

OUR CHURCH BEAUTIFUL

Sarah G. Chipman

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My original intent when I agreed to talk about these murals and windows was to resurrect two sections of a term paper which I had written for a Maine History course in college. However, like most objects unearthed after twenty years, the paper required cleaning, polishing, and repair. In the past few weeks I have poured over several of the bound volumes of the Pittsfield Advertiser, reread sections of Mr. Cook's Pittsfield on the Sebeccook, studied the early church records, consulted encyclopedias, and even secured material from the Maine State Library. All of this research might lead you to believe that I have become an expert on church history and art. Nothing could be further from the truth, and I can best describe my role here this morning as one falling somewhere between that of an MCI junior delivering her Manson Essay and a primary teacher conducting an exercise in "show and tell." Yet, writing this paper has been immensely satisfying, and I am delighted to share it with you.

The first indication that the Universalist congregation was interested in building a new church is found in the February 11, 1895, church records when a committee was appointed "to consider the feasibility of building a new house of worship." The committee must have had little encouragement; since at a meeting the next week, it was discharged, and the costs of repairing the meeting house were discussed. In May 1896 Mr. C. E. Vickery chaired the second investigating committee, but again no action was taken. However, in March 1898 a third committee was appointed, and, after canvassing for support during March and April, reported sufficient encouragement so that the Executive Committee voted to build a new church upon the existing lot. On May 16 a committee report showed that \$8,000 had been pledged; therefore, a new committee was formed to dispose of the old church, to get a good title to the lot, and to build the new church. At the same time the Executive Committee voted that the pews in the new church should be free.

If one reads the Pittsfield Advertiser from March to December 1898, one can follow the building process, step by step. Unfortunately, the papers for 1899 are not bound, and progress from January to June 21, the date of the dedication, is not easily traced. The Advertiser did report that much activity took place from mid-June through mid-October: the old church was moved 90 degrees; a foundation was laid; and the framing and boarding were nearly completed. From October to mid-December great strides were made in finishing the construction. The furnaces in the basement were in working order so that the frost was no longer a threat to the plaster.

The church records again show that in January 1899 a committee was appointed to arrange for the dedication of the new church, and on June 21 the new building was dedicated with Mr. C. E. Vickery accepting the keys. The total cost had been approximately \$20,000; all of this made possible by a church with a parish of three hundred families and a budget of \$1500.

Before I begin to discuss the paintings in detail, I will give you somebiographical information about the artist.

Harry Hayman Cochrane was born in Augusta, Maine, in 1860, the son and grandson of artists. He went to Monmouth to live with his grandparents after his mother's death. As a grown man, Mr. Cochrane remembered with amusement and some bitterness one teacher, who declared that he should make it his business, if he never did another thing that term, to "cure that Cochrane boy of drawing pictures on his slate."

Fortunately for us, the boy could not be cured nor his talent crushed. At the age of eighteen he began portrait painting—then as now considered a most ambitious endeavor. One day when a mural decorator came to Monmouth to do a church, Cochrane's ambition was stirred. "I never had any peace of mind afterward until I did my first church," he said. At the age of twenty-seven, Cochrane realized his ambition and later was to decorate at least one hundred fifty Maine churches.

After attending Monmouth Academy, he studied at New York Art School and at the

Chicago Art Institute. He also studied the works of the old masters in all the principal art centers of Europe, and traveled extensively in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, getting the inspiration and securing the background impressions that were to mean so much to him in his mural painting.

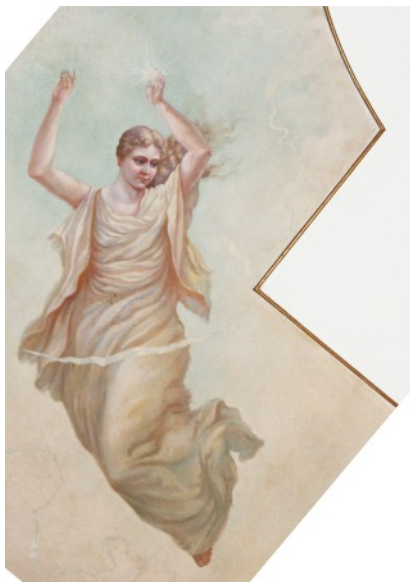
In 1920 Mr. Cochrane was commissioned to design the State of Maine Centennial coin for the United States Mint and was later authorized to go to Washington to receive from the Mint the first half-dozen coins to bring back to Maine.

Among the many buildings which Mr. Cochrane decorated in this state, none has received more acclaim than Kora Temple in Lewiston. In 1927 at the time of its completion, a Lewiston paper printed: "Mr. Cochrane's work has become recognized and ranked among the great art works of America. His genius is at last being rewarded and his name stands high in the American world of ecclesiastical mural art."

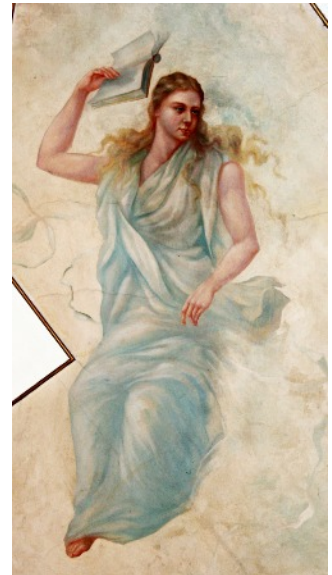
Harry Hayman Cochrane died on September 20, 1946. Those who knew of his vitality and strength of purpose were not surprised to learn that for three days during the week preceding his death, this eighty-six-year-old artist had been actively engaged in redecorating the Hammond Street Congregational Church in Bangor.

The murals in this room were first painted on canvass and then later attached to the walls and ceiling; If one looks at those surrounding the chandelier, one can see four small murals depicting (1) Light, (2) Truth, (3) Justice, and (4) Faith.

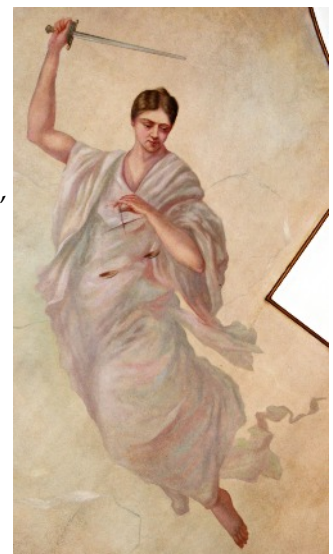
Light is the maiden standing in the midst of the stars



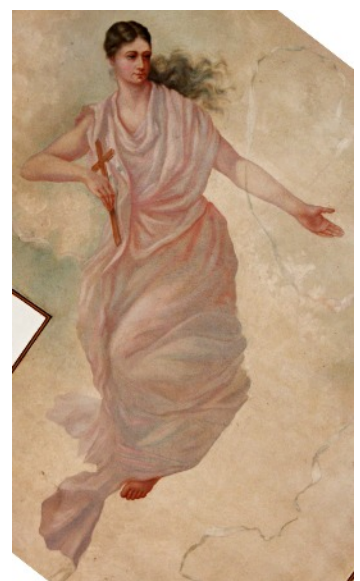
Truth is the figure holding closely the Bible.



Justice reminds us that she will weigh, in one hand, human values by the scale of Eternal Insight, while wielding Power with the sword in the other hand.



Faith is carrying the Cross with a hand out-stretched with help and comradeship to all the children of God.



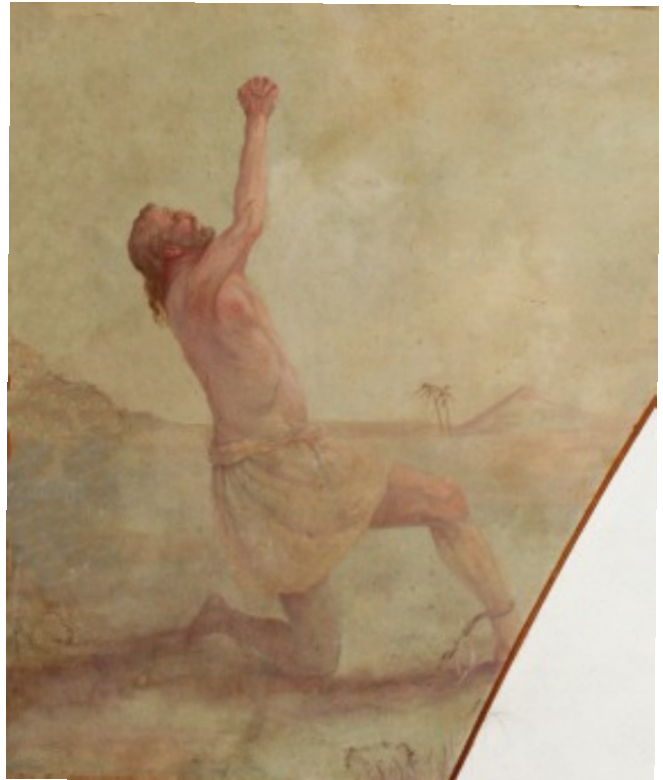
In the niche to the right of the main entrance is the beautiful mural of Ruth holding sheaves of barley in her arms. The picture reminds us of the virtues of that alien woman who surpassed the requirements of the Hebrew code in the loyalty she showed for Naomi. Beside the mural is part of this Biblical passage: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." This panel was given in memory of Cora Damon Burns, a member of the Executive Committee of this church. Mr. and Mrs. Burns had been married only six years when she died in May 1893.



Ruth holding sheaves of barley

The beautiful murals which surround this church are a series of paintings depicting the story of Hebrew history.

Looking at the first painting at the right of the organ, one sees the *Hebrew slave* praying for deliverance from the hand of the Pharaohs. The Hebrew people journey into Canaan and a few hundred years later travel into Egypt, where they are well received and favorably treated. However, the ascendancy to power of the Pharaohs brings a change for the Hebrews; they are stripped of their powerful positions and forced into slavery. Later, Moses leads these oppressed people out of captivity to freedom and self-establishment.



Hebrew slave praying

Thus the second painting is of *Moses* the liberator, the lawgiver, the organizer, and the judge. He is standing on the shore of the Dead Sea pointing the way to freedom for his people. The background suggests the change which took place among the Hebrews during their years in the wilderness, where they developed from a mob of ambitionless slaves to a self-assertive group of people, capable of self-support and of the aggressive possession of the new territory of Palestine.



Moses standing on the shore of the Dead Sea



Gideon with his flaming torch and pointing sword

The figure in the third painting is that of *Gideon*, a foremost judge or general during the period in which the Hebrews are often engaged in warfare defending their territory. Their many victories show that the Hebrew tribes are now successfully organized against enemy forces. Gideon with his flaming torch in one hand and pointing sword in the other is leading the Hebrews to victory against the Midianites.

Time passes and the Hebrew conquest proves to be permanent. Since they are surrounded by enemy tribes, and hostility is widespread, they need to be more closely united. In the next panel is *Samuel*, the last of the judges and the first of the prophets. He seems to be pointing backward at the old regime and looking forward to the time when the tribes will be united under a powerful king. The anointing of Saul and the establishment of a future nation is suggested in the haze on the horizon.



Samuel, judge and prophet



King David

In the fifth panel stands the mighty King David with his lyre and royal insignia. Behind him is the capital city of Jerusalem, which indicates that the Hebrew nation has developed into a well-organized kingdom, now experiencing economic prosperity, international trade, and an influx of foreign ideas.

Over the main entrance, the sixth panel depicts the wise King Solomon, Behind him is Jerusalem, known in his day, as the city of kings, the center of Hebrew religion, and the Mecca of all who sought advice from the wise king of Israel. The clouds arising in the distance indicate the downfall of the United Kingdom of Israel on the north and Judah on the south. During the century of civil war and reconstruction which follows, the prophets of Jehovah are almost wiped out of existence, and from this time until the time of Ahab there are few to protest against the popular worship of Baal.



King Solomon



Elijah waiting in the wilderness

The seventh panel shows Elijah, a prophet of Jehovah waiting in the wilderness to hear the voice of his God. Since he has defied the haughty Queen Jezebel, successfully challenged the priests of Baal, and dramatically defeated them on Mount Carmel by proving Jehovah's superiority, Elijah believes that God will reward him for his daring. He listens in vain through the wind, fire, and tempest for the voice of God and finally, after his exaltation and pride have left him, realizes that the voice of God comes to waiting men and women as the still, small voice that speaks to the individual soul in the quiet hours of meditation and prayer.

More than three hundred years pass. The enemy nations defeat the Hebrews and they are taken to Babylon as captives. In the eighth panel Isaiah is standing as though trying to visualize a Universal God—a God who is the God of all people with a world plan for a civilization which neither war, famine, pestilence, nor the greed of man can deflect. He is looking beyond the gloomy present to the future and the abiding contribution of the writers of the Captivity Period, whose ideas are of an Omnipotent universal God—a God with a plan, not for one generation or one race, but for all generations and all mankind. With the passage of five centuries, time moves our subjects from the Old Testament to the New. The ninth panel depicts John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. He shocks the Hebrew people into realizing that repentance and a change of ideals of living must come if the race is

to be preserved. The tenth panel pictures one of the most human and beautiful representations of Jesus. Typifying human brotherhood, spiritual understanding, appreciation of divine testing and the worth of the human personality, Jesus looks with kindness upon the congregation assembled beside the Galilean Sea. His hands are eloquent; one is reaching out to all mankind and the other is pointing significantly to a shadowy cross in the far corner of the panel. The last, of the paintings on the left of the organ is of Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles. This forceful, keen-minded thinker spread the teachings of Jesus throughout much of the Roman world and constantly reminds us of the responsibility each of us has to see that the teachings of Jesus are not merely known but truly lived. Thus, these beautiful paintings make us constantly aware of the struggle, victory, and faith of these ancient people

Now let us turn our attention from these beautiful paintings and focus our eyes and thoughts on these magnificent stained-glass windows. Mr Cook tells in his history that the windows are constructed of Tiffany glass. Their creator was Louis Comfort Tiffany, the great innovator of American stained-glass designers; He was the son of the New York, jeweler, Charles L. Tiffany, but rather than enter the family business turned to painting as a career. He studied with George Inness, the American painter, and later went to Europe. In 1870 he became interested in the decorative arts and in 1875 began experimenting in stained glass. Mr. Tiffany established a glass-making plant and eventually devised his own process for the production of iridescent glass, which he called Favrite glass, but which was to become better known as Tiffany glass. In his windows Mr Tiffany reproduced the flat pastel colors and exotic flowing forms and used his own technical innovations. Among them were rippled "drapery glass" which gave a textured effect; and a thin copper-cored leading, which gave greater durability and strength. His extraordinary designs brought innumerable commissions, and he eventually formed the Tiffany Studio which employed several designers.

The windows in this church are triptych in design; therefore, they are divided into three com-

partments with the central section the most important and often complete in itself. The designs on either side are usually smaller and less important.

