic Adventist doctrines. These included the soon and sudden return of Jesus Christ to the earth, the desire to watch over fellow believers in love, and the need to apply the Bible to everyday life.

While making a pastoral visit, Rev. Isaac Blake died in Lowell near Holland, Vermont on September 20 or 23, 1883. The Magazine of Western History (volume nine) records:

After the war he kept up his army affiliations. It was while attending a reunion that his useful life suddenly came to an end. He was visiting a sick comrade, ministering to his wants, both spiritual and temporal, when his kind and sympathizing and patriotic heart ceased beating, and his unwearied hands dropped by his side never more to be lifted. He was singularly successful in the pulpit. Possessor of a fine voice, he was enabled by his singing to greatly add to his effectiveness as a preacher.

After Blake’s death, we lose track of his second wife Lucy. In the 1890 Census she not only is no longer a resident of Vermont, but she is not listed as a resident anywhere in the United States. The natural conclusion is that after Isaac died, she returned to Quebec where she had relatives she could live with. Isaac is buried next to his first wife Azubah in the Mead Hill Cemetery in Holland.

Of Chaplain Isaac Blake it was stated in the *8th Vermont Infantry Biography*, “He was a man of marked character, and many of his good deeds and speeches are treasured by his comrades.” *Conway’s of Ireland* stated of Isaac Blake:

Rev. Isaac Blake was a preacher of the Second Advent persuasion, in northeastern Vermont, and had reached nearly three-score, when the war broke out. Having preached the duty of sustaining the government by arms, he enforced his teachings by his example, and at the age of 58 enlisted, at Derby, in company B, of the Eighth Regiment . . . His age and earnestness of faith distinguished him, no less than his music, among the men of the regiment.

Isaac Blake served well his God, his country, and his parishioners in rural northeastern Vermont.

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Kenneth Lawson is a resident of Derby, Vermont. He is currently serving in the United States Army as a chaplain with the rank of colonel. He is presently stationed with his family at Fort Hunter, Liggett, California.

A Layperson's View of the Ministry of the USAF "Team Chapel"

John Bigos

My trip to the office of the chaplain came from unemployment. I was laid off from an automobile company, and could not afford to continue in college. I was looking for anything to take me away from the depressed work situation in Detroit, Michigan. I volunteered to join the United States Air Force in 1975. My recruiter was pleasant, but let me join under an open category of career fields, which meant that I was going to be placed in something as yet unknown, once I got to basic training. At that time the career fields that were seriously short of manpower were security forces and cooks. I had to take a defense language aptitude test, on which I scored very highly. I was tentatively assigned to go to the Defense Language Institute to learn a Middle Eastern language. That did not appeal to me.

One day, after marching around in the hot south Texas sun, our flight was ushered into the base chapel to receive some moral instruction. I recall that of all the places I had been marched into, this was the most pleasant. Then a senior NCO came to speak, and told us that the one career field we could not be forced into accepting was that of chapel management. He asked who was interested. I raised my hand.

I had an interview with a Catholic chaplain. He asked me vaguely about my faith commitment, and asked what I thought of working with ministers of other outlooks. I was raised in the Polish tradition of Catholicism, in the spirit of the typical European tradition of Catholicism. The church is acknowledged, but it's not something to dwell upon. In my limited exposure to other faiths, I really had no thoughts one way or the other. I stated that I had worked with professional engineers in the past, and felt I would have no problem dealing with professional ministers. The chaplain remarked that I had given him a very good answer. He indicated that "religiously oriented" volunteers for the job were not looked at with favor, since sometimes they tended to preach on their own. Obviously, a chaplain assistant who considered him or herself to be a chaplain, could cause confusion and interfere with the mission of the chaplain's office. Out of a handful of candidates that day, I was picked.

From basic training I proceeded to technical training. There I learned the basics of being an office person in a religious environment: typing, finance, and religious services support. I went on from there to assignments stateside and overseas, and I thoroughly enjoyed the career field.

The chaplain is the key player in ministry to the Air Force community. He or she is trained to bring and share hope with the personnel at their location, be it stateside, overseas, or deployed. At the time I was in military service, the major faith groups represented were Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish. As with the cross section of people in the United States, the cross section of chaplains represents most major faith groups.

Some chaplains are extremely talented and a joy to work with. Others are competent at their job and a joy to work with. And there are those who are not talented or competent, and are challenging to work with.

In the Air Force, chaplains are assigned to their own section, with the senior chaplain as the supervisor of all the chaplains and the senior NCO. The senior NCO supervises the enlisted support personnel. As with the cross section of society I mentioned above concerning ministers, the same applies to the support staff. Some are extremely talented and a joy to work with, others are competent at their job and a joy to work with. And, unfortunately, there are also those who are not talented or competent, and are challenging to work with.

An Enlisted View of the Chaplain's Role

The workload of a chaplain is all inclusive. Preparation of worship services is the number one priority, and everything else needs attention when and where possible. Being the center of attention at worship services is the generally most "visible" work the chaplain is involved in, reaching out to the military members and their families. But that is only one part of the chaplaincy ministry.

Most other aspects are not as visible. As a layperson, I think that they would also not be quite as rewarding as leading worship. The chaplain is tasked to be a counselor, an advisor, a teacher, and at times a referee. Military families can suffer stress even beyond that of their civilian counterparts. The chaplain is asked to add his or her input into complex family situations, ranging from marital troubles to children issues. I recall one chaplain telling me that, out of frustration, he *ordered* a counselee not to continue abusing his family. I wonder to this day if he was serious about that counseling technique or was just making a wry remark.

The chaplain enjoys complete confidentiality with those military members that visit him. They will not report what transpired during a counseling session to the commander or first sergeant. Most chaplains are wise enough to suggest the client get medical or other professional help where warranted. However, some try to solve everything themselves, without referring people to other agencies designed to provide therapy and more extensive psychological help.

The recognition of the importance of visitation has grown in recent years. Chaplains make visits to the workplaces of the military members. They go to the hot flight line, to the hectic hospital, to the overworked maintenance hangars, and to the undermanned personnel offices, to show that someone is interested in what the individual military member is doing. Supervisors and commanders do not always do that, overwhelmed as they are with mission responsibilities. That is where the chaplain is most important. The chaplain reflects the presence of the spirit of hope. There will be a new day coming.

When I was in Europe in the 1980's there was still a cold war going on. When we were ordered to report to duty stations in the middle of the night, we did not know whether it was an exercise in progress or a real world situation. That thought frightened anyone who understood what could happen if hostilities were to break out. The chaplain had to don his protective gear just like every other military member, and was there to do the task required.

Chaplains were also there to be that presence of the spirit of hope. I know I personally needed that assurance and encouragement, because there were times I really was terrified. My wife and children were with me in Europe, and I worried about them even as I tried to accomplish my checklist with the chaplain in the emergency operation centers.

I joined the Air Force after the movies M*A*S*H and Patton had been released. The chaplain in those films had been presented as an amiable but ignorable presence in M*A*S*H. The chaplain was shown as an errand boy for General Patton in the other film. Patton officiously ordered him to prepare a prayer for a major offensive, "and that's an order." What great Hollywood presentations. I am grateful that I ignored both of those misrepresentative movies, which also made light of medical personnel the same way.

No, I learned firsthand that chaplains are as professional in the military as the ministers they were in civilian life, without the same recognition they could enjoy in those "safer" ministries. I learned that the professionals in the military—doctors, lawyers, and ministers—are as committed as those in civilian life, with the addition that they are part of the military community. I never had a desire to be a chaplain, but I possessed a genuine desire to support the chaplains, because in that way I too had the opportunity to reach out to the military community and help in my own way, as part of Team Chapel.

No one explained that to me directly when I was in the career field, neither my supervisors nor the chaplains themselves. Many may never have thought of it that way. Today's focus on unit ministry teams, and the powerful partnerships between chaplains and chaplain assistants, is a great confirmation of what I always believed.

My final thought on the Air Force chaplain office is that this was one place where the professional ministers were forced to deal with each other, learn to accept different viewpoints, and do so without compromising their own beliefs. I did not care what any individual chaplain believed, as long as he or she seriously worked with me on carrying out the administrative requirements of running one of the installation's major public facilities. The mission was to serve the military community, and that is a purpose in which the professional minister and I, the layman, were privileged to share.

© 2014 by John Bigos.

Following his career as a member of the United States Air Force Chaplain Service, John Bigos continued serving his nation as a valuable member of the Civil Service.

The First Female Military Chaplain Ellen Elvira Gibson Hobart

Robert C. Stroud

Many dedicated and gifted women have served as chaplains in the United States armed forces. Chaplain, Major General Lorraine Potter, served in a senior leadership role as Chief of Chaplains for the Air Force. Like their male counterparts, they have come from many different faith traditions, and the vast majority have served with integrity.

The honor of being the first woman chaplain goes to Ellen E. Gibson Hobart,¹ who was “elected” chaplain of the First Wisconsin Heavy Artillery in 1864. However, it was not until quite recently that Gibson received a formal *commission* as a chaplain. In fact, although she served with the regiment for nearly a year, she received no pay for her service until 1869 (four years after the war’s conclusion). At that time, Congress passed a statute allowing her to receive the “full pay and emoluments of a chaplain . . . as if she had been regularly commissioned and mustered.” As these words reveal, the bill stopped short of awarding Gibson an *actual* Army commission. That injustice would not be remedied until 2002 when Congress “authorized and requested” that the President “posthumously appoint Ella E. Gibson to the grade of captain in the Chaplains Corps of the Army.” This is slightly ironic, since at the time of her service, chaplains did not hold formal military rank at all. Thus, Chaplain Hobart, as a “captain,” gained a privilege not shared by her civil war peers.

Following Gibson’s service during the War Between the States, many years would pass before the next female chaplain would be commissioned in the United States military. It would be more than 100 years before the first female chaplain was officially commissioned into the military, when Reverend Dianna Pohlman Bell became a Navy chaplain in 1973. (Historical perfectionists will note that Chaplain Bell’s commissioning actually preceded Chaplain Gibson’s, but since the latter’s was retroactive, we will pass on that debate.)

In some ways, Gibson was a trailblazer, rightfully admired. In others, she was a very peculiar individual and her religious beliefs will be shocking to many. A quotation from her obituary summarizes her final status as an atheist who opposed governmental support of religion, even in the form of chaplaincies. As the laudatory

¹ Hobart was her last name during her election and service as a chaplain. However, following a divorce shortly after the war, she resumed the use of her maiden name. In light of that, and the fact that most of her writings are attributed to “Ellen E. Gibson,” we will refer to her by her preferred surname, despite the technical inaccuracy. Chaplain Gibson’s first name is sometimes cited as “Ella,” by which she frequently went. She also filed her (pay) grievances

tribute celebrated: “In fact, she was about the first woman that we remember who became entirely liberated from Christian superstition.”² We will see how her liberation from Christian doctrines began even before her commissioning as a chaplain.

Even as we consider the life and faith of Reverend Gibson, it should be noted that there is no reason to believe her military service was anything other than honorable. She did not misrepresent her beliefs at the time of her selection as a chaplain. Her concern for Union soldiers was apparently commendable. Thus, in terms of her military service, Chaplain Gibson merited the posthumous recognition she received as the first female chaplain in the United States armed forces. It is unfortunate she did not enjoy the dignity that properly accompanies that achievement during her lifetime.

A Circuitous Path to the Chaplaincy

The path to Gibson promotion was rather convoluted. In July, 1861, Ellen Gibson married John Hobart, who sometimes still fancied himself a Methodist, despite his conversion to Spiritualism in the mid-1850s.³ Ellen had likewise laid aside the Methodist Christian faith of her youth and adopted the occult worldview of Spiritualism. Her theological perspective was not the primary issue in assessing her suitability for the chaplaincy. Gibson was a patriot, totally devoted to the Union cause. When her husband was made chaplain of the Eighth Wisconsin Infantry, she immersed herself in the life of that regiment, and won the hearts of its members.

She penned a temperance pamphlet entitled *The Soldier’s Gift: The Dangers and Temptations of Army Life*⁴ and generously contributed the first one hundred dollars from its sale to the work of the Northwest Sanitary Fair at Chicago, in 1863. The cover of the booklet features a place to inscribe the names of the presenter and the recipient. The dedication reads: “To My Husband, Chaplain of the Live Eagle Regiment, Eighth Wisconsin Volunteers, This Work is Affectionately Dedicated.” It is conjectured that the booklet, which was dedicated to her husband, may have been inspired by “her frustration at his weakness for ardent spirits.”⁵ The dedication continues:

² “Ella Elvira Gibson—Obituary,” *Free Thought Magazine*, volume 19 (H.L. Green, 1901): 296.

³ John W. Brinsfield et al, *Faith In The Fight: Civil War Chaplains* (Stackpole Books, 2003): 37-38.

⁴ Ella E.G. Hobart, *The Soldier’s Gift: The Dangers and Temptations of Army Life* (Tribune Press, 1863).

⁵ Brinsfield, *Faith*, 38. The United States Sanitary Commission (USSC) coordinated support of the war effort in civilian communities, including fund-raising fairs. The USSC was an official agency of the government and it effectively coordinated the volunteer efforts of women who desired to contribute to Federal war effort. These women raised millions of dollars, made uniforms and bandages, and volunteered as nurses and cooks in military camps and hospitals. They worked closely with Union chaplains and were highly regarded. Such appreciation was not universal, however. The organization was forced to respond to critics in its own publications. One such incident reads:

And to every lover of his Country in the hour of her peril,
 Every Soldier on the battle-field,
 Every sister laboring and praying at home,
 Every liberty-loving, truthful, progressive heart,
 whether black or white, on land or sea,
 Every struggling soul who desires improvement,
 and who seeks to reform the world.
 To the Afflicted,
 Whose buds of promise have been despoiled of their beauty,
 or have perished in this sanguinary strife,
 Comes the Author, With an embalming tear, and weeps as
 “The Soldier’s Friend.”

The thirty-two page booklet includes poems and exhortations. It exhorts soldiers to retain their moral standards, to “never lose the man in the soldier. [To] remember that in all the relations of life . . . he is still a father, son, brother or husband, and that as such, he is expected to fulfill all the obligations devolving upon him in those relations.”⁶

At some point Gibson grew dissatisfied with her civilian role. She determined to become a regimental chaplain. And she did what many nineteenth century Americans did when they desired a federal appointment. She went directly to the president of the United States.

An Audience with Abraham Lincoln

Gibson was well aware of the fact that her commissioning would be a novel divergence from historical tradition. But, after being unanimously affirmed by the officers of a newly forming Wisconsin regiment, she boldly went directly to the president to support her commissioning as a chaplain. Their meeting must have been fascinating. Their historic encounter is described thusly in *Faith in the Fight*.

Another letter comes from Bradford County, Pa., complaining that a chaplain from the army had publicly opposed the Sanitary Commission in his county, and had discouraged the Ladies Aid Society from contributing any more to the soldiers through that channel. His complaint was, that the “contributions of the people rarely reach the suffering soldier, but that the officers of the army who control these sanitary stores, appropriate them to their own use, and leave the private soldier to suffer in his destitution and want.” We assure the Society at Leraysville, in Bradford, that they may continue in their noble work without discouragement, if they will trust to their good impulses, and their past experience. When officers return from the army and say, that they—the officers—use the supplies that are given to them for the soldiers by the Commission, there need be no blame attached to the Commission. We are confident, however, that the chaplain is in error about the supplies to soldiers not reaching them. (*United States Sanitary Commission Bulletin*, Volume 3, New York, 1866, p. 788.)

⁶ Gibson, *Soldier’s Gift*, 7.

The president may have tried letting her down easy, telling her that hers was a hopeless application. Yet there she sat, in a somber black dress that was her feminine version of the prescribed chaplain's uniform. A veteran of many political bargaining sessions, Lincoln recognized blind determination in the face of reason when he saw it, and so he finessed the problem with an expedient nick-of-time gimmick. "This lady would be appointed Chaplain of the First Wisconsin Heavy Artillery, only that she is a woman," he wrote as she watched. "The President has not legally anything to do with such a question, but has no objection to her appointment." He wished Mrs. Hobart good luck with her quest, handed her the note that listed the salient points of their discussion, and directed her to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. The note with Lincoln's signature should gain her deference and prompt treatment at the War Department.⁷

Stanton, however, did not defer to the President's ambiguous endorsement. Gibson was rebuffed, not meeting the presupposed gender requirements for commissioning as an Army officer.

Gibson's failure to procure formal approval prohibited her being "mustered" into the service, but it did not prevent her from serving *de facto* as the regiment's chaplain. They made no effort to secure another. Caring for the troops at Fort Randall, in the role of a chaplain's wife, had provided her with visibility. Fort Randall, on the Missouri River in South Dakota, was a staging ground for new units. Gibson approached the commander of one of the new Wisconsin units being formed there, volunteering to serve as his chaplain. She later wrote "Colonel Meservey and all his officers in camp committed themselves to me." She considered that endorsement to be the beginning of her chaplaincy, writing "from that day I labored particularly for that regiment . . . doing all in my power for the comfort and happiness of the men, just as I did after the November 22 election when I was legally acknowledged chaplain-elect of the regiment."⁸

Gibson joined her regiment in Virginia. The First Wisconsin Heavy Artillery was assigned to defend Washington, D.C. In that capacity, they saw no action. That did not, however, mean that their chaplain was not a busy person. Since they manned their large guns at seven different fortifications, Gibson had to travel between them conducting her ministrations. Added to that was visitation of regimental troops who were hospitalized due primarily to illness. She described her duties in this way: "I did all and more than was required of me in the hospital, and I held two or three services every Sunday in various barracks, speaking also weekday evenings and conducting funerals. Much was done in the open air as late in the season as December because we had no chapel or place of meeting other than the barracks."⁹

⁷ Brinsfield, *Faith*, 36.

⁸ *Ibid*, 38.

⁹ *Ibid*, 40.

By all accounts, those she served held her in high regard. In 1869 she received her first recompense. A joint resolution of Congress was passed.

Be it resolved . . . That Ella E. Hobart, who was appointed as chaplain to the first regiment of Wisconsin volunteer heavy artillery, shall be entitled to receive the full pay and emoluments of a chaplain in the United States Army, for the time during which she faithfully performed the services of a chaplain to said regiment, as if she had been regularly commissioned and mustered into service.¹⁰

This validation was appreciated, but it fell short of fully acknowledging her trailblazing accomplishment. Despite receipt of her emoluments, she continued battling for the recognition she would not receive until 2002.

Gibson and her husband were not the only chaplains who practiced Spiritualism. Chaplain John Pierpont, whose advanced age forced him to resign his commission after two brief weeks, did not find his own interest in spiritualism incompatible with his ordination as a Unitarian pastor.

The liberal cast of Pierpont's mind is reflected in his attraction to phrenology and Spiritualism, both common beliefs of antebellum reformers. Never admitting any conflict between his beliefs as a Unitarian and Spiritualist, Pierpont became an active "investigator" into Spiritualist phenomena as early as 1854, and by the late 1850s, was a firm believer.

"There is not a fact in sacred history," he wrote, "or, in truth, in any other history, of which the evidence presented to my mind is so strong—or a tithe as strong, as that those whom I have loved, and have 'gone before' are often, if not always around me, and that I am still an object of their interest and of their care" (1861 September 19).

It is likely that these beliefs—along with his penchant for preaching politics—contributed to renewed conflict in his congregation in Medford that in the spring of 1858, once again led him to resign a pastorate.¹¹

Gibson's Civilian Ministries

¹⁰ George P. Sanger, ed. *The Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America from December 1867 to March 1869*, volume 15 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1869): 465.

¹¹ This paragraph comes from a brief biography of Chaplain Pierpont written by the William L. Clements Library, which houses the John Pierpont Papers. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/clementsms/umich-wcl-M-2713.35pie?view=text>

Less than three months after General Lee's surrender at the Appomattox Court House, Gibson had returned to the speaking circuit. One of her first presentations dealt with a very timely subject. In the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation and the elimination of slavery even in the Border States (which had originally been exempted from Lincoln's order), Gibson spoke on the logical question that followed. It is interesting to note that the brief announcement in the *New York Herald* mentions neither her service as a chaplain nor her beliefs as a (former?) "trance lecturer."

Negro Suffrage—Those of our citizens who are interested in the subject of negro suffrage can have an opportunity to hear what a woman thinks and how she tells what she thinks, by attending a lecture to be given this evening, at Metropolitan Hall, 95 Sixth avenue, by Mrs. Ella E. Hobart, who has recently returned from the South, where she has been in the capacity of a nurse.¹²

Gibson was born on 8 May 1821, she was named Elvira. Elvira was the name of her elder sister who died in infancy twenty months prior to her own birth. At some point, "By an act of the Legislature her name was changed to Ellen Elvira Gibson."¹³ She became an educator, and "the first twelve years of her maturity she was a teacher in the public schools of Rindge, N.H., and Winchendon, Asbury and Fitchburg, Mass."¹⁴

An 1887 freethought publication briefly describes Gibson's conversion from orthodox Christianity. In a tribute to her ongoing work to promote liberal thought, the editor wrote:

Another lady who takes an unceasing interest in all that pertains to Freethought is Ellen Elvira Gibson. Born at Winchendon, Massachusetts, May 8th, 1821, she became a public school-teacher at the age of fifteen, but in 1848 had to retire on account of ill-health. A serious study of the Bible brought her face to face with many difficulties, and she had to relinquish belief in the infallibility of that book. She took to the Freethought platform, and with much success. . . .

Miss Gibson actually served as chaplain, with or without commission. She, however, did not succeed in getting her pay and pension. She is the author of "Godly Women of the Bible, by an Ungodly Woman of the Nineteenth Century," and despite continued ill-health arising from ague contracted while with the army, she manifests the utmost interest in Freethought, writing constantly in the *Truthseeker*, the *Boston Investigator*, the *Liberal*, and the *Ironclad Age*.¹⁵

¹² "Negro Suffrage," *New York Herald* (19 July 1865): 5.

¹³ Ezra S. Stearns, *History of the Town of Rindge, New Hampshire* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1875): 530.

¹⁴ *The Free thought Magazine*, Volume 19 (1901): 296.

¹⁵ Annie Besant, ed., *Our Corner* (London: Freethought Publishing, 1887): 9.268.

Prior to the outbreak of the war, and even before her ordination, Gibson was able to make a respectable living as a medium. During this high water period of Spiritualist influence, there were various types of mediums who would open themselves to supernatural personalities. In contrast with mediums who “channeled” spirits in séances, Gibson was a “trance lecturer.” Becoming inspired, such individuals could fill lecture halls across the country.¹⁶ Trance lecturers could speak on a wide variety of subjects. However, their insights were attributed to supernal beings, or at least humans who had crossed over to the other side. Shortly before the war, Gibson was representative of an entire community of scores of such practitioners.

When the *Banner of Light* started printing lists of lecturers in 1860, it began with twenty-three women and listed fifty-two women lecturers by the end of the year. The *Spiritual Register* for 1859 listed the names of over one hundred women trance speakers in eleven states. This did not include all the dozens of women whose careers could be followed in the Spiritualist press.

Women began to deliver lectures in trance shortly after the advent of spirit communication. Mrs. G.B. Bushnell spoke in the “abnormal state” in Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania in 1850 and was still on the lecture circuit in 1852. . . . several spiritualist women, such as Cora Scott (later Hatch) in Buffalo . . . had permanent positions as regular lecturers. Antoinette Brown Blackwell tried to secure such an arrangement where she could preach weekly reform sermons for free in New York City in 1859, but no backer would underwrite the cost of the hall. In contrast, a relatively obscure medium, Ella E. Gibson, filled a concert hall in Augusta, Maine, for six consecutive evenings. Manchester, New Hampshire boasted seven trance speakers in 1858, five of them women. . . .

Spiritualists embraced the platform as an alternative to the pulpit. Trance speaker and feminist Charlotte Beebe Wilbour called the platform “the people’s arena, the democratic pulpit,” observing that “A Stand-point so high and inaccessible as the Pulpit, may seem fit for the solitary despot whose empire is sometimes served. . . . Here [on the platform] Virtue is the only strength—Reason the only test—and Spiritual Power the only exaltation.”¹⁷

¹⁶ This was the same type of spiritualism as practiced by Cora Lodencia Veronica Scott (1840-1923), one of the most famous American mediums. Her striking beauty catapulted her to fame, and she pastored one of Chicago’s Spiritualist congregations for nearly fifty years. (Researchers should not be confused by the fact that Cora used the surnames of all four of her husbands.)

¹⁷ Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2001): 92-93.

Although she was not in the first ranks of the mediums before the war, Gibson did receive some publicity. Presentations were typically made in public halls, but occasionally hosted by Universalist churches. In 1858, one of her talks from such a setting was published as *Humanitarianism: Lecture Delivered in the Universalist Church in Belfast, Me., Wednesday Evening, May 6, 1857, through the Organism of Miss Ella Elvira Gibson*. A modern Universalist history records:

[The] Religio-Philosophical Society made it possible for other women to enter the ministry and preach at a time when opportunities in the mainstream denominations were few. It provided the credentials for spiritualist women to demand recognition for their pastoral work.

A good example is the career of Ella Elvira Gibson. She was born in 1821 in Winchendon, Massachusetts. For several years, she was a member of the Methodist church, but after a profound sickness, “she experienced an entire change in her religious views” to embrace a love that was convinced of humans’ innate goodness and the ultimate salvation of all.

As an adult, Gibson lived in Barre, Massachusetts, where she wrote and published some of her poetry. In the early 1850s, she became a devoted spiritualist and then a trance lecturer, advertising in the spiritual registers her willingness to travel and speak all over the east. Under “spirit influence,” for example, working “through her organism,” Gibson delivered lectures in 1856 and 1857 in the Universalist church in Belfast, Maine (John Dods’s and Luke Rand’s previous platform) on the subject of humanitarianism. (Actually, she spoke on the “origin of mind, and soul marriage” and how certain combinations of spiritual natures between men and women could produce elevated human offspring.)

Shortly before the beginning of the Civil War, Gibson married John Hobart, another traveling spiritualist lecturer, and they moved to Darien, Wisconsin.¹⁸

Following the war, Gibson returned to lecturing about free thought and social radicalism. Shortly after the war’s conclusion she drew a sizeable crowd to the prestigious Cooper Union (where Lincoln’s political aspirations bloomed). A newspaper of the day reported the gist of her address.

After the war she lectured in the North and in September 1865 addressed a large audience in Cooper Union, but according to the New York *Herald* of the eighteenth she did not discuss her war experiences

¹⁸ John B. Buescher, *The Other Side of Salvation: Spiritualism and the Nineteenth-Century* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, 2004): 160.

although “spicy ideas” were inserted among her more serious comments.¹⁹

Since her Cooper address was not recorded for posterity, we must use our imaginations to reconstruct it. The war had just ended, so even though she did expressly “discuss her war experiences,” no doubt the sacrifice and suffering she witnessed were fresh in her mind.

Later, however, she devoted her energies to “freethinking.” The proceedings from one such convention, held in 1878, were entitled “Have We a Right to Criticise Jesus?”²⁰ The answer, of course, was “yes.” In a moment we will consider a brief selection from the substantial speech.

At some point she became disenamored with spiritualism. There is some evidence that she even became a critic of the belief system into which she had been ordained. Evidence comes from a fascinating book, written by a discredited medium who had converted the atheist founder of Liberal, Kansas, a freethinking utopia experiment. Even after a house fire revealed a trapdoor and concealed space from which spirit messages had been delivered during séances, founder George Walser apparently remained a devout spiritualist. Oddly, after the medium himself, J.B. Bouton, was exposed as a fraud, he sought to capitalize on his new notoriety. Bouton wrote a book brazenly alleging that conducted the séances “in order to ‘cure’ the town of its belief in spiritualism.”²¹ In Bouton’s self-expose, he writes how some doubters sought to disprove the reality of his psychic orchestrations.

Curiously, Chaplain Gibson played a minor role in this drama. It reveals her beliefs in later life related to the spiritualism she had championed during her pre-war ministry. Bouton writes that Elmina Drake Slenker, prominent writer for freethinking publications, had proposed a critical examination of Bouton’s séances. Gibson responded to Slenker’s suggestion with a letter published in the press and reproduced in Bouton’s book.

[Slenker] being a sensible woman, and little given to superstition, she desired further evidence, and so resolved to come to Liberal to find it; but here is a short letter from Ella Gibson which explains why Elmina did not come:

Mr. Walser: Please say to Mrs. Elmina Drake Slenker, through your columns, that I will comply with her request, and “go” to Liberal “and investigate for me” (her), the same as she did for others.

¹⁹ Mary E. Massey, *Women in the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1994): 84.

²⁰ Ella E. Gibson, “Address by Ella E. Gibson, *The Freethinkers’ Convention Held at Watkins, N.Y., August 22^d, 23^d, 24th, and 25th, ’78* (New York: D.M. Bennett, 1878): 142-50.

²¹ Mary Barile, *Forgotten Tales of Missouri* (History Press, 2012): 90.

Besides, Mr. Editor, I have a special invitation from you to investigate at Dr. Bouton's, under test conditions, volunteered and arranged by yourself. Having been conversant with the phenomena in all its varied forms, for thirty-five years, and not believing that spirits exist, I think Mrs. Slenker ought to admit that I am an "unbeliever," "outsider," which, as I understand, are the only conditions she stipulates.

I regret I cannot go before warm weather; but when I do come I will bear my own expenses, and not deadhead myself upon believers or unbelievers—neither friends or foes—provided I have the latter.

Yours, for Truth and Honesty,
Ella E. Gibson
Barre, Mass., Feb. 17th, 1886.

But Ella didn't come! Reason: We had concluded that the farce had continued long enough, as all of us were tiring of it, and we were intending to ease down on the séances, for the benefit of the Spiritualists, so as to break as few of their hearts as possible, when the catastrophe of an exposure was presented them. Shortly after the publication of Ella Gibson's letter I announced that no séances would be held during the Summer. So Ella deferred her visit.²²

Another evidence of Gibson's rejection of spiritualism comes in her praise of the Seybert Commission Report. The estate of a devout spiritualist (Henry Seybert) funded a commission of ten professors from the University of Pennsylvania who examined various prominent spiritualists beginning in 1884. All were neutral or positively disposed toward spiritualism at the outset, but their "Preliminary Report" was vigorously challenged by the spiritualist community.²³ Upon its publication, Gibson wrote a lengthy letter endorsing its publication. Her closing hope was not realized, however, and after publication of the initial report, it ceased its research.

To the Editors: Barre, Mass.

The preliminary report of the Seybert Commission for investigating modern spiritualism is just out, and deserves more than a passing notice from the pen of the reviewer.

This Commission has so well done its work, even in its preliminary report, that it would seem as if an unprejudiced person need only to read this book to be convinced that all the so-called spirit manifestations can be produced by individuals now living . . . But I will not detain the readers of *The Open Court* with my remarks, but refer them directly to

²² J.B. Bouton, *Two Years Among the Spirits in the Godless Town of Liberal: The Experience of the Famous Medium*, Dr. J.B. Bouton, Liberal, Mo (W.S. Allison, 1888): 35.

²³ The complete report is available online at Project Gutenberg.

the book itself, only premising that if they will read it carefully and without prejudice, they will arrive at the conclusion that the believers in spiritualism, who have been converted to its theories by any of the so-called mediums exposed by this Commission will feel that they have been most egregiously humbugged. . . .

I trust this investigation will go on until such scathing exposures are made, that not one solitary trickster can be found who will ply his or her infamous trade under the delusive appellation, “Spiritual Medium.”

Ella E. Gibson²⁴

Gibson’s disaffection with Spiritualism did not mark a return to the Christianity of her youth. On the contrary, if anything, her animosity toward established churches became stronger. The following passage come from the major address she delivered in 1878 to the New York State Freethinkers’ Association. (The entire address is included in the editorial section of this issue of *Curtana: Sword of Mercy*.)

Consequently, we must examine that life according to the record of his life given to us. Now, as we have no knowledge of this man, or God, or demi-god, except as recorded according to Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we must judge his life and character by that record. And, moreover, as it is claimed that this record is infallible—inspired by God, and given through holy men—and we are commanded, on pain of everlasting damnation, not to disbelieve it, we have no alternative but to accept it as it stands. Far be it from me to decide whether it be literally false or true—that is not the question under consideration—but this character, as laid down in the professed Divine Word of God, should be criticised by humans.

But I am bold to say that if the record be correct in every particular this character should not only be criticised but that it is not a safe guide to follow; for if we discover anything in the character of this man, or God-man, that we would condemn in any other man, why should we justify it in him because of his superiority or Godship? All the more perfect should he be, and raised above the human standard for our pattern and our redemption. . . .

But, inquires one, pray, what do you find recorded in the gospels in regard to Jesus that you would condemn in any man? Much, much, I would answer ; more than I have time to state in this half-hour allotted me. Nevertheless, I will specify a few of the objectionable acts of his life, and some of his sayings, which no one would commend in a child of ten

²⁴ *The Open Court: A Fortnightly Journal, Devoted to the Work of Establishing Ethics and Religion upon a Scientific Basis*, Volume 1 (1887-88): 389-90.

years of age, much less in a Hebrew prophet, priest, or king, that king being the Lord God of heaven and earth.²⁵

One conviction of Chaplain Gibson that did *not* change as the years passed was her commitment to temperance causes. At a Pennsylvania gathering of liberals, Gibson pressed the issue.

The committee reported a Testimony on Temperance, which was taken up and considered. An animated discussion with considerable diversity of opinion ensued. Rev. Ella E. Gibson thought as there was a law prohibiting the sale of adulterated kerosene, for a like reason there should be a law against the sale of poisonous beverages. Liquor should not be exposed before the people, if we wish to make temperance men. Tax those who drink or sell, to support the losses from drink.²⁶

It would be an error to think of Gibson as concerned only about religious and political matters. As a writer, she expressed interest in how words were used. In the following letter, written to a prominent periodical about writing, her youthful identity as a school teacher comes to the fore.

THE USE AND MISUSE OF WORDS

“Splendid” and “Lovely.” We hear and read of “splendid cats,” “splendid potatoes and gravy,” “splendid rocks,” “splendid teeth,” “splendid”—anything and everything, from taste in the mouth to taste of the refined, in diamonds, dress, magnificent display, lectures, poems, painting, and works of art. In a majority of these illustrations, would not “excellent” be a more fitting word? A phrase equally reprehensible is “just too lovely for anything.”

Every day we are treated to “lovely cake,” “lovely dogs,” “lovely horse-races,” “lovely door-mats,” mingled with “awful pretty curls,” “dreadful sweet fruit,” “terrible handsome men and women,” “funny bonnets, that we guess came out of the ark.” Is not such language a disgrace to civilization, and an injustice to our citizens, who, by compulsory taxation, are forced to bear the expenses of a common school education for the youth of the land? Where is the excuse, except in idleness, carelessness, don’t-care-a-tiveness, or indifference?

²⁵ Gibson, Address, 142-43.

²⁶ *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends* (New York: Baker & Godwin, 1873): 11.

Ella E. Gibson
Barre, Mass.²⁷

Gibson's Later Views on the Military Chaplaincy

We have already noted that Gibson had to fight for justice in her desire to have her chaplaincy service properly acknowledged. Though that vindication would come in recent years, during her lifetime she had to remain content with receiving the pay that would rightly have been hers had she been properly mustered.

Every evidence is that Gibson was diligent in performing her duties. She was rightfully proud of them. Her commander approved as well, and supported her in her efforts to have the records reflect her performance of all of the duties expected of any chaplain.

Some might allege that her subsequent repudiation of federal chaplaincies was influenced, at least slightly, by her mistreatment at the hands of the Army. In fact, Gibson was a wholehearted freethinker. She invested all of her energies, and much of her limited financial resources in furthering the cause of ending religious "superstitions." Her rejection of all governmental chaplaincy positions was sincere, and was in fact a cornerstone of Liberal (freethinking) principles. "she was one of the organizers, and a charter and life member, of the National Liberal League."²⁸ A major Liberal publication carried on its front page the formal "Nine Demands of Liberalism." These included:

1. We demand that churches and other ecclesiastical property shall be no longer exempt from taxation.
2. We demand that the employment of chaplains in Congress, and in the legislatures, in the navy and militia, and in prisons, asylums, and all other institutions supported by the public money, shall be discontinued.²⁹

This radical anti-establishment interpretation was held by most of the organizations that Gibson supported for the majority of her life. A prime example of this position is found in "Describing Chaplains as Vermin," which you can read in the editorial section of this issue *Curtana*.

It should not shock us that Gibson came to regard the chaplaincy as theft from the public pocket. She had devoted much of her waning energy to challenging all traditional Christian doctrines. Her obituaries each highlight the (originally anonymous) publication of her critique of the Christian scriptures, entitled *The Godly*

²⁷ *The Writer: A Monthly Magazine for Literary Workers*, (January-December 1890): 4.132.

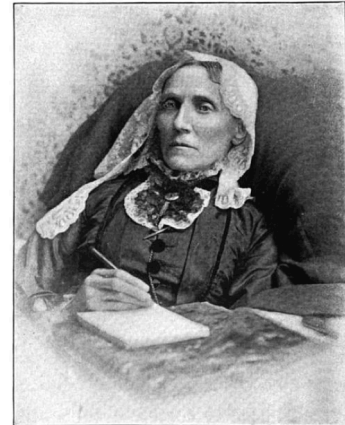
²⁸ *The Free thought Magazine*, Volume 19 (1901): 297. The National Liberal League split into different organizations related to disagreement about moral considerations related to the Comstock Law of 1873. The American Liberal Union, one faction, published *The Index*.

²⁹ *The Index* (17 June 1880): 1.

Women of the Bible, “by an Ungodly Woman of the Nineteenth Century.” The following sentence from the preface summarizes the whole of the 345 page work. “Christianity is an insult to the wisdom of the nineteenth century. To place before its progress and development a leader, ruler, king, savior, god, whose knowledge was less than a five-year-old school girl, is an outrage upon humanity.”³⁰

Chaplain Gibson’s Epitaph

Although her name is not familiar today, Chaplain Gibson was lauded by the free thinkers of her day. She played a ground-breaking role in America’s military chaplaincy. Her unique story merits the attention of all those interested in either aspect of her life. The closing quotations come from *The Free Thought Magazine*, a publication for which she had written. The first appeared several years before her death, a tribute to her remarkable accomplishments. The last is from her obituary, summarizing the essence of her life’s work.



Ella Elvira Gibson.

Ella Gibson, now of Barre, Mass., whose portrait is the frontispiece of this number of this Magazine, is one of the most remarkable women this century has produced. Having been born May 8, 1821, she has lived more than three-fourths of this century, and says she is bound to remain on this globe and see how it seems to live in the twentieth century. Her career in life has been most extraordinary, and has no parallel in history.³¹

Few women that have lived during the nineteenth century are more entitled to the gratitude of Freethinkers than is Ella Elvira Gibson. She was the female John the Baptist of Free Thought, crying in the Wilderness of Christian Superstition, when most every other woman in this country was subservient to the priesthood.³²

³⁰ Ellen E. Gibson, *The Godly Women of the Bible* (New York: Truth Seeker, 1881): vi.

³¹ *The Free thought Magazine*, Volume 15 (1897): 119.

³² *The Free thought Magazine*, Volume 19 (1901): 298.

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Robert C. Stroud is a retired United States Air Force chaplain. He is an avid student of the American Civil War, and is especially intrigued by the stories of the thousands of clergy who served as chaplains during its tragic course. He is also the proud great-grandson of Corporal Chauncey W. Stroud, who served for the duration of the conflict in the Fifth Iowa Volunteer Cavalry regiment.

Three Looks at the Chaplaincy

Harry G. Rosenbluh

[This article originally appeared in the Fall 1977 issue of *The Military Chaplain's Review*, pages 53-60. We reproduce it here because many of Rosenbluh's observations remain timely a quarter century after he made them.]

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that "All history is biography," and it is with that thought in mind that I realize that my views of the Chaplaincy have been colored by the circumstances of my life. My dealings with chaplains span a period of 30 years and break nicely (if unevenly) into three distinct periods. In each I had a different relationship with the military clergymen, Jewish and Christian, with whom I came into contact.

The first period consisted of my brief Army career as an enlisted man in the late 1940's. The second period, following a 15-year gap with virtually no contact with chaplains, consisted of my attendance (as a civilian) and occasional participation in the religious program of a Jewish Chapel with an assigned chaplain. After about ten years of that relationship, the third period (which is still going on) began. As the individual responsible for the Jewish religious program on an Army post where there is no Jewish chaplain, I now deal with that post's Christian chaplains more or less as an equal.

Oddly enough, even after 30 years I find that I have some views of the Chaplaincy that have not changed. And, not surprisingly under the circumstances, I have also observed a number of changes in my personal views of the Chaplaincy.

Similarities

Perhaps the most unchanged thing that I've sensed about the Chaplaincy is its retention of a very strong spirit of interfaith cooperation. I saw it firsthand in 1947 and I'm still seeing it in 1977 as more than just a pious platitude. Particularly, as a representative of the Jewish faith, I am more often a recipient of that cooperation from members of other faiths, but whenever I get a chance to reciprocate (such as attending a service to commemorate a chaplain's anniversary of ordination, supplying literature for Christian Sunday School groups, or talking to such groups) I'm glad to be able to show the chaplains that interfaith cooperation is a two-way street.

For the one unpleasant example in this field (recently a "born again" Christian chaplain tried to convert a Jewish chaplain's assistant whom we were lucky enough to have assigned to us), I can cite many instances of interfaith cooperation and brotherhood. I'd like to mention just two of them, over a quarter of a century apart.

During my Army tour of duty in the late 1940's, I was stationed at an out-of-the-way camp in southern Japan. Both a Catholic and a Protestant chaplain were assigned, but no Jewish chaplain. (In fact, the nearest Jewish chaplain was several hundred miles and three or four echelons away.) When one of the Jewish officers on that post, a dentist, lost his father and had to say the mourner's prayer, he checked the records looking for Jewish names. He got a number of us together for services in one of the unused rooms in the hospital. Shortly thereafter, when the Christian chaplains learned of it—I don't know how—they expressed joy that our camp was probably the only one in the division (if not on the whole island of Kyushu) that had a “full” religious program, i.e., Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish.

They arranged for the Jewish services to be held in one of the small rooms of the newly built Post Chapel and went out of their way to help us. They made sure that the room was properly decorated, that our orders were sent to the nearest Jewish chaplain for holiday supplies in ample time, that the Jewish room was kept locked during the week, and took care of many other details to ensure the sanctity of their “Jewish chapel.” (When the dentist returned to the United States, I became the one in charge of Jewish services and got to know those two Christian chaplains well. I also got my chance to reciprocate the interfaith cooperation. When the Catholic chaplain's shipment of communion wafers failed to arrive he desperately called to ask if I had some unleavened bread he could use. Fortunately, I had a box in my locker which I gave him. When the Protestant chaplain heard about it, he asked if I'd give him a box so he could use it in a communion service too.)

More recently I've heard reference to a “full” religious program at Fort Meade because we have Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish services (not to mention some distinct denominational services). This shows that the term is still kicking around and still causing joy to some chaplains. A few years ago one of those chaplains showed how much he valued having a meaningful Jewish religious program by an action which spoke louder than words. During the fuel crises of 1973 our Post Commander ordered the Post Chaplain to close two of the chapels on the base to conserve fuel. Despite the fact that the Jewish Chapel serves a very small number of people and is used by only one faith, he never considered closing it or moving the activities of some other faith (from one of the closed chapels) to share the building with the Jews. He realized how important the maintenance of a kosher kitchen was to the Jewish program and knew that there would be no way to keep the chapel kitchen kosher if anyone else shared the building. As far as I'm concerned, that was interfaith cooperation above and beyond the call of duty!

Unfortunately, another similarity I can observe between today and 30 years ago is that there are not enough Jewish chaplains to go around. This is probably applicable to other faiths as well. For example, at Fort Meade we've had only one Catholic chaplain for several months handling functions previously the responsibility of four or five priests. As these words are being written, the post is without an Episcopal chaplain, etc. Obviously, however, as an individual who has

had to conduct Jewish services on posts where there was (or should I say “is”?) no Jewish chaplain, I am more acutely aware of what affects me. I might add, though, that I’m glad the Jewish Welfare Board has instituted a Military Lay Leader Program as a means of coping with the Rabbi shortage.

A third similarity that I’ve noted to some extent is the use by some chaplains of the “You think you’ve got problems?” counseling technique. On one occasion in Japan when I sought theological sympathy from one of the Christian chaplains, I poured out my tale of woe and got a comforting word or two. But this was followed by a long recitation of the chaplain’s tale of woe: his mother was in a hospital back home thousands of miles away, it would cost several hundred dollars to fix the organ in the chapel, his back was giving him trouble lately, he suspected a chaplain’s assistant of helping himself to the communion wine, six of his classmates from the Chaplains’ School were majors and one was a lieutenant colonel but he was still a captain, etc., etc. “But you don’t hear me asking for sympathy.” My problem began to seem trivial, and that was the way he wanted me to feel. I subsequently discovered that several years earlier George Baker had drawn a “Sad Sack” cartoon about just such a visit to a chaplain. I’ve also heard of chaplains using that technique quite recently. I guess that Koheleth [the “Preacher” who composed Ecclesiastes] was right: “There is nothing new under the sun.”

Differences

During my time as a soldier I was keenly aware of the dichotomy between enlisted people and officers, even if those officers happened to be chaplains. We went to them with problems, we respected them as clergymen, we were glad to see them on maneuvers because their presence meant a break from our usual activities, and we knew that they would argue with other officers for an EM’s rights. But we still thought of chaplains as officers. They had to be saluted and called “Sir.” If we had any dealings with them it was strictly business; there was no fraternization.

That was in the 1940’s, and there was also some vestige of that aura of sanctity (in the minds of laymen) around clergymen. By virtue of their closeness to God and their familiarity with his teachings, they were automatically worthy of respect. They too had to be called “Sir” (or “Rabbi” or “Father”). Over the intervening years that wall between lay people and clergy has been breaking down, with much assistance from the preachers.

Still, I wasn’t prepared for the informality I encountered at the Jewish Chapel in the early 1960s when I started attending services there. I was utterly flabbergasted the first time I heard someone call the chaplain by his name—nay, by a nickname: “Al”! To be sure, that was 15 years after my Army “career” had ended and many chaplains were becoming approachable, more human. I even recall one chaplain who had no objection to his assistant’s calling him by his first name. It took me quite a while before I could call them anything but “Chaplain” or “Rabbi.” But now I can drop first names along with the best of them when it comes to talking to chaplains, Jewish or Christian.

I was also amazed to see how the emphasis had shifted in 15 years from chaplains serving individuals to chaplains serving families. I presume this brings chaplains a little closer to their civilian counterparts. (While I realize that in Vietnam chaplains didn't have many families to worry about, my experience has all been in peacetime or garrison where the family is the basic unit of concern.)

Just as these families represent careerists, so too the chaplains of today differ from the ones I met in my previous "incarnation." They have made the Army their way of life. All of the chaplains I talked to in the 1940's spoke of the congregation they had left and to which they planned to return. The chaplains I have been meeting lately may mention civilian churches or synagogues where they served before coming into the service. But (with very, very few exceptions) they have no plans for returning there. To use the old expression, they have "found a home in the Army" and seem to like the travel and other aspects of service life.

Naturally there are only a limited number of individuals who have a desire to be doubly dedicated, to God and to country. This, it would seem to me, is especially true of Jewish chaplains—although five of the six Jewish chaplains I worked with at Fort Meade were careerists—because, theoretically, the military is "no job for a Jewish boy." Our religion's emphasis on peace and respect for all living creatures, coupled with the history of pogroms and persecutions by the armies of European rulers, would tend to make most Jews shy from a career in the military. Nevertheless, there were Jewish draftees and mobilized Reservists who found themselves in uniform during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam who decided they had invested so many years in the service that they might as well stay in to earn the retirement benefits. (The recent educational arrangements the services now offer have also been an attractive inducement for many Jewish young people). These Jewish personnel too are entitled to and need religious guidance, even though they are so few. Indeed, the very fact that they are such a minority makes their need for rabbinic leadership even greater. But the shortage of available Jewish chaplains makes it impossible for every garrison with a handful of Jewish personnel to have their own chaplain. (The obvious solution of restricting the number of places where Jewish soldiers could be sent and making sure that Jewish chaplains were assigned to those places is so discriminatory that I'm sure it would never be considered—at least I hope not. It might solve one problem but it would create many more.)

One means of coping with the shortage of Jewish chaplains was the institution of the Jewish Lay Leader program by the Jewish Welfare Board. An officer or enlisted person is made responsible for the Jewish religious program at his or her installation (with the approval of a senior chaplain and the recognition of the JWB Commission on Jewish Chaplaincy). This individual doesn't necessarily conduct the services or teach Sunday School. He may arrange for someone else to do it. But the Lay Leader is responsible for seeing that such services and classes are held. Technically, the official name of the program is the Military Lay Leader program, since under most circumstances the individual involved is in the service.

In fact, to the best of my knowledge, I'm the only civilian Lay Leader in the continental United States. I don't know how kosher my claim to the title is. Nevertheless the JWB sends me the same literature, supplies, holiday materials and gifts, etc., it sends to Military Lay Leaders. I once broached the subject of expanding the program to provide for other civilians who may live near a military base and would be willing to assume the responsibility of conducting services for the Jewish personnel on that base.¹ I'm sure that there must be lots of "frustrated rabbis" like me who would be glad to share their Jewish knowledge, either on a voluntary basis (as I do) or for a small fee.²

There is also the Auxiliary chaplain program under which ordained civilian rabbis from cities and towns near military posts drop in once a week or so to conduct a service, lead a discussion, provide counseling, etc. But, since most of these rabbis have congregations of their own, they cannot provide their ministrations to the military on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. "Civilian Lay Leaders" might provide a solution.

I am not saying civilians can be used to do away with Jewish chaplains. Just as Military Lay Leaders and Auxiliary chaplains are necessary because there aren't enough full-time Jewish chaplains to go around, I'm suggesting that Civilian Lay Leaders should be considered as an additional possibility. Fort Meade is proof that it can work. The Christian chaplains there seem happy that there is a Jewish Chapel program even if there isn't a Jewish chaplain.

Finally I've noticed a change in the type of young people who serve as chaplain's assistants, like the swing of a pendulum. During World War II, and shortly thereafter, the chaplain's assistants whom I met were devout lads with good knowledge of the Scriptures and the ins and outs of their particular denomination. Many of them were sons of preachers or rabbis who planned to follow in their father's clerical footsteps.

Just as I had been taken aback by those who called their chaplain by his first name, I was flabbergasted at the change that had taken place in chaplain's assistants during my 15-year absence. (I had a rough idea of how Rip Van Winkle must have

¹ Unlike many other religions, Judaism has no requirement that only duly ordained clergy can conduct its worship services. Any qualified (i.e., one who is familiar with the prayers) male is eligible to lead the congregation. Since there are now a few women ordained as rabbis and the Conservative movement is arguing about a greater role for women, perhaps that word "male" may have to be changed some day.

² Actually I was serving as a Military Lay Leader when I was in the Army in Japan, except the term hadn't been invented yet. But I did have a title that deserves to be recorded for posterity: When I wrote to the Jewish chaplain at Corps level with a request or a report, I signed my letter, "PFC Harry G. Rosenbluh, Jewish Chaplain, Camp So-and-So." He politely reminded me that the Army took a dim view of anyone, except members of the Chaplain Corps, calling themselves "Chaplain." Subsequent letters were signed: "Harry G. Rosenbluh, Jewish Assistant to the Christian chaplains, Camp So-and-So."

felt.) I encountered fellows who blatantly admitted that they had applied for Chaplain's Assistant School because they knew it was "a clerical job in a nice clean office." They wouldn't have to crawl around in mud and dirt, carrying heavy equipment. They'd heard that chaplains were pushovers to work for, etc. I even met one Jewish assistant who was not only ignorant of his religious heritage but was practically an anti-Semite! I also met one young man who thought that, as a chaplain's assistant, he wouldn't be sent to Vietnam. Needless to add, he soon learned the fallacy of that belief.

But recently I've been encountering more of the old-time assistants, those with a firm foundation in their faith. In fact, three of the chaplain's assistants I've had dealings with in recent years have gone from Fort Meade to a seminary. While the new breed of assistant is able to handle a typewriter, jeep, lawnmower, floor waxer, and all of the other non-religious equipment that their job calls for, they are equally at home with prayerbooks, vestments, and other ritual objects only chaplains and assistants are responsible for. If I hadn't had that 15-year hiatus in my observations of the Chaplaincy, I might have thought that there had been no change in the nature of chaplain's assistants. I'm glad, though, that I got to know the non-religious type because it makes me appreciate the modern religious chaplain's assistant so much more.

Afterthoughts

I have a few other "mundane" observations and comments to make that don't really deal with differences or similarities in the Chaplaincy. Nevertheless, they are important to me and I feel they are worth mentioning.

First, I must not be the only one who finds the architectural layout of the cantonment-type chapel objectionable. Oh, I'm very glad that the Post Chaplain lets us use the one we have, but I am at a loss to explain why others (i.e., chaplains) who have used them haven't raised a fuss to have certain changes made in their design.

It's bad enough that the light fixtures are the medieval, Gothic design with heavy frosted glass that allows only a dim light to penetrate into the room. It is just about impossible without firemen's ladders to reach those fixtures to dust them or change a bulb. When there is an evening service (as so many Jewish services are), those lights are totally inadequate. But, to add insult to injury, the switches for those lights are in the kitchen. Whoever opens the chapel has to walk the length of the sanctuary in the dark and grope around looking for switches. At the end of the service, after switching off the lights, it is again necessary to grope through the darkened sanctuary to get out. Why can't the switches be near the main entrance? Why can't there be two sets of switches, one at each end of the building?

But, as bad as the placement of the light switches may be, the location of the rest room—and why only one?—is even worse. If someone has to answer nature's call during a service, they have to march across the platform a few feet away from the officiating clergyman, in full view of the whole congregation.

And, in this era of fuel conservation, do we really need those high-peaked ceilings? I've often wondered if the building couldn't be converted into a two-story structure, with the upper floor used either for storage or Sunday school classrooms.

One of the biggest problems with chapels today, frankly, is the large number of empty seats. It seems to me that the Army's recent liberalizations have encouraged military personnel to leave the post regularly. Inadequate on-post housing, more generous weekend pass policies (even in basic training), and the elimination of the draft have all contributed to the increase of vacant pews.

Oh, yes! One other "change" I should mention: Have you noticed how much younger today's chaplains are? When I was in the Army (in my late teens) I was struck by the "great age" of the chaplains. They were all at least 30. Several were in their 40's, and I'm sure one must have been about 50! Now I'm amazed to note that many of them are only in their 30's and a few may still be in their late 20's. Ah, well—that's why it's so much easier for me to call them by their first names now!

Mr. Rosenbluh served as a linguist employed by the Department of Defense at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. After 1971, when that post lost its last Jewish Chaplain, he conducted religious services for Jewish personnel there, editing the monthly Chapel Bulletin, and participating in inter-faith activities.

† Editorials †

“The Passing of the Pans”

Scott Jimenez

We went to visit my mother, and as usual, upon our leaving, she wanted to send us home with something. Typically it was something delicious. This is because my mother showed her love with food. It became her vocation, but it never stopped being her avocation. I don't mind, because she has always been a great cook. To this day, there are certain foods I won't eat in a restaurant, because I know they won't be nearly as good as my mother makes. And she could cook anything: French, Mexican, American, Italian, German, and my favorite—Colombian. Almost all of my memories of growing up seem to be wrapped in food. I mark my memories of events, of where we were and what happened, by what we ate. I may be exaggerating a bit, but only a bit. My wife's family claims they allowed her to marry me so they could enjoy my mother's cooking. It seemed like a fair exchange.

This time was different. When I unpacked the trunk to find what my mother had put in there, I found the food, but I also discovered her big pans. These pans cooked and held the food my mother lovingly made for more years than I can remember. As I looked at these big pans, I thought about her, and about this gift. Every now and then, my chaplain antennae kick in. This was one of those times. What was the symbolism? Did she just want an excuse to get new pans? Or, was it something deeper? Was she giving them to me because her cooking days were over? Because so much of our shared past revolved around wonderful food, is this a way of saying, with love but also with finality, that she feels her days were numbered?

Was the passing of these pans a passing of a generation? Am I now to be the patriarch, the oldest surviving member of my clan? Are there new responsibilities? Like many things in our lives, sentinel events do not come with an answer book. It is muddle as you go. Think of becoming a spouse, or a parent, or a grandparent. (Perhaps grandparenting does come with an answer book; it is etched on our minds and hearts in what we would do better as *parents*, if we had to do it over.) We learn as we go. We make mistakes, and learn from them. How do you get good experience? From bad experience, which you vow never to repeat.

It wasn't until my mother passed me the pans that I realized she was, how should I say it delicately, not young. It stands to reason: I'm a grandparent. I had also been a military chaplain, retired, now a VA chaplain. These things take time. But to see her age meant that I had also aged. My mind fought to stay young, to do all the things I used to be able to do, admittedly with more recovery time. The passing of the pans made me realize that the seasons of our lives are worth entering into, and passing through. For example, I made a promise to my wife that I would "get old and wrinkly with you," that we would go through the seasons in our lives together. Some of these seasons have already passed, some are passing now, and some are yet to come. Soon, too soon, I may have to pass on my pans. I am at the tail end of the Baby Boomer generation (I've always hated that term!). This means that for my generation, our parents are getting older. It also means that *we* are getting older!

To my fellows, whether it be in age, occupation, or shared history: Has there been "a passing of the . . ." event in your life? For me it was pans. For you it might be tools, heirlooms, furniture, or something else. Do we recognize these as a passing from one generation to another? Do we recognize these events in our own lives? Do we recognize them in other peoples' lives? As chaplains, we have the unique honor that people share with us sentinel events, if we can only listen. Are we prepared to listen? Are *you*? Do we each have a responsibility to be the bridge between the generation that preceded us and that which follows us? How do we deal with that? And, how will we recognize when the right day arrives for each of us to pass the pans?

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Chaplain Jimenez serves as a staff chaplain with the West Texas Veterans Health Care System, in Big Spring, Texas. He is a graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary. He is currently pursuing this Doctor of Ministry degree at Nazarene Theological Seminary.

Have We a Right to Criticise Jesus?

Ella E. Gibson

[Ella Gibson served as chaplain of the First Wisconsin Heavy Artillery regiment during the American War Between the States. Originally ordained as a Spiritualist minister, the second half of her life was devoted to the Free Thinking cause. This speech was delivered at the New York Freethinker's Convention held at Watkins, New York in August of 1878. A biography of Chaplain Gibson appears among the articles in this issue of Curtana: Sword of Mercy.]

Have we a right to criticise Jesus? Why not, if he be a man, the same as any other man? If he be the Son of God, or the very God, and took on himself humanity, and walked with man as his exemplar, and died for his redemption, why should he even then be exalted above criticism, since man is to look to his life for a pattern, and of course must examine and criticise that life before he is able to understand it and copy after it? In either case, then, we cannot see why it is not only perfectly valid and legitimate that man should criticise Jesus, but we think it is his duty so to do in order to comprehend the kind of a pattern he has to follow, and the kind of a Savior he has to imitate.

Consequently, we must examine that life according to the record of his life given to us. Now, as we have no knowledge of this man, or God, or demi-god, except as recorded according to Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we must judge his life and character by that record. And, moreover, as it is claimed that this record is infallible—inspired by God, and given through holy men—and we are commanded, on pain of everlasting damnation, not to disbelieve it, we have no alternative but to accept it as it stands.

Far be it from me to decide whether it be literally false or true—that is not the question under consideration—but this character, as laid down in the professed Divine Word of God, should be criticised by humans. But I am bold to say that if the record be correct in every particular this character should not only be criticised but that it is not a safe guide to follow; for if we discover anything in the character of this man, or God-man, that we would condemn in any other man, why should we justify it in him because of his superiority or Godship? All the more perfect should he be, and raised above the human standard for our pattern and our redemption. I repeat, I have no means of judging the truth of this record except my senses, and would fain believe that the historians have exaggerated, interpolated, or willfully misrepresented, rather than to believe that a leader, even nearly two thousand years ago, should do and say so many inconsistent things as are attributed to this same Jesus of Nazareth.

But what I would wish to have, or not wish to have, is not to the point. The facts are before us, and it is with them we have to do, not our individual feelings, either for or against.

But, inquires one, pray, what do you find recorded in the gospels in regard to Jesus that you would condemn in any man? Much, much, I would answer; more than I have time to state in this half-hour allotted me. Nevertheless, I will specify a few of the objectionable acts of his life, and some of his sayings, which no one would commend in a child of ten years of age, much less in a Hebrew prophet, priest, or king, that king being the Lord God of heaven and earth.

The first I shall mention is to be found in St. John's gospel, chapter ii. The first miracle Jesus performed was at a wedding feast, where, it is said he turned some thirty gallons of pure water into wine for the guests, who wanted wine, although it appears by the saying of the governor of the feast (verse 10) that they already had a sufficiency, he declaring to the bridegroom: "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

The moral of this is plain to us temperance men and women in these days who have spent our lives and sacrificed our ease and pleasure to promulgate the principles of total abstinence, and we cannot but feel that in a similar case, instead of procuring more wine or turning water into wine, as it is stated our divine exemplar did, exultingly saying: "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast"—instead of doing this we should have presented a temperance pledge and advised no wine-drinking at a marriage feast, it being a bad precedent for all concerned.

Shall we take this as an example of the principles of our divine Lord and Master in regard to temperance and conviviality at a marriage feast? For myself, I beg to respectfully decline, feeling that too much of this has already been practiced by the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. I prefer not to imitate such an example, if it was ever set by Jesus. You will find it recorded in John, chapter ii.; but remember, as I said previously so say I now, I will not vouch for its correctness, but give it as I find it in examining the record that presents us with this character which we are told to follow.

Nearly the whole Sermon on the Mount is impracticable, and is never followed by Christians. It is never even attempted by the great body of evangelical Christians. Who plucks out a right eye, or cuts off a right hand? What Christian gives his cloak to the thief because he has taken his coat? or goes two miles with him who has compelled him to go one? Who turns the left cheek when the right is smitten? and lends to every borrower, hoping nothing in return? Surely, if this is good advice, the Christian should follow it. If not good, then away with the boast of the "incomparable Sermon on the Mount."

"No swearing!" Then why swear in our courts of justice on the same book wherein are these words, "Swear not at all," by the God who is said to have uttered this command and inspired the book? Who follows the advice, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on," and trusts that God will provide for them as he does for the fowls of the air, and the lilies of the field? If Christians should so trust, would not the sinners have them to care for, and a population of tramps like the frogs of Egypt infesting society.

I might go on for hours stating these inconsistent sayings as recorded, which are never followed nor obeyed by Jesus' disciples, but I forbear.

Would we commend a man who cursed an apple-tree because no apples were found thereon to satisfy his hunger, and that too out of season? We should condemn any one, however ignorant and vile, who would even curse his overloaded or obstinate beast, but to curse a harmless tree because it was not unnaturally bearing fruit out of season, we should consider the height of folly and madness, and would never think of setting up such a man, be he drunk or sober, for any person to follow. If this alleged God did not know there were no figs on the tree till he came to it, "lest haply he might find some thereon," then he could not have been omniscient and omnipresent, and not much more a God than any other man. I am inclined to think this story a *canard*, and not a true representation of Jesus. Bible makers love to exalt their heroes, and probably this was related to show the power of the god, in the "tree withered at the roots," subsequently.

"Gentle Nazarine [sic]." Indeed! Read the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, and there take a lesson in gentleness from the "gentle Nazarine."

"Scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites," "Child of hell," "Blind guides," "Ye fools and blind," "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" to which add the "scourge of small cords" in John ii, 15, and, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and you have an example of the "meek and lowly Nazarine" that might not be to the advantage of any Freethinker to follow. We will warrant that Colonel Ingersoll never used such terms nor called such names when addressing his enemies or speaking of them. If he descends into personalities instead of attacking errors, customs, dogmas, doctrines and creeds, he is less a gentleman than we had hoped, and might in that respect be called a Christian. What would be said of reformers of to-day should they thus malign the Church and speak evil of them? The truth is severe enough without calling people fools, liars, and hypocrites, because they cannot see precisely as we do. Has not the Church imitated Jesus in this respect? And should we not all avoid these anathemas?

Does God the Father desire his human family to pattern after God the Son? If so, then how could he or his worshipers complain if we do pattern after him? And can we, poor, weak, finite creatures be expected to discriminate which of his acts or what of his sayings we are to imitate? We know that this human God is said to have declared that, "whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt v, 22), yet himself said, "Thou fool" (Luke xii, 20), and (Matt xxiii, 17, 19) "Ye fools and blind," when exasperated, because not understood.

But we are told he was a God—*the* God—and had a right to use such language as he chose, and that we are not to judge or criticise *him*.

Well, even if he is a God, has he the right to break his own commands, to violate his own laws, or ought he to tell us to be like himself, to learn of him, for he is meek and lowly in heart (Matt xi, 29), to “be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt v, 48), when that Father is so intensely human as to be clothed with all the vile passions of the flesh, and to exercise them also? Has he any right to judge us by himself if he is a God, and we but human? Why should he require us to live as gods, and punish us as gods, when he admits we are but human? He, the wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (Isa. ix), who “looked round about on them with *anger*,” and then said to the wicked, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees: “Whosoever is *angry* with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matt v, 22), and, “Anger rests in the bosoms of *fools*.” How he could do this, as the records declare he did, and still be a pattern for mortals, is simply unaccountable to us Infidels.

Christians profess to be able to comprehend and reconcile it, and we will not doubt their sincerity or faith in many instances. At any rate, we shall not feel above criticising pattern-gods held up before us to follow, whether we find them in the old Jew book of fables, the Koran, Zend-Avesta, or the bible of any nation or sect. It is too late to cry now, “hands off,” “sacred things,” “irreverent,” “blasphemous,” for we are not fearful to investigate and discuss all books, characters, creeds, and Gods.

It is said by Matthew and Mark that when Jesus hung on the cross, he cried out in great agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Either he did thus cry or he did not. If he did, was God the Almighty crying to God the Almighty because God Almighty had forsaken God Almighty? And did not God Almighty know from the beginning that this death was to take place for human salvation? Then why should he thus cry on the cross in despair and desolation? Did Jesus the Son offer himself to expiate the wrath of the Father when he knew of his own sufferings and death? Why ask the Father that the cup might pass from him? Why not meet it bravely? Old Socrates, the Athenian sage and philosopher, did not seek to escape the hemlock cup. He took it and drank it off heroically. Shall we attribute cowardice to the one who did not? Why should he flinch in the hour of suffering any more than any other martyr? What Infidel or Atheist could have more effectually expressed his utter distrust of and abandonment by God than Matthew and Mark put into the mouth of the dying Jesus: “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*”

Bishop Hatfield, in a harangue against Thomas Paine, in New York city, not long since, declared that these were the dying words of that immortal statesman. Did he think to prove by this that Thomas Paine, in his last moments, felt himself deserted by God? If so, it proves too much, for Jesus then might be classed with the Infidel Paine, though Paine was a Deist and believed in a God.

It will not do to criticise Jesus? Then why criticise Paine, Ingersoll, etc.? They are, or were, but men. They made no pretension to divinity, or their friends for them, yet they are slandered as well as many others, their equals. Who shall vindicate

them and their memories? The Christians vindicate Jesus, the apostles, holy fathers, and martyrs, ancient and modern, and shall not we vindicate those in whom we believe when we hear them maligned?

That all may be free and unbound is the right of man. The religion founded on the myth that Jesus was God, a Savior, and above criticism, has cursed the world for eighteen hundred years, and is still cursing it. Shall we fear to discuss this question, and break the yoke that a false Christianity has imposed upon us? No. Let us realize that no creed, day, book, man, or God, shall be imposed upon us, either by law or sword, but that we will maintain a free right to religious worship, or no worship, and that our inalienable right is liberty of conscience in these United States in the year 1878.

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† Martial Poetry †

Military Muses

Some Gave All
Death in Battle
The Soldier in the Rain
The Soldier's Amen
Anthem for Doomed Youth
Ypres
Hardness of Heart
Captives
All Armies are the Same
Three Hundred Thousand More
The Silent One

James E. Martin
C.S. Lewis
Julia L. Keyes
Anonymous
Wilfred Owen
Laurence Binyon
Edward Shillito
Ernest Hemingway
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John S. Gibbons
Ivor Gurney

Contributors:

Laurence Binyon (1869-1943) was an English poet and art scholar. Too old to volunteer for duty during WWI, he served as a hospital orderly in France.

John S. Gibbons (1810-1892) was a member of the Hicksite community of the Society of Friends and considered “a fighting Quaker” during the American Civil War.

Ivor Gurney (1890-1937) was an English composer who was wounded in WWI and returned to battle before being gassed by the Germans.

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) drove a WWI ambulance and served as a journalist during the Spanish Civil War and WWII. He was wounded by mortar fire during WWI.

Julia L. Keyes (1829-1877) was a Southern poet whose husband served in the Confederate army. They emigrated to Brazil after the war, where she continued to write.

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) was the foremost Christian apologist of the last century. He was a wounded WWI combat veteran and provided valuable radio broadcasts during WWII.

James E. Martin is a retired United States Air Force veteran and Baptist clergyman who has published a collection of patriotic poetry.

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) perished during the First World War, during which his graphic poetry about the trenches brought him to prominence.

Edward Shillito (1872-1948) was a Congregational minister who wrote a number of theological works, in addition to poetry.

Some Gave All

James E. Martin

They came from all over the land,
Some very young, others old.
There was in them all something grand,
That needs to be continually told.

That “something” that in them all was found,
That simply could not be obscured,
Was a devotion to duty and honor profound
That to the end endured.

In Asia, Europe, Africa, and more,
They answered their country’s call.
And there on foreign, distant shore
They courageously, silently did fall.

There still are some whose remains
The location of which only God is sure.
The freedoms that they died to obtain
Prayerfully will forever endure.

Gratitude is to them surely due,
If it could be properly expressed.
This, obviously, we cannot do
Except by public address.

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Death in Battle

C.S. Lewis

Open the gates for me,
Open the gates of the peaceful castle, rosy in the West,
In the sweet dim Isle of Apples over the wide sea's breast,

Open the gates for me!

Sorely pressed have I been
And driven and hurt beyond bearing this summer day,
But the heat and the pain together suddenly fall away,
All's cool and green.

But a moment ago,
Among men cursing in fight and toiling, blinded I fought,
But the labour passed on a sudden even as a passing thought,

And now-alone! Ah, to be ever alone,
In flowery valleys among the mountains and silent wastes untrod,
In the dewy upland places, in the garden of God,
This would atone!

I shall not see
The brutal, crowded faces around me, that in their toil have grown
Into the faces of devils-yea, even as my own—
When I find thee,

O Country of Dreams!
Beyond the tide of the ocean, hidden and sunk away,
Out of the sound of battles, near to the end of day,
Full of dim woods and streams.

© C.S. Lewis as appearing in *Spirits in Bondage*.

The Soldier In The Rain

Julia L. Keyes

Ah me! the rain has a sadder sound
Than it ever had before;
And the wind more plaintively whistles through
The crevices of the door.

We know we are safe beneath our roof
From every drop that falls;
And we feel secure and blest, within
The shelter of our walls.

Then why do we dread to hear the noise
Of the rapid, rushing rain—
And the plash of the wintry drops, that beat
Through the blinds, on the window-pane?

We think of the tents on the lowly ground,
Where our patriot soldiers lie;
And the sentry's bleak and lonely march,
'Neath the dark and starless sky.

And we pray, with a tearful heart, for those
Who brave for us yet more—
And we wish this war, with its thousand ills
And griefs, was only o'er.

We pray when the skies are bright and clear,
When the winds are soft and warm—
But oh! we pray with an aching heart
'Mid the winter's rain and storm.

We fain would lift these mantling clouds
That shadow our sunny clime;
We can but wait—for we know there'll be
A day, in the coming time,

When peace, like a rosy dawn, will flood
Our land with softest light:
Then--we will scarcely hearken the rain
In the dreary winter's night.

The Soldier's Amen

Anonymous

[This Confederate poem (and song) was voiced with various alterations by other soldiers in distant lands. It reveals the lack of respect for conscripts held by many volunteers.]

As a couple of good soldiers were walking one day,
Said one to the other: "Let's kneel down and pray;
I'll pray for the war, and good of all men,
And whatever I pray for, do you say 'Amen!'"

"We'll pray for the generals and all of their crew,
Likewise for the captains and lieutenants, too;
May good luck and good fortune them always attend,
And return safely home!" Said the Soldier—"Amen!"

"We'll pray for the privates, the noblest of all;
They do all the work and get no glory at all;
May good luck and good fortune them always attend,
And return crowned with laurels!" Said the Soldier—"Amen!"

"We'll pray for the pretty boys who want themselves wives,
And have not the courage to strike for their lives;
May bad luck and bad fortune them always attend,
And go down to Old Harry!" Said the Soldier—"Amen!"

"We'll pray for the pretty girls, who make us good wives,
And always look at a soldier with tears in their eyes;
May good luck and good fortune them always attend,
And brave gallants for sweethearts!" Said the Soldier—"Amen!"

"We'll pray for the conscript, with frown on his brow,
To fight for his country he won't take the vow;
May bad luck and bad fortune him always attend,
And die with dishonor!" Said the soldier—"Amen!"

Anthem for Doomed Youth

Wilfred Owen

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,--
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

© Wilfred Owen.

Ypres

Laurence Binyon

She was a city of patience; of proud name,
Dimmed by neglecting Time; of beauty and loss;
Of acquiescence in the creeping moss.
But on a sudden fierce destruction came
Tigerishly pouncing: thunderbolt and flame
Showered on her streets, to shatter them and toss
Her ancient towers to ashes. Riven across,
She rose, dead, into never-dying fame.
White against heavens of storm, a ghost, she is known
To the world's ends. The myriads of the brave
Sleep round her. Desolately glorified,
She, moon-like, draws her own far-moving tide
Of sorrow and memory; toward her, each alone,
Glide the dark dreams that seek an English grave.

© **Laurence Binyon.**

Hardness of Heart

Edward Shillito

In the first watch no death but made us mourn;
Now tearless eyes run down the daily roll,
Whose names are written in the book of death;
For sealed are now the springs of tears, as when
The tropic sun makes dry the torrent's course
After the rains. They are too many now
For mortal eyes to weep, and none can see
But God alone the Thing itself and live.
We look to seaward, and behold a cry!
To skyward, and they fall as stricken birds
On autumn fields; and earth cries out its toll,
From the Great River to the world's end--toll
Of dead, and maimed and lost; we dare not stay;
Tears are not endless and we have no more.

© Edward Shillito.

Captives

Ernest Hemingway

Some came in chains
Unrepentant but tired.
Too tired but to stumble.
Thinking and hating were finished
Thinking and fighting were finished.
Cures thus a long campaign,
Making death easy.

© 1920 Ernest Hemingway.

All Armies are the Same

Ernest Hemingway

All armies are the same
Publicity is fame
Artillery makes the same old noise
Valor is an attribute of boys
Old soldiers all have tired eyes
All soldiers hear the same old lies
Dead bodies have always drawn flies

© 1922 Ernest Hemingway.

Three Hundred Thousand More

John S. Gibbons

*[This poem was written to aid Lincoln's 1862
call for 300,000 more Union troops.]*

We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more,
From Mississippi's winding stream,
And from New England's shore;
We leave our plows and workshops,
Our wives and children dear,
With hearts too full for utterance,
With but a silent tear;
We dare not look behind us,
But steadfastly before—
We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more.

Chorus:

We are coming, we are coming,
Our Union to restore;
We are coming, Father Abraham,
With three hundred thousand more.

If you look across the hill-tops,
That meet the Northern sky,
Long moving lines of rising dust
Your vision may descry;
And now the wind, an instant,
Tears the cloudy veil aside,
And floats aloft our spangled flag,
In glory and in pride;
And bayonets in the sunlight gleam,
And bands brave music pour—
We are coming Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more.

Chorus is Repeated

If you look all up your valleys,
Where the growing harvests shine,
You may see our sturdy farmer boys,
Fast forming into line;

And children from their mothers' knees,
Are pulling at the weeds,
And learning how to reap and sow,
Against their country's needs;
And a farewell group stands weeping
At every cottage door—
We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more.

Chorus is Repeated

You have called us, and we're coming,
By Richmond's bloody tide.
To lay us down, for freedom's sake,
Our brother's bones beside;
Or from foul treason's savage group
To wrench the murderer's blade,
And in the face of foreign foes
Its fragments to parade;
Six hundred thousand loyal men,
And true, have gone before—
We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more.

Chorus is Repeated

© 1862 John S. Gibbons.

The Silent One

Ivor Gurney

Who died on the wires, and hung there, one of two—
Who for his hours of life had chattered through
Infinite lovely chatter of Bucks accent:
Yet faced unbroken wires; stepped over, and went
A noble fool, faithful to his stripes—and ended.
But I weak, hungry, and willing only for the chance
Of line—to fight in the line, lay down under unbroken
Wires, and saw the flashes and kept unshaken,
Till the politest voice—a finicking accent, said:
“Do you think you might crawl through, there: there’s a hole”
Darkness, shot at: I smiled, as politely replied—
“I’m afraid not, Sir.” There was no hole no way to be seen
Nothing but chance of death, after tearing of clothes
Kept flat, and watched the darkness, hearing bullets whizzing—
And thought of music—and swore deep heart’s deep oaths
(Polite to God) and retreated and came on again,
Again retreated—and a second time faced the screen.

© Ivor Gurney.

† Book Reviews †

**The Power of Parable:
How Fiction by Jesus became Fiction about Jesus**
By John Dominic Crossan
(HaperOne, 2012): 259 pages.

Reviewed by John E. Hugus

In this book John Crossan, a world renowned Jesus scholar, breaths new life into well known parables. He does this by challenging the reader to observe familiar parables from different angles while, not losing sight of the possible meaning within a parable. Crossan is not afraid to ask questions which force the reader to think without fear. He regards a parable as a fictional story invented for moral or theological purposes. This means that there are stories by Jesus, such as, the Good Samaritan but also there are parables “about” Jesus, such as the crowd in the Passion account. Crossman explores the possibility that factual history may become parable, in other words—parabolic history or historical parable.

The core question for Crossan is: Where does factual history end and fictional parable begin? There is, it seems, an interaction taking place, which Crossan eloquently challenges the reader to understand. Does the interaction of fact interpreted by fiction, of history interpreted by parable, of human event interpreted by divine vision . . . extend to the full content of a gospel? This may be why we have only one gospel in reality, but have four “according to’s,” which is the genesis question of this book (5).

Crossan divides his book into two main parts. Part I focuses on parables “by” Jesus, involving “fictional” events about “fictional” characters. Part II focuses on parables “about” Jesus, involving “fictional” events about “factual” characters. Part I, in turn, has six chapters. In chapters 1 and 2 Crossan lays out his two-fold typology for Jesus’s parables which are “riddle parables” and “example parables.” Chapter 3 reveals a suggested third type of typology which is named “challenge parables.” Chapter 4 argues that challenge parables already existed in the pre-Jesus biblical tradition. Chapter 5 shows how many of Jesus’ were challenge parables rather than either riddle or example parables. Challenge fits Jesus’s mode of teaching well. Chapter 6 raises the question of why Jesus chose challenge parables as his major teaching style and tool. In essence, why use a parable at all?

Part II is comprised of four chapters. The chapters correspond to each of the four Gospels. In each chapter Crossan focuses on one important part of the gospel to propose it as parable rather than history. Crossan then proposes that a gospel version is a book-length “mega parable” about the life, death and resurrection of the historical character Jesus of Nazareth. Throughout this section of the book, Crossan examines the “attack parable.” This a fourth type of parable. In this kind of parable Jesus challenges hearers and attacks them by calling them names, doubting their sincerity, or impugning their integrity. Crossan wonders if this last type of parable is characteristic of the historical Jesus.

Crossan argues that a parable is not an attempt “to write a good story in as short a space as possible” which is how Jewish folklorist Howard Schwartz defines parable (7). Basically Crossan defines a parable as a “metaphorical story.” This is a story which *points beyond itself*. A parable is never about the content. It points the hearer toward some external referent or destination. And this is what Crossan accomplishes in his book. Crossan takes the reader on a journey of expanding one’s understanding of gospel, story and Jesus. His goal is to open up new avenues so that readers hear the gospel in a different light, and discover new ways of better understanding of Jesus as recorded in the Bible.

Crossan accomplishes his central thesis summarized in the final paragraph of his book. “The power of Jesus’s parables challenged and enabled his followers to co-create with God a world of justice and love, peace and nonviolence. The power of Jesus’s historical life challenged his followers by proving at least one human being could cooperate fully with God. And if one, why not others? If some, why not all? ‘Ashes denote,’ wrote Emily Dickinson, ‘that fire was.’ And if fire ever was, fire can be again” (252).

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**A Born Again Episcopalian:
The Evangelical Witness of Charles Pettit McIlvaine**
by Thomas G. Isham
(Birmingham, Alabama: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2011) 296 pages.

Reviewed by Kenneth E. Lawson

This is a book that I had been hoping for years would be written. In fact, several years ago I began collecting articles and reports about the life of this remarkable man, with the idea that perhaps one day I might write a book about him. Now that book has been written by Thomas Isham.

Charles P. McIlvaine (1799-1873) was a Princeton educated evangelical preacher who stood for the fundamentals of the faith before there was such a term as fundamentalist. He was an Episcopalian and he encouraged revival wherever he was. His churches and chapels grew both spiritually and numerically. By birth and by choice he was a member of the Church of England or, as it was called in America at that time, The Protestant Episcopal Church. His primary ministry took place during the more than four decades he served as the Episcopal Bishop of Ohio.

He was a nationally known figure who preached orthodox Christianity and was publically opposed to the Tractarians, who sought to reunite Protestants with the Roman Catholic Church. He was also openly in opposition to the rising European rationalism which challenged the historicity of the Bible. McIlvaine stood for the fundamentals of the faith at a time when liberal speculation, Darwinism, and higher critical theories of the origin of the Bible were prevalent.

McIlvaine was a friend to the U.S. military. His relationship to the army was longstanding. As a younger clergyman he was the chaplain at West Point. During the Civil War he ministered to the wounded and dying on several battlefields as a civilian clergyman. He was sent as a religious diplomat by President Abraham Lincoln to England to try and smooth over tensions between the two countries. He was successful in these endeavors. As a Princeton Seminary graduate, McIlvaine kept in touch and coordinated his evangelical efforts with his former professors, some of America's leading theologians. In fact, McIlvaine's writings against the Tractarians and the Rationalists became classics of nineteenth century Christian orthodoxy. Many of McIlvaine's writings and sermons are still in print today.

As good as this volume is, there are two important things the book did not cover. First, in his own state of Ohio, McIlvaine sent several of his Episcopal priests into the war as chaplains. We have no account of McIlvaine as a bishop administrating ministerial support for these numerous Episcopal churches without their pastors. Second, Ohio was the victim of the longest raid of the Civil War, when Confederate General John H. Morgan of "Morgan's Raiders" fame invaded Ohio in July, 1863. During the raid, Morgan vandalized numerous towns and churches. How this affected Bishop McIlvaine, when the fires of war were blazing in his own state, is not addressed.

McIlvaine would not recognize his Episcopal Church today. He could not imagine how his denomination has embraced many of the ideas that he adamantly opposed. In the modern worldwide movement within the Episcopal Church to return to its roots, McIlvaine is becoming a hero. His writings have stirred the interest of Episcopal clergy who were taught only theological liberalism in seminary. Many Episcopalians today—in North America, Australia, South Africa, and Great Britain—are discovering their historic roots in theological orthodoxy, and in doing so are reading everything they can by Charles McIlvaine.

This was a fine book and I recommend it.

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Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible Through Palestinian Eyes

by Mitri Raheb

(Maryknoll, New York, Orbis, 2014).

Reviewed by Robert C. Stroud

The Christian Church finds itself in controversy on nearly every front. Epic changes in the social and moral fabric have different religious constituencies polarized. In America even the “conservative bastion” of the armed forces has been radically transformed by the current administration. What would have been culturally inconceivable a decade ago is now a “done deal,” and it will take a generation or more to measure the consequences. Politically, the United States has moved rapidly toward socialism, a transition lauded by some, and feared by others.

Internationally, the world seems more fragmented than ever. Given the opportunity to break away from larger, pluralistic nations, many ethnic minorities wage war to gain independence. Tribalism appears to be a powerful rival to the globalism that many utopians have deemed to be the messianic hope for our world’s future. The growing uncertainty of the financial fate of bankrupt governments, and declining trust in those same institutions, is on the rise. The magnitude of the impending troubles numbs the minds of all but the most naïve or epicurean.

As the Allies prepare to end their decade-long effort to bring democracy and freedom to Afghanistan, the question looms: once the West evacuates, will the overwhelming sacrifices have been worth it? Is democracy so alien a concept that in some societies it is destined to be rejected?

With the turbulent mix of these recent convulsions, some things *remain the same*. However, the lack change—in an instance such as the subject of this volume—is nothing to be celebrated. The tempestuous situation in today’s Middle East is nothing new to the land of Palestine (and/or Israel, depending on one’s predilections). This conflict has lasted so long that there remain few objective individuals who have not already settled into their personal belief in who is the aggressor, and who the victim. Because of that fact, many are reluctant to invest time in reading something on the subject that may not reinforce their existing convictions.

Dr. Raheb’s book offers a refreshing contribution to this complex subject. Raheb doubles as the President of Dar al-Kalima University College in Bethlehem and as President of the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

Raheb, a Palestinian, is not neutral. He writes of “the State of Israel as the expression of the empire in Palestine . . . Empires are always about control” (55). He also describes the disappointed hope for peace he experienced “when Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin shook hands at the White House.” This has been replaced by “fear for my two daughters . . . whether they will ever experience peace during their lifetimes” (125).

Elsewhere he invites challenge by offering weak arguments. For example, he incomprehensibly attributes internecine Muslim animosities to Western machinations.

This is part and parcel of colonial history in the Middle East. Prior to World War I the West assisted the Arabs against the Turks; today, the West is pitting Sunni Muslims against Shiite Muslims. Sometimes the West attempts to separate the Christians of the region from their Muslim neighbors (112).

In reaction to such an allegation, one does not have to be reactionary to inquire about Sunni-Shia relations throughout history when the West has exerted little influence. Likewise, perhaps Christian-Muslim relations are also influenced by the unjust concept of the *dhimmī*, which makes permanent a second-class citizenship category for non-Muslims.

Despite such shortcomings, the volume merits reading. This book offers a real story, with genuine people, not actors on a stage or caricatures from an editorial cartoon. Raheb’s passion is genuine. Yet all of the diverse participants in these debates recount true stories, and speak with deep passion. What makes this work unique?

Rather than being either (1) a pontificating foreigner, convinced they hold the answer to the problem, or (2) a member of the Jewish or Muslim divides in Israel itself, the author is a native Palestinian Christian. Raheb sets the stage for his book, beginning with the biblical narrative. His viewpoint offers a voice too seldom heard. While many evangelicals committed to the security of the nation of Israel will find his positions discomfiting, listening to his message will prove worthwhile. Describing Israel’s historical position as shaped by its geographic situation, he writes:

Situated between different empires, the fertile plains of Palestine often became the most suitable battlefield to keep wars and their tragedies away from the heartland of those empires. It is no coincidence that Armageddon was envisioned as taking place in the most fertile and largest plain of Palestine. This wasn’t a revealed vision of the end times, but it corresponded to the political reality of the region. Wars constitute reality in Palestine. I know this not merely from history books but from my own experience. I am just fifty years old and have already lived through nine wars (51).

The author reveals more about his own psyche when he describes discussions with those who “envy” his birth “just across the street from where tradition says Jesus was born” (67).

But the truth is that living in the land called *Holy* is not to be envied. It is not easy to live in Palestine and survive physically and even more, psychologically and emotionally. It is a distinct and unique challenge to be placed in a buffer zone and often war zone. It is tough to see it divided and torn apart. It is enervating to feel that one’s country and people are occupied . . . But this is the context in which the people of Palestine have repeatedly found themselves. It is the context in which the Bible was written (67).

Despite his sad assessment of the recent history of Israel and Palestine, Raheb does end on an optimistic note. Appealing to the hope of the faith in which he was baptized and ordained, he declares, “I am convinced that war is not destiny. After all, in the midst of the Roman occupation the angels proclaimed peace on earth. Peace in the Holy Land must be the mandate for all of us” (125).

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† Resurrected Biographies †

In this issue of Curtana, we deviate slightly from our normal simple listing of chaplain biographical notes, captured from various sources. The names that follow all come from a single source. They are listed in the order in which they were introduced in the original text. In addition, not all of these clergymen chose to serve as chaplains. Some elected to bear arms and were prepared to kill to preserve the Union. At the end of the list, we reproduce some explanatory material from the source that illustrates the sending agencies' view that either vocation was appropriate for their pastors.

† Curtana †

William K. Hoback

United States Army Chaplain
(57th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 73-74.

In the autumn of 1861, the governor authorized the Rev. J.W.T. McMullen and Rev. F.A. Hardin, both members of the North Indiana Conference, to raise a regiment of infantry to serve for the period of three years, unless sooner discharged, the same to be organized at Camp Wayne, Richmond, Indiana. Hundreds of men, especially those of moral and religious character, flocked to their standard, and the regiment, afterward known as the 57th Indiana Volunteers, was soon organized. Two of the company commanders, Rev. W.K. Hoback and Rev. C.E. Disbro, were traveling ministers. The Rev. John W.T. McMullen at the time of enlistment was pastor of the Pearl Street church, Richmond, Indiana. His commission as colonel of the 57th regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was dated November 9, 1861. He resigned his commission March 6, 1862, and never re-entered the service. He was transferred to the Northwest Indiana Conference in 1862. Rev. Franklin A. Hardin at the time of enlistment was pastor at Newcastle, Indiana; his commission as Lieutenant Colonel was dated November 9, 1861, and he also resigned the following March. He was recommissioned on April 3, 1862, and again resigned September 15, 1862. He was located April 14, 1862, and subsequently became a member of the Rock River Conference.

Rev. W.K. Hoback enlisted at Cassville, Indiana, his commission as captain of Company H, 57th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was dated October 30, 1861, resigned to accept a captaincy March 20, 1863. He was commissioned as chaplain February 20, 1863, resigned October 26, 1863, because of disability. Captain Hoback was granted a location April 11, 1862, readmitted to the conference in 1863, was located again in 1874, and died October 19, 1876.

William S. Bradford

United States Army *Line Officer*
(57th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 74.

Rev. William S. Bradford enlisted at Middletown, Indiana, his commission as captain of Company F, 57th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was dated October 30, 1861. He gallantly led his company at the battle of Shiloh. He was taken sick three weeks before the evacuation of Corinth, received a leave of absence and started home, but continued to grow worse and died at Muncie, Indiana, May 14, 1862, before reaching his destination.

† Curtana †

Charles E. Disbro

United States Army *Line Officer*
(57th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 74.

Rev. Charles E. Disbro enlisted at Alto, Indiana, was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, April 30, 1862, resigned February 21, 1863; was afterward promoted 1st Lieutenant, but was not mustered. Was in the battles of Shiloh, Perryville, Ky., Stone River and siege of Corinth. After resigning from the 57th Regiment he enlisted in the 108th Regiment State Troops, and was commissioned as Captain of Company G., July 11, 1863, mustered out July 17, 1863, promoted Major, Howard County Regiment Indiana Legion State Troops, October 17, 1863; located April 11, 1862; readmitted April 11, 1864.

† Curtana †

Abram C. Barnhart

United States Army Chaplain
(11th Indiana Cavalry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 74-75.

Rev. Abram C. Barnhart enlisted at Columbia City; the date of his commission as 1st Lieutenant of Company C., 126th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was December 21, 1863; promoted Chaplain April 8, 1864, and was mustered out with regiment. Located 1856, readmitted 1863, located 1869.

Safety Layton

United States Army Chaplain
(17th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 75.

Rev. Safety Layton enlisted at Logansport, Indiana; the date of his commission as Chaplain 9th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was September 5, 1861; resigned July 6, 1862; reappointed Chaplain 17th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, December 7, 1862; resigned January 14, 1864; withdrawn 1869; died, date not known.

† Curtana †

Lewis Dale

United States Army Chaplain
(19th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 75.

Rev. Lewis Dale enlisted at Muncie, Indiana; date of commission as Chaplain of 19th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was July 29, 1861; resigned March 8, 1863; located 1863.

† Curtana †

Thomas Barnett

United States Army Chaplain
(19th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 75.

Rev. Thomas Barnett enlisted at Selma, Indiana; date of commission as Chaplain 19th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was April 10, 1863; resigned July 5, 1864; withdrawn under charges 1871.

† Curtana †

Orange V. Lemon

United States Army Chaplain
(36th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 75.

Rev. O.V. Lemon enlisted at Richmond, Indiana; the date of his commission as Chaplain of 36th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was October 1, 1861; resigned July 6, 1862; died September 30, 1889.

Morrow P. Armstrong

United States Army Chaplain
(36th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 75.

Rev. Morrow P. Armstrong enlisted at Blountsville, Indiana; the date of his commission as Chaplain of 36th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was July 12, 1862; resigned January 22, 1863.

He enlisted in the 106th Regiment, State Troops at Kokomo, Indiana, was commissioned as Captain of Company H. July 10, 1863; mustered out July 17, 1863; readmitted 1863; transferred to Illinois Conference 1867.

† Curtana †

Arad S. Lakin

United States Army Chaplain
(8th Indiana Cavalry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 75.

Rev. Arad S. Lakin enlisted at Peru, Indiana; date of commission as Chaplain of 39th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was August 8, 1861; mustered out December 31, 1864; term expired.

Mr. Lakin is given this recognition on account of faithful service, though not a member of this conference.

† Curtana †

Greenberry C. Beeks

United States Army Chaplain
(44th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 75-76.

Rev. Greenberry C. Beeks enlisted at Fort Wayne, Indiana; date of commission was November 21, 1861, as Chaplain of 44th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers. He resigned December 1, 1862. At the time of his enlistment he was presiding elder of Fort Wayne district. Died 1878.

John W. Smith

United States Army Chaplain
(48th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 76.

Rev. John W. Smith enlisted at Middlebury, Indiana; date of commission as Chaplain of 48th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was January 2, 1864; mustered out with regiment; died June 3, 1891.

† Curtana †

Orville P. Boyden

United States Army Chaplain
(75th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 76.

Rev. Orville P. Boyden enlisted at Muncie, Indiana; date of commission as Chaplain of 75th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was October 14, 1862; resigned February 15, 1863; died August 22, 1865.

† Curtana †

Enos W. Errick

United States Army Chaplain
(89th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 76.

Rev. Enos W. Errick enlisted at Decatur, Indiana; date of commission as Chaplain of 89th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was August 9, 1862; resigned July 22, 1863; withdrew from North Indiana Conference in 1863, and joined Evangelical Lutheran Church.

† Curtana †

John S. McCarty

United States Army Chaplain
(89th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 76.

Rev. John S. McCarty; date of commission as chaplain of 89th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was December 26, 1864. Mustered out with regiment; died July 10, 1910.

Silas T. Stout

United States Army Chaplain
(84th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 76.

Rev. Silas T. Stout; date of commission as chaplain of 84th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was September 26, 1862; resigned July 31, 1863; died December 23, 1880.

† Curtana †

Augustus Eddy

United States Hospital Chaplain
(Hospital: Indiana)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 76, 109.

Rev. Augustus Eddy was appointed as hospital chaplain July 4, 1862. There is no record as to length of his service, but it was probably three years. He died February 9, 1870.

It is not difficult to locate the leading members of a Conference. The Rev. Augustus Eddy, Presiding Elder of Anderson district, had for years been one of the conspicuous men. He was born in Massachusetts, October 5th, 1798, and was converted at a very early age. Before he was twenty he was taking an active part in song and prayer services. At the close of a sermon by B. G. Paddock, young Mr. Eddy rose up in the middle of the congregation and said, "Mr. Paddock, will you take me?" Mr. Paddock went back to him and invited him to come into the church.

He was licensed as an exhorter in 1819. In 1820 he married Miss Martha Thomas. He was made Presiding Elder in 1831. He traveled a number of the large districts of the central West, such as the Indianapolis, Whitewater, Madison and Lawrenceburg districts. In 1855 he was transferred to the North Indiana Conference. He also served as post chaplain at Indianapolis for four years during the war. He served three times at General Conference. "He closed up a long life heroically devoted to life's noblest end," February 9th, 1870.

† Curtana †

Richard D. Spellman

United States Army Chaplain
(101st Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*
(Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 76.

Rev. Richard D. Spellman enlisted at Noblesville, Indiana; date of commission as chaplain of 101st Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was September 10, 1862; resigned April 7, 1863; died October 20, 1905.

† Curtana †

Reuben H. Sparks

United States Army Chaplain

(57th Indiana Infantry)

Source: *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 76-77.

Rev. Reuben H. Sparks enlisted at Union City, Indiana; date of commission as chaplain of 124th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was November 17, 1864; resigned May 2, 1865. He transferred to Iowa Conference in 1874, returned to this Conference in 1875, and transferred to South Kansas Conference in 1879.

† Curtana †

Original Editorial Matter Concerning these Chaplains

The writer feels handicapped in the fact that no records are available to show the engagements in which these men participated, some of them on account of disability having resigned their positions before their commands saw active service, and of others no records are given.

The members of the Conference who were enlisted in the army and appointed to positions other than that of chaplain were located by action of the Conference, with the promise of readmission upon their return, which promise was faithfully kept.

Members of the Conference who served as chaplain in different Indiana regiments were very loyal to the cause of the Union, and did what they could in the time of the country's peril. They were nearly all men past middle life, and this accounts in many cases for their early retirement from the service. Many of these devoted men have fought their last battle and have gone to their reward.

The army chaplain did not have many privileges for distinctly religious services, except on rare occasions, when the army spent some time in camp. But he had many other opportunities to be helpful to those under his care. One of the duties of the chaplain was to convey to the families and friends of the soldier the funds paid him by the government. In this way a communication was maintained between the soldier and his distant home.

He was the regimental postmaster, mail coming to army headquarters, down through corps, division, brigade and regimental, into the hands of the chaplain, and conveyed by him to the soldier addressed. The chaplain was the special friend to every man in his command. This gave him great opportunity for usefulness in time of sickness or wounds, in writing letters for disabled men and in other ways too numerous to mention.

Another duty required of the chaplain was to take his place with the surgeons and ambulance corps, in time of battle to render any assistance possible to the wounded and dying. Many a soldier boy has been comforted and led to the Savior at such times by the presence of a devoted chaplain.

At times even these zealous workers, however, seem to have become discouraged in their labors.

One chaplain wrote that the soldiers “were in a state of mind unfavorable to the reception of the truth.” A captain, seeing this statement in print, hastened to deny it. In his opinion, he said, the regiments as a whole were very open to such a reception. In support of this belief he pointed out that the terrible battles through which the men had passed had made them think more seriously of the future. This belief of the captain is somewhat proved by the reports which many of the chaplains made of how many of the men were converted at the religious meetings held at various times.

In 1863 an added burden was put upon the chaplains when the Secretary of War declined to furnish regimental tents for religious worship. In explaining this action, he said that the difficulty of transporting such a large tent impeded the progress of the army.

Under a new law, made in 1863, the chaplain received \$100 per month and two daily rations—the rations being estimated at \$18 per month—making a total monthly pay in cash of \$118. They furnished their own clothing and board. Also, each man was allowed to keep a horse if he so desired, and in case he did so, forage was provided for the mount. Many of their expenses amounted to \$10 a week, besides the families at home who were dependent upon them for sustenance.

In 1864 a number of new regulations were issued concerning chaplains, which relieved the need in their case considerably. This order read:

Chaplains of the volunteer service are hereafter to have rank as such, without command, heretofore they had had no rank whatever; to be borne on the staff and field rolls, next after the surgeons, and to wear such uniform as may be prescribed by army regulations. They are to have forage for two horses; and when assigned to hospitals, posts and forts they shall be entitled to quarters and fuel within the hospital, which they do not have now.

When absent from duty on leave, or from sickness or disability, or imprisoned by the enemy, their pay shall not be subject, as now, to any other diminution than other officers. Those absent from sickness, wounds or imprisonment shall receive full pay, without rations. In other respects their pay to be the same as now. Chaplains are hereafter required to make monthly reports to the War Department of the moral condition and general history of regiments, hospitals, etc.; and all commanding officers must render them such facilities as will aid therein; and they must also hold religious services at the burial of deceased soldiers and public services every Sabbath, when practicable. Pensions are to be granted to the chaplains at the rate of \$20 per month for total disability, and at the same rate to the widows, children, mothers or sister of chaplains who have died since March 4, 1861, of wounds or disease contracted in the service while in the lines of their duty.

That such concessions and provisions were made shows how the chaplains' work was appreciated more and more as the war progressed.

While the faithful army chaplains were performing their duties among the troops, some of the pastors at home were combatting Southern sympathizers. One pastor writes, "there is a large class of 'sympathizers' in this section, self-styled 'Democrats,' more properly called traitors, whose principal distinguishing characteristics are whisky drinking, Sabbath breaking and general lawlessness, and utter disregard for the law from God or man.

Organized in bands, with old muskets, revolvers and horse-pistols, they frequently meet to drill, generally on horseback. Their drill consists in racing their horses at breakneck speed, hurraing for [Ohio Congressman Clement] Vallandigham and Davis, insulting decent people, cursing everything good, and drinking a great deal of very bad whisky.

At their last meeting here two days since, one Clark, a good-for-nothing, drunken lawyer, a pretended leader among the chivalry, harangued the motley crowd for a while upon the 'Constitution;' his arguments were clear as mud, yet seemed to be very convincing to his constituents." The Methodist preacher was the sworn enemy of these "sympathizers." The pastor of the Third Street Church, Peru, in 1864, was Rev. W.K. Hoback, who had been both a captain and a chaplain in the Union army, having resigned on account of poor health.

Naturally, he entertained very decided views in regard to the war, and he did not hesitate to express them, both in and out of the pulpit. This alienated a part of his congregation, but it attracted others, and he was given credit for creating Union sentiment in his congregation and in the community at large.

Many churches throughout the Conference were centers of patriotism, and were often used for the purpose of enlisting troops. In the little frame church at Kokomo many patriotic speeches were made, and often in this church fifes and drums played soul-stirring music to call the boys to arms. “On one occasion a cannon was brought out in front of the church and fired many times to arouse enthusiasm.” In some places there was complaint that church work languished during the war, due to the fact that the members were more interested in working for the soldiers and the Sanitary and Christian commissions than for the church . . . The period of the war was a period of increased giving, which was not only true in Indiana, and of the Methodist Episcopal Church, but was generally true in every section of the North, and of every church.

[Horace Herrick et al, *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart, 1917): 77-81.]

† Curious Citations †

Describing Chaplains as Vermin A Nineteenth Century Freethinker's Viewpoint

Robert C. Stroud

Most citizens are surprised and troubled when they hear the cries of some secularists for the dismantling of the military chaplaincy. Based on a misinterpretation of the First Amendment these activists view the chaplaincy's existence as a violation of the "establishment clause." (An interpretation the very *writers* of the Bill of Rights did not share.) Similarly, they have used the extra-Constitutional language of the "separation" of church and state to construct a barrier that only the most radical founders of the nation would applaud. (The individuals who would have joined Jefferson in those ranks are debatable, but they would clearly constitute a small percentage of the women and men who established this nation.)

In our post-Constantinian and post-modern world, major societal change has become normative. Likewise, the pace of this evolution (or devolution, depending on one's values) seems to grow faster each year. The increasingly strident calls of a fringe group of secularists to defund the military chaplaincy grow louder. As the voices grow in volume they gain the attention of some for the first time. Many people learning only recently of systematic efforts to remove all semblance of religious expression from the public forum, are dumbfounded. Still, these arguments are not new. For over 150 years, critics of federal chaplaincies have combined their voices to call for their demise.

The Nine Demands of Liberalism is one of the most influential documents in American political history. It was written during the 1880s by the American Secular Union and the Freethought Federation to encompass their primary goals. In addition to urging that presidents and governors desist from calling for days of prayer or thanksgiving, it offered a prioritized list of demands beginning with the elimination of tax exemption for religious organizations. It is the second of their demands that relates to us here.

That the employment of chaplains in the United States Congress, in state legislatures in the United States Army and United States Navy, and in prisons, asylums, and all institutions supported by public money, shall be discontinued, and that all religious services maintained by national, state, or municipal governments shall be abolished . . .

It is important to note that ending the existence of the respective Chaplain Corps is not an attack on Christianity. It is an assault on all religious expression in uniform. Liberal or conservative, Jewish or Buddhist, Roman Catholic or Muslim, *all* chaplains would be expelled from the armed forces if these revisionists have their way.

This would result in members of the armed forces being deprived of their Constitutional rights under the “free exercise” clause. It is unavoidable that some service members will be stationed in locations without access to local civilian worship options. The reason may vary—linguistic barriers, off base safety considerations, limited local faith tradition representation—but the end result would be the same.

The primary argument employed by critics of government chaplaincies (including congressional and hospital chaplains) is the aforementioned prohibition of establishing a state religion. The very diversity of the (mutually exclusive) faiths represented proves this to be false. A “Christian” chaplaincy, of course, would not tolerate the presence of alternative religions that also claim universality. That is the type of chaplaincy that was associated with the Constantinian era in the West, and remains true of some Islamic nations today.

Defunding military chaplains would mean that service members would have to rely on “missionaries” of a sort, funded by themselves or by a commissioning body. Ironically, this approach would invite a surplus of the more evangelical varieties of chaplains—precisely the clergy secularists most abhor. While it might be possible to accommodate religious access for most military members with a volunteer, paramilitary chaplaincy, the resulting problems would far outweigh any potential gains.

For example, what sort of access would they have to military areas? What type of training would they require to accompany troops to high threat areas? Who would determine which individual missionaries would be granted various access privileges when there was a surplus of volunteers? What sort of accountability would these ministers have to commanders who are responsible for accomplishing military *missions* . . . when these quasi-chaplains themselves are not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice?

If advocates of ending federal chaplaincies are interested in advancing their cause, these are precisely the sort of questions they need to answer. Curiously, the American Civil War offers a unique context in which to do just that. With millions of soldiers, sailors and marines mobilized during that lengthy conflict, there were thousands of chaplains. State and federal mechanisms for selecting and commissioning these clergy varied. (The article about Chaplain Ella E. Gibson in this issue of *Curtana* amply illustrates this.) In addition to military chaplains, there were also many other workers—including many clergy sometimes regarded as variations of chaplains—who served the military community. While clergy in organizations such as the United States Christian Commission and the United States Sanitary Commission found it easier to care for the troops in hospital and garrison, they were known to visit the battlefield as well. A comprehensive study comparing the effectiveness of their “volunteer” efforts to those of their military counterparts would be quite illuminating.

Now Let Us Consider the Blood Sucking Vermin Metaphor

Throughout the nineteenth century a number of liberal, often secular publications flourished. They often trumpeted the value of “freethought,” unencumbered by faith (which they typically referred to as “superstition”). While it can be debated that ultimately every rational being ends up placing their trust somewhere—be it in abstract science or their own reason—that is not our purpose here. During the utopian era of freethinking, Robert G. Ingersoll became prominent as “The Great Agnostic.” His advocacy of doubt was all the more significant since his father was a Congregationalist pastor who had once filled the pulpit in Charles G. Finney’s church while he was leading revivals in Europe. Walt Whitman, another freethinker, considered Ingersoll the greatest orator of the age. And Ingersoll used all of his rhetorical skills to undermine religious belief. He was the founding president of the American Secular Union.

In the same spirit, many other talented writers contributed their work to the freethought journals which proliferated. One of them, *Truth Seeker*, often availed itself of the illustrative skills of Watson Heston (1846-1905). In addition to providing numerous editorial comics for this journal and others like it, Heston wrote and illustrated two major books: *The Old Testament Comically Illustrated* (1890), and *The New Testament Comically Illustrated* (1898). One recent history relates that “his drawings were sometimes considered too blasphemous even for the pages of the *Truth Seeker*.”¹

¹ Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (Henry Holt, 2004): 175. She also writes: “Like Heston’s cartoons, Ingersoll’s satire went over well with frontier settlers accustomed to speaking their minds in an environment in which religious disputes were often viewed as “fighting words” (177).

The illustrations which follow are taken from *The Freethinkers' Pictorial Text-Book*, which was published by the Truth Seeker Company in 1890. From a wide selection of well detailed illustrations, we will consider the two that expressly refer to the second demand of liberals, as posed by the American Secular Union.² To the author and his readers the very existence of the military chaplaincy was an abomination. The layout of the book includes explanatory text on the left page, with a large illustration to the right. To allow for maximum legibility in the illustrations, we will also reproduce them in a similar manner, despite the handicap of using a vertical layout.

² Watson Heston, *The Freethinkers' Pictorial Text-Book* (Truth Seeker, 1890): 8-9, 158-59.

CHAPLAINS IN THE ARMY AND NAVY

Students of the United States Constitution might search in vain for some article in that instrument providing for the hire of ministers of the Christian gospel by the general government. Yet, notwithstanding this prudent omission, they need not look in vain for ministers so hired. The *Army Register* shows that in the army thirty white post chaplains are employed, besides four colored preachers, to minister to the “spiritual” wants of the United States army. These thirty-four incumbrances draw from the taxpayers of the country wages varying from \$125 to \$175 a month. The pay scale is for the first five years’ service \$125 per month; for the next five years, \$137.50; after ten years’ service, \$150; after fifteen years, \$162.50; after twenty years, \$175. Upon retiring they are pensioned at the rate of \$112.50 to \$157.50 a month. There were in 1884 thirteen of these retired leeches upon the roster. When traveling on orders chaplains draw in addition mileage of eight cents per mile.

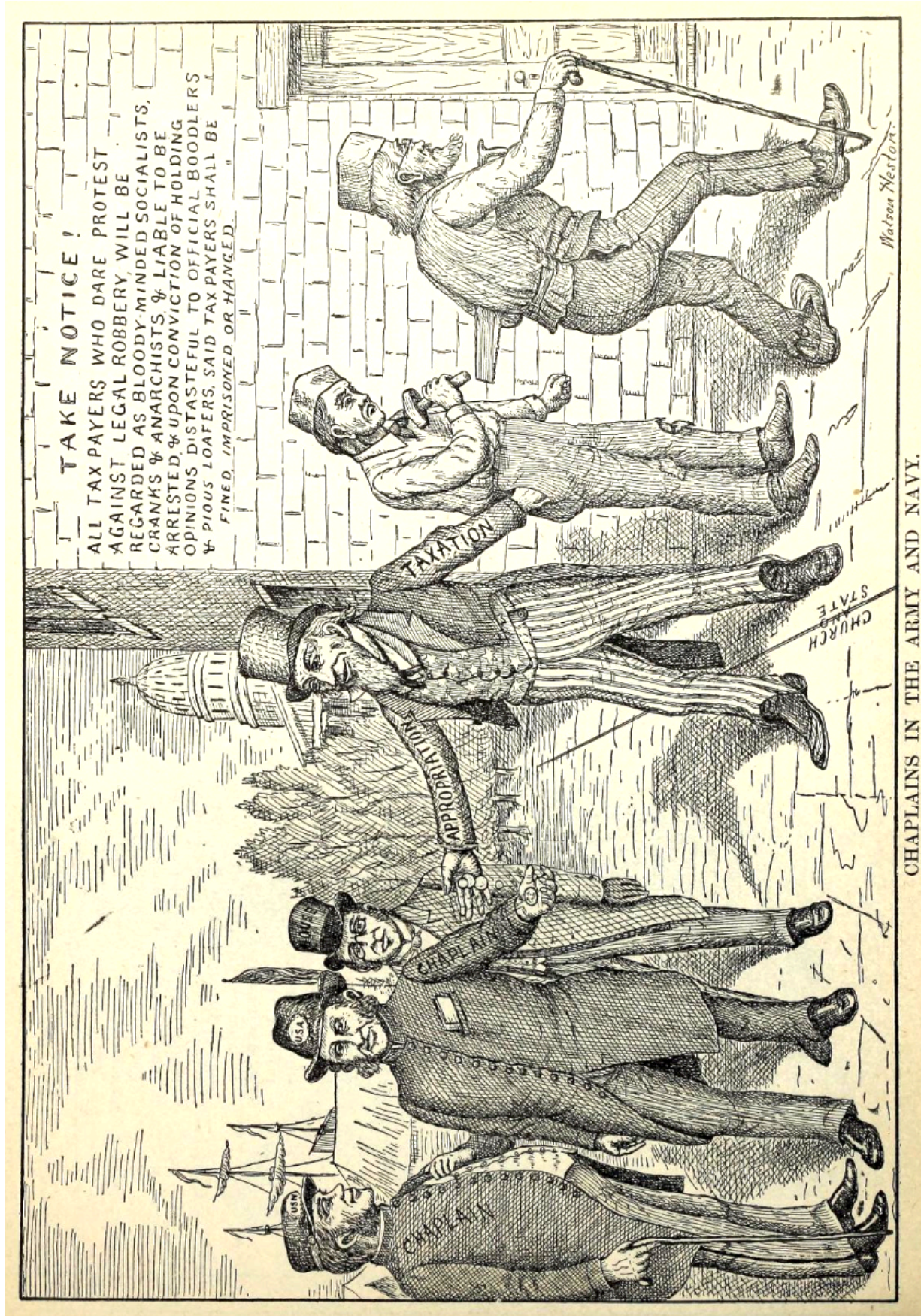
The average drain upon the treasury for these unconstitutional burdens is probably about \$1,800 a year each. Forty-seven times \$1,800 is \$84,600, this sum being spent annually to establish religion by our law-makers in defiance of their oaths to support the Constitution.

In the navy affairs are as bad. Chaplains while getting their sea legs on are paid \$2,500 a year; after five years’ service, \$2,800. If during the initiatory five years they are left on shore to say their prayers, the people pay them \$1,200 per year; after the five years, \$2,300. On leave of absence, or waiting orders, doing nothing, they command \$1,600 or \$1,900, according as they have been the five years or more in the navy. Retired chaplains hold the relative rank of captains, with three-fourths pay. There are twenty-three of these naval nuisances actively engaged, with a round half dozen retired.

The chaplains of Congress get \$900 a session. The United States spends annually on these three services, therefore, about as follows:

Chaplains in Congress	\$ 1,800 00
” ” Army	84,600 00
” ” Navy	<u>60,000 00</u>
Total annual expenditure	\$146,400 00

During the late war, the North had a million men in the field. A chaplain went with each regiment, which consisted of nearly a thousand men. The North, therefore, in round numbers, had a thousand chaplains at \$1,500 a year, who prayed God that the North might prevail. The Confederates also had a proportionate number to petition the throne of grace in behalf of the Confederacy. One thousand times \$1,500 is \$1,500,000 per year, spent during the war. In four years, \$6,000,000 was added to our national debt to pay a lot of men whose services were worthless. The expenditure for the purpose of the navy could not have been less than \$2,000,000. The people have been paying interest on that eight million ever since. Since the war closed some three millions more have been squandered on these religious drones. In the last quarter of a century, Congress has devoted not less than eleven millions of dollars to the establishment of the Christian religion, and is continuing at the rate of nearly \$150,000 annually. — *Truth Seeker Annual*, 1886.



CHAPLAINS IN THE ARMY AND NAVY.

THE PESTS THAT BOTHER UNCLE SAM

[Caution: The descriptive labels in the image are more offensive than the text which accompanies the drawing. They do, however, properly reflect the racist opinions of some populist writers of the era.]

There are now thirty post chaplains in the army, authorized by the act of March 2, 1849, and four regimental chaplains, one for each of the colored regiments, authorized by the act of July 28, 1866. These thirty-four officers rank as captains of infantry with pay varying from \$125 to \$175 per month according to length of service. But there are over one hundred army posts in the country, and consequently some of them are without chaplains. Under the shadow of the well-known holiness of this administration, the churches have become emboldened to procure the introduction in Congress of several bills having for their object the advancement of religious interests.

A sample one of these is described in a dispatch from Washington to a daily paper. It proposes a graded corps, to consist of twenty senior chaplains, thirty chaplains, and fifty assistant chaplains, having the pay and allowance respectively of major, captain, and first lieutenant of infantry. To their names on the register would be added their religious denominations, which is not the practice now.

Two chaplains log-rolling for the privilege of holding an unconstitutional office, and incidentally earning \$900 a session, was the ungraceful spectacle the country beheld at the organization of the fifty-first Congress. Last session the House of Representatives was Democratic, and the blind chaplain Milburn was chosen to direct the action of God so far as that action related to the lower House. This year the House is Republican by a small majority, and the Republicans selected for all its offices men of their own political faith. The Republican candidate for chaplain was a relative of Mrs. Harrison. By the bolting of a few Republican members Mr. Milburn had a good chance of election, and his friends worked for him strenuously. He was finally elected.

There isn't the shadow of a ghost of a shaving of constitutional authority for swearing in a chaplain as a United States officer. In fact, it is forbidden; for the prohibition against religious establishment is violated by such act. But some of the members of the House are pious, and of course are willing to violate not only a constitution but the rights of all other citizens to get daily religion at some one's else expense, and the rest of the members are afraid to antagonize the churches. So the people have to pay for what about eight of every ten of the members regard as a positive nuisance.

— *The Truth Seeker*, Feb. 1, 1890.

The Italian priests, unique in the world, are the real enemies of their country, and when Italy finds herself pledged to defend her land against invasion, the priest will be the spy of the enemy, and will excite a civil war in the country where all these ministers have left him absolute master.

— *Garibaldi*.

[Note: In addition to the bloodsucking military and congressional chaplains attentive readers will see Irish Catholic scorpions, pious booblers, African beetles, a Methodist Hell Fire Fly, and the notorious God-in-the-State centipede. Prohibition and Woman's Christian Temperance Union mosquitoes curiously flank the Whisky Blow Fly. The Society for the Suppression of Vice bears the unique distinction of being portrayed as dung beetles.]



THE PESTS THAT BOTHER UNCLE SAM.

Anti-Chaplain Arguments Today

Discussions today may or may not be as crude as some of those seen here, but the core concern of the argument remains the same. How are we to properly interpret and implement the First Amendment? Some will emphasize the establishment concern—and be bewildered that their ignorant adversaries cannot comprehend the simple implications of the impenetrable wall between church and state.

On the other side, those who focus on the free exercise guarantee will see unbroken historical precedent in support of their interpretation, and become indignant when unbelieving activists seek to undercut our nation's moral character.

The repercussions of this argument extend far beyond the question of the military chaplaincy itself. It is ultimately about what it means to be free to speak in the public forum about matters of faith. Every individual brings their personal worldview to that conversation. God forbid that someday people who praise his name are forbidden from doing so where others may hear. Better to learn a lesson from those who would demonize their adversaries. Such approaches only heap more fuel on the pyre of alienation and animosity. Much better to strive to discuss these disputes amiably. After all, truly enlightened people should all agree in their desire that civil society would be civil.



Detail from *Chaplains in the Army and Navy* by Watson Heston.

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Robert C. Stroud is the editor of Curtana: Sword of Mercy. He retired from the United States Air Force after serving his nation, fellow citizens, and God, as a chaplain. If there was no military chaplaincy, he would still have pursued the privilege of serving the men and women of the armed forces as a civilian minister in whatever capacity he was able. As a chaplain, he was dedicated to the principle of facilitating the Constitutional rights of members of all faiths to freely follow their convictions.



Merging Star Clusters in 30 Doradus.
Photo courtesy of NASA.

**“And those who are wise shall shine
like the brightness of the sky above;
and those who turn many to righteousness,
like the stars forever and ever.”**

Daniel 12:3 (ESV)

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