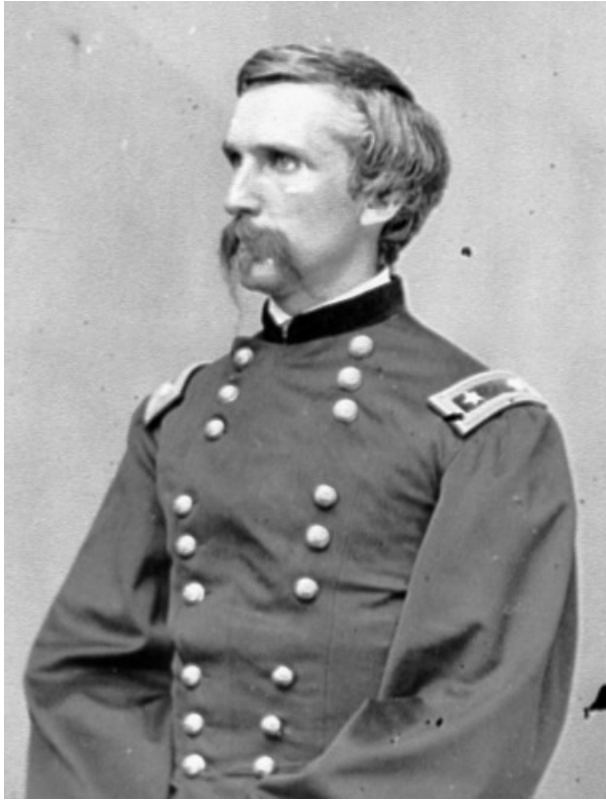


General Joshua Chamberlain's 20th Maine at Gettysburg



Joshua L. Chamberlain's life was of the substance from which legends are made; a number of books and movies are a credit to his achievements. His life's story was that of a man with immense optimism and determination, surrendering to what he felt was a divine calling to join the Civil War. He answered Lincoln's call for troops and left his wife, children and teaching position at Bowdoin College to join the war effort. He is best known for the Civil War battle of Little Round Top. The Maine 20th was led to the battle by the Ghost of George Washington on horseback. Through an odd set of coincidences, the Maine 20th rushed in to secure Little Round Top, a strategic point left unattended by the Union Forces. As the battle of Gettysburg raged and as the Civil War's outcome hung in the balance, the Maine 20th held their position. Outnumbered, with many dead and out of ammunition, Chamberlain ordered a last ditch bayonet charge against the Confederate troops, securing a win for the Union Forces. Close to death on a number of occasions, he regained his health, only to rejoin the military action for many more important battles during the Civil War.

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was born in Brewer, Maine in 1828. He was first-born with one sister and three brothers. He grew up in a hard-working religious household, which taught him self-reliance and perseverance. He had a deep respect for nature and was "reluctant to kill animals that seemed so indispensable to the balance of the serenity he found in the forest."²¹ "Lawrence would join the Indians who camped in his father's back lot and still lived in birchbark wigwams. He learned their language and listened to their dark tales of the fearful Mohawks of old and the myths"²² of the tribe. At age 14, he attended Major Whiting's military and classical school for a term in Ellsworth, Maine. He learned the basics of drill and the history of many of the military leaders. At age 16, he gained entrance to and became active in the First Congregational Church in Brewer. During his youth, he was afflicted with a stutter, which made it difficult to pronounce words beginning with the letters b, p and t. He struggled for many years to overcome this affliction.

At age 18, he would study long hours every day learning Greek and Latin to prepare for college, while doing chores necessary for the household. With the family short on funds, he tutored to pay for his education at Whiting Academy and later at Bowdoin College. He tutored a class of 30 boys and girls, the "older, more rowdy students threatened to make his life miserable ...they had for his predecessors, more than one of whom had been tossed out the open school house window."²³ "To maintain order he apparently resorted to fisticuffs. He claims to have hurt none of his pupils at least not seriously,"²⁴ which gained him a fair level of respect at the Academy.

After passing a rigorous entrance exam, he attended Bowdoin College, fully engaging in his studies. He wrote, "I really think I never have been so faithful to my self & my duty as since I have been at College. It seems to me that engaging in God's service is a delightful employment."²⁵ Joshua was a regular at First Parish

Church off campus led by pastor Dr. George Adams, whose adopted daughter he would later marry. Overexertion on academic studies, work as a library assistant and off campus activities nearly killed him by the end of the school year. He returned home so sick, he did not respond to any traditional medical treatment. Finally, a homeopathic doctor and his mother nursed him back to health. His sickness caused him to miss a year of school. He returned to college and wisely chose to slow down the pace of many of his activities.

On a number of Saturday evenings, Chamberlain was invited to the home of Professor Stowe, whose wife was giving group readings on her new book. Harriet Beecher Stowe would read chapters from her book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to the group before sending them off to the abolitionist newspaper, *National Era* in June of 1851. Her book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published, March 20, 1852. Had Joshua Chamberlain not missed a year of school, he would already have graduated from Bowdoin and would not have attended the book reading. "The book had a strange power over almost every one who read it ... She said the book had come to her in visions and all she did was write down what she saw."⁶ "Years later she stated categorically, 'God wrote it.'"⁷ Of the effect the book had on the country, Lincoln would later say, "so this is the little woman who made this big war."⁸ No doubt, Joshua Chamberlain was moved by the words in the abolitionist book, as were many others who heard or read it.



Joshua Chamberlain graduated from Bowdoin College in 1852 and presented his future wife Fannie with an engagement ring later that year. While many of his classmates from Bowdoin College went on to military schools such as West Point, he chose a different path. In a letter to his mother he wrote, "my first & greatest duty is to God...I believe that God is over all things & that He will put me where He wants me and there I ought to be."⁹ Feeling the call to be a preacher, he started his masters degree studies at Bangor Theological Seminary in the fall of 1852. He completed his theological degree in 1855 with his final address on the topic of Law and Liberty. His fiancée "in several letters...made it clear that she had no intentions of becoming a minister's wife. 'My whole mind, character and temperament ...are entirely inappropriate for that position, and I could never be useful in it.'"¹⁰ Under some pressure from his future wife, he accepted a teaching position at Bowdoin College and married Fannie Adams in 1856. They settled down and started a family with the birth of his daughter Grace and son Harold. His life plans would soon be dramatically altered by the start of the Civil War. Joshua thought the Civil war would be brief. However, with the mounting Union losses and with Lincoln calling up additional troops in 1862, it became clear this would be a long protracted war.

Chamberlain received a letter from one of his former students, which may have motivated him to enlist in the army. Walter Poor was stationed in Pennsylvania and wrote about what he saw in the military camps. Poor wrote about the beardless boys, lifeless and characterless men, and lack of effective military leadership and poor discipline among the enlisted troops. At this critical time in history, Chamberlain felt his experience and leadership skills should be put to use to help save the Union. He secretly lobbied the Governor of Maine for a position with the latest regiment being formed. He was able to secure a Lieutenant Colonel's position with the Maine 20th. While not having much military experience, Chamberlain did have a history of family members in the military. Chamberlain's father had been a Colonel in the militia in the War of 1812 fighting the British, later a Lieutenant Colonel in the Aroostook War, and his grandfather served in the Revolutionary War. Against protests from the college, family and friends, Joshua left with the latest Maine regiment headed for the Civil War.

The Maine 20th was described by Colonel Adelbert Ames as a "hell of a regiment,"¹¹ which was said not in a positive sense. They left for Camp Mason to get their weapons and supplies. They started their military training in what little time would allow, then on to the District of Columbia where they picked up the rest of their allotment of supplies. The Maine 20th would see some action at Antietam, Shepardstown Ford, and

Fredricksburg in 1862. At one of the battles, a musket ball grazed Chamberlain's neck and right ear. Colonel Ames, seeing potential in Chamberlain, took it upon himself to help train him in the art of war. For his part, Chamberlain read up on battle strategies and tactics, studying as much information as he could get his hands on.

Chamberlain took a short leave from the military, which may have saved his life. He met up with his wife in Washington D.C. for four short days before returning to his unit. Upon his return, he discovered that "many men in the regiment had evidently been inoculated with a defective smallpox vaccine, causing over eighty cases to develop and several deaths. .the regiments moved over a mile to 'Quarantine Hill' under orders to keep the men isolated from the rest of the army."¹² After the battle of Chancellorsville in 1863, Chamberlain was promoted to Colonel of the Maine 20th.

The Second Maine regiment had finished their duty, and were preparing to go home. "However, 120 soldiers whose papers said they had signed up for three years were left behind disconsolate, and about forty of them refused duty...the 118th Pennsylvania, with fixed bayonets and loaded muskets, brought the mutineers to Chamberlain. They were assigned to his regiment with orders from General Mead to 'make them do duty or shoot them down the moment they refused.'"¹³ Fortunately for Chamberlain, many of the soldiers were from his hometown and surrounding area in Maine. The prisoners had not been fed for three days. After some food, clean clothes and hearing their complaints, he added the additional troops to his regiment. Whether by coincidence or hand of Providence, the extra men with the Maine 20th would prove to be critical for the next battle in the war; Gettysburg.

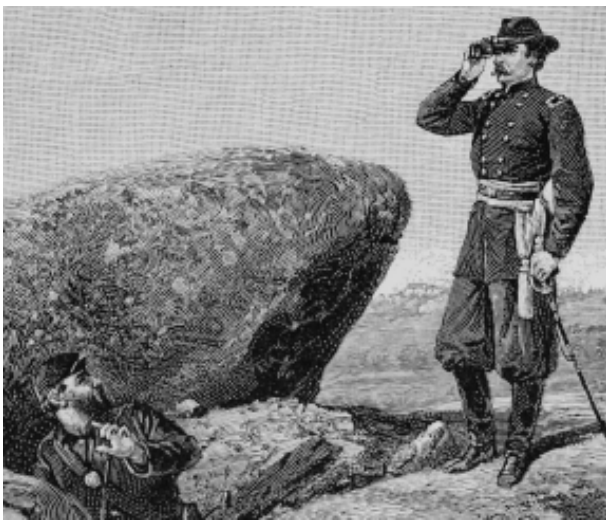


"Suddenly the startling bugle-call from, unseen headquarters! 'The General!' it rang! 'To the march! No moment of delay!' ...'To Gettysburg!' it said, a forced march of sixteen miles. But what force it? And what opposed? Not supper, nor sleep nor sore feet and aching limbs."¹⁴ On July 1st, 1863, the Maine 20th regiment marched double quick toward Gettysburg. With the sounds of guns in the distance that afternoon, they marched well into the night. It was dark that night on their march toward Gettysburg and the troops were tired. The Maine 20th stopped for a bit while the officers decided which fork in the road to take. "Suddenly the clouds parted, and the moon shone down upon a horseman wearing a bright coat and a tricorn hat. Mounted on a magnificent pale horse, he cantered down one of the roads branching off before them. Turning slightly toward them, he waved them to follow."¹⁵ The rumors of George Washington spread through the ranks.

In his book *Blood & Fire at Gettysburg*, written after the war, Joshua Chamberlain described the event. "At a turn of the road a staff officer, with an air of authority, told each colonel as he came up, that General McClellan was in command again, and riding ahead of us on the road. Then wild cheers rolled from the crowded column into the brooding sky, and the earth shook under the quickening tread."¹⁶ General McClellan, however, was not ahead on the road, nor was he back in command. While Chamberlain had not personally witnessed

the apparition of George Washington on horseback, he was well aware of the rumors among his troops. On their march toward Gettysburg, he describes an odd encounter with something he had difficulty finding the words to express. He wrote, “Now from a dark angle of the roadside came a whisper, whether from earthly or unearthly voice one cannot feel quite sure, that the august form of Washington had been seen that afternoon at sunset riding over the Gettysburg hills. Let no one smile at me! I half believed it myself, - so did the powers of the other world draw nigh!”¹⁷

The rumor of the Generals, George Washington on horseback and news of McClellan [reported by other Army units] in command was perhaps an angelic apparition guiding them and ensuring their timely arrival at Gettysburg. The rumor’s effect was “miraculous enthusiasm” that motivated a band of tired and weary federal troops before a pivotal battle in the Civil War and American history. Chamberlain wrote of their march to Gettysburg that “all things, even them most common, were magnified and made mysterious by the strange spell of night.”¹⁸ What a strange night indeed it was before for the big battle.



At Gettysburg, Major General George Sykes, realizing that Little Round Top was not protected, sent a courier to Commander General James Barnes requesting he send another regiment. Colonel Strong Vincent intercepted the courier barking, “Give me your orders!” The courier, “told that Barnes was ordered to send a brigade to Little Round Top, Vincent replied: ‘I will take the responsibility myself of taking my brigade there.’”¹⁹ The Maine 20th, New York 44th, 83rd Pennsylvania and 16th Michigan filled in to secure Little Round Top. The Maine 20th held a strategic point of Little Round Top that overlooked an open area between their position and Round Top. Chamberlain was ordered by Colonel Vincent to “Hold that ground at all hazards”²⁰ just before the battle ensued. The three other Union regiments held

off the 5th Texas and 4th Alabama forces. The Maine 20th was bombarded on one side from the 47th Alabama and the other from the 15th Alabama. Chamberlain would later recall about the battle:

The two lines met and broke and mingled in the shock. The crush of musketry gave way to cuts and thrusts, grappling and wrestling. The edge of the conflict swayed to and fro, with wild whirlpools and eddies. At times I saw around me more of the enemy than of my own men; gaps opening, swallowing, closing again with sharp convulsive energy; squads of stalwart men who had cut their way through us, disappearing as if translated. All around, strange mingle roar-shouts of defiance, rally, and desperation; and underneath, murmured entreaty and stifled moans; gasping prayers, snatches of Sabbath song, whispers of loved names; everywhere men torn and broken, staggering, creeping, quivering on the earth and dead faces with strange fixed eyes staring stark into the sky. Things which can not be told-nor dreamed. How men held on, each one knows, - not I. But manhood commands admiration.²¹

The Confederate troops came in waves against the Maine 20th, barely able to push them back. “The troops, it was said, beheld a pale rider in their midst. It had come from nowhere and was dressed in antique costume. It rode along the thin blue line of Federals, and everywhere it passed, men picked up hope and took courage to fight. The Rebels seemed to have seen the apparition as well. A number of them were seen to fire on it, thinking it a Union commander as it was clad in blue. But despite their concentrated fire at the figure on horseback, bullets had no effect on it. Soon, the phantom rider had spread dismay and panic among the Rebel

ranks.”²²

The Maine 20th was out of ammunition; they salvaged what they could from the dead and dying. Chamberlain wrote in his his book, *Blood & Fire at Gettysburg* that “the enemy seemed to have gathered all their energies for their final assault.” Not able to withstand another assault from the Confederate troops, Chamberlain ordered his men to “mount bayonets.” In a surprise move, the Maine 20th, in unison, charged over the hill with bayonets pointed. “Suddenly, an imposing figure stood in front of the line exhorting them to follow. The rays of the afternoon sun set his upraised sword aflame. Once more the Twentieth Maine was seized by the same exultation they felt following the phantom horseman on the road to Little Round Top. He was leading them again! Inspired by supernatural bravery they plunged down the hill thrusting their bayonets into the ranks of the amazed Alabamians. Bewildered, the Confederates had not time to fire a decisive volley, and they fell back and their line broke.”²³ The shocked and surprised Confederate troops fell back in disarray, having little time to surrender or the blade of “cold steel.” In a horseshoe shaped attack, then an arc, later assisted by the 83rd Pennsylvania, they captured about 400 soldiers. As Providence would have it, just in the nick of time, quick assistance by General Warren with the 140th New York and Colonel Patrick O’Rorke’s assistance with General Vincent’s brigade helped hold the Union line. In Washington D.C., the War Department took the rumors of the George Washington apparitions seriously enough to send Colonel Pittenger to investigate. He gathered testimony from a number of the eyewitnesses. However, his findings were never published.

There are a few interesting aspects of the Battle of Little Round Top that should be noted. After the war, Chamberlain received a letter from “a member of the Fifteenth Alabama” who had tried to kill him at the battle. It appears divine intervention prevented his action. The following is the text of his letter:



Dear Sir:

I want to tell you of a little passage in the battle of Round Top, Gettysburg, concerning you and me, which I am now glad of. Twice in that fight I had your life in my hands. I got a safe place between two rocks, and drew bead fair and square on you. You were standing in the open behind the center of your line, full exposed. I knew your rank by your uniform and your actions, and I thought it a mighty good thing to put you out of the way. I rested my gun on the rock and took steady aim. I started to pull the trigger, but some queer notion stopped me. Then I got ashamed of my weakness and went through the same motions again. I had you, perfectly certain. But that same queer something shut right down on me. I couldn’t pull the trigger, and gave it up - that is, your life. I am glad of it now, and hope you are.²⁴

Chamberlain’s life may have been spared at the Battle of Little Round Top on more than one occasion. By hand of God or good luck, his hanging sword diverted a bullet leaving him with a very painful bruise on his side. He also recounted at the end of the battle how a Confederate officer “fired his pistol at my head with one

hand, while he handed me his sword with the other.”²⁵ The pistol misfired [trigger pulled and gun did not immediately fire] at point blank range, sending a shot past his head. In the military reports about the incident, he wrote that the officer “fires one barrel almost in my face,” “seeing the quick saber-point at his throat, reverses arms, gives sword and pistol into my hands and yields himself prisoner.”²⁶ More remarkable about the battle was that Chamberlain was able to fight at all. It was said he was shaking from a fever he had before the battle, from which he had not fully recovered. While many of his troops after the battle dropped from days of lack of sleep and physical exhaustion, Chamberlain, limping from a projectile that had cut through his boot and his left thigh bruised by a minié ball, lead a small group to the top of Round Top. They captured a scouting party of twenty-five from Hood’s division and chased the remaining Confederates off the neighboring peak. With the arrival of the 83rd Pennsylvania and 44th New York, his men slept on their arms in shifts, getting what sleep they could safely afford.

Had the Maine 20th been forced off the hilltop and not held their position, the Confederates would have swung around the Union’s left flank and the outcome of the battle of Gettysburg and possibly the Civil War would have been very different. On July 3rd, Little Round Top as well as Cemetery Ridge were strategic positions that allowed Union artillery batteries to fire on Pickett’s and Trimble’s forces, turning back their charge. We may never know why General Lee waited days to attack, allowing the Union Army time to rush in to protect the northern border and Washington D.C. General Lee’s delay and the swift movement of regiments like the Maine 20th and others made the difference at Gettysburg. Joshua Chamberlain, recounting the battle of Little Round Top and the Civil War at a monument dedication to the Maine 20th at Gettysburg many years later, said:

We rose in soul above the things which even the Declaration of Independence pronounces the inalienable rights of human nature, for the securing of which governments are instituted among men. Happiness, liberty, life, we laid on the altar of offering, or committed to the furies of destruction, while our minds were lifted up to a great thought and our hearts swelled to its measure. We were beckoned on by the vision of destiny, we saw our Country moving forward, charged with the sacred trusts of man. We believed in its glorious career; the power of high aims and of strong purpose; the continuity of great endeavor; the onward, upward path of history, to God. Every man felt that he gave himself to, and belonged to, something beyond time and above place,—something which could not die.

These are the reasons, not fixed in the form of things, but formative of things, reasons of the soul, why we fought for the Union. And this is the spirit in which having overcome the dark powers of denial and disintegration, having restored the people of the South to their place and privilege in the Union, and set on high the old flag telling of one life and one body, one freedom and one law, over all the people and all the land between the four great waters, we now come as it were home; we look into each other’s eyes; we speak in softer tones; we gather under the atmosphere of these sacred thoughts and memories, — like the high, pure air that shines down upon us today, flooding these fields where cloud and flash and thunder-roll of battle enshrouded us and them in that great three-days’ burial, — to celebrate this resurrection; to rear on these fields memorials of familiar names, and to honor the State whose honor it was to rear such manhood, and keep such faith, that she might have part in far-away things....

at the cost of toil and treasure, of blood and tears. The people have made themselves the expounders of their Constitution. The decision has been accepted by clear, constitutional and legal enactment; confirmed by the supreme judicial tribunals of the land; and, we fervently trust, sealed by the benediction of the Most High. We are one People; and the law of its spirit is supreme over the law of its

members... The “lost cause” is not lost liberty and rights of self-government. What is lost is slavery of men and supremacy of state. It was necessary for us to save the Union. ...

In great deeds, something abides. On great fields, something stays. Forms change and pass; bodies disappear; but spirits linger, to consecrate ground for the vision-place of souls. And reverent men and women from afar, and generations that know us not and that we know not of, heart-drawn to see where and by whom great things were suffered and done for them, shall come to this deathless field, to ponder and dream; And lo! the shadow of a mighty presence shall wrap them in its bosom, and the power of the vision pass into their souls.

This is the great reward of service. To live, far out and on, in the life of others; this is the mystery of the Christ,—to give life’s best for such high sake that it shall be found again unto life eternal.²⁷

— Joshua L. Chamberlain, Monument dedication to the 20th Maine, October 3, 1889,
Gettysburg, PA

The turning point of the Civil War was the Union victory at Gettysburg and Vicksburg to the west on July 4th, 1863, six months after the Emancipation Proclamation. Freeing the slaves helped restore the spirit and “The Original Intent” of the compact, the sacred parchment [Declaration of Independence] signed in petition to Providence [God] for assistance, back on July 4th, 1776. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness ... of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” The dual Union victories on July 4th and the turning of the war was taken as a sign by many as a sign from God, reminding them of the significance of the July 4th date, thus giving His approval.

Lincoln said, “We know that by His divine law, nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world. May we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? ... It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness”²⁸ If Lincoln was correct in his assessment of the reasons for the war, at 600,000 lives lost to wounds and disease, what a tragic loss of life, bloodshed and broken families upon the North and South to make up for the sins of the past. On the topic of God and war, Chamberlain wrote:

But we had with us, to keep and to care for, more than five hundred bruised bodies of men, - men made in the image of God, marred by the hand of man, and must we say in the name of God? And where is the reckoning for such things? And who is answerable? One might almost shrink from the sound of his own voice, which had launched into the palpitating air words of order - do we call it? - fraught with such ruin. Was it God's command we heard, or His forgiveness we must forever implore?²⁹

Later that year, Joshua Chamberlain was in action at Sharpsburg Pike [Maryland], Manassas Gap, Bristol Station, Brandy Station, and Rappahannock Station. He was hospitalized after he collapsed on November 13th from what some called malarial fever. He was shipped by cattle car to the District of Columbia and arrived unconscious. He recovered and in late December was furloughed to Maine where he regained his strength. By February of 1864, the year that would come close to ending his life, he rejoined the War. He saw action at Spottsylvania, North Anna, Cold Harbor and Petersburg. At Petersburg, he was gravely wounded by a minié ball that ricocheted off the ground causing much damage to his internal organs. The minié ball “had severed the urethra and nicked the bladder, before lodging in the left hip. Medical science of the day was

powerless to repair such extensive damage to vital organs. The ball could be removed, but that seemed to be the extent of the treatment. ...At one point, supposedly, they stopped, afraid they were merely prolonging the patient's suffering. It is said that Chamberlain rose himself from anesthetic and urged them to continue."³⁰ .

The next day, after undergoing an extensive operation the night before to remove the minié ball, suffering from severe pain, he mustered what strength he had to write a letter to his wife Fannie, on June 19th of 1864:

My darling wife I am lying mortally wounded the doctors think, but my mind & heart are at peace. Jesus Christ is my all-sufficient savior. I go to him. God bless & keep & comfort you, precious one. You have been a precious wife to me. To know & love you makes life & death beautiful. Cherish the darlings & give my love to all the dear ones. Do not grieve too much for me. We shall all soon meet. Live for the children. Give my dearest love to Father, Mother & Sallie & John. Oh how happy to feel yourself forgiven. God bless you evermore precious precious one.
Ever yours, Lawrence.

It took some time, but he recovered enough strength to return home to his state of Maine, where his wife nursed him back to health. He was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in 1865. Once again, against the protests of family and friends, he rejoined the military campaign. In a letter to his mother, Chamberlain, trying to explain his decision to rejoin the military, wrote:

Not a selfish ambition: for I assure you not all the honor & titles that can be given or won, would tempt me to hazard the happiness and welfare of my dear ones at home, nor would they be any equivalent whatever, for these terrible wounds as must cast a shadow over the remainder of my days, even though I should apparently recover.

But what it is, I can't tell you. I haven't a particle of fanaticism in me. But I plead guilty of a sort of fatalism. I believe in a destiny - one, I mean, divinely appointed, and to which we are carried forward by a perfect trust in God. I do this, and I believe in it. I have laid plans, in my day, & good ones I thought. But they never succeeded. Something else, better, did, and I could see it as plain as day, that God had done it & for my good.³¹



In 1865, he saw action at Quaker Road where he was wounded in the arm. He was involved in the fighting at White Oak Road, Five Forks and South Side Railroad. At White Oak Road, Chamberlain had his sixth horse in the war shot out from underneath him. After the battle as General Sickel lay wounded on the battlefield, he was reported to have said to Chamberlain, "General, you have the soul of a lion and the heart of a woman."³² Chamberlain had his troops ready to do battle when General Lee surrendered. He was so well respected by his troops and higher officials, he was chosen by General Grant to command the surrender ceremonies of the infantry. He later attended Lincoln's funeral with the other Generals and is quoted by a newspaper, "These are terrible times, but I Believe in God, and he will bring good at last." Oddly enough, he was stationed at the end of the war at Arlington Heights where the 20th Maine first joined the Army. He was mustered out of the Army in 1866 to return to private life, accepting a position at Bowdoin College. Upon hearing that the Army of the Potomac as an organization "ceases to exist," he wrote:

The splendor of devotion, glowing like a bright spirit over those dark waters and misty plains assures us of something that cannot die! ... This army will live, and live on, so long as soul shall answer soul, so long as that flag watches with its stars over fields of mighty memory, so long as in its red lines a regenerated people reads the charter of its birthright, and in its field of white God's covenant with man.³³

He was elected Governor of Maine in September of 1866 and would remain in office till 1871. He was a fair Governor who worked hard to expand business and investment within the state. Concerned about young talent leaving the state, he tried to cultivate opportunities within state borders. He left office to accept a position as President of Bowdoin College. Chamberlain's Biblical world view was not challenged by the advancing science and technology of his day. He rested on the truth of God's word, confident that new discoveries in science would only reinforce those truths.

I do not fear these men of science, for after all they are following in God's ways, and whether they see him now or not, these lines will surely lead to him in the end. Sooner or later, if not now, they will see and confess that these laws along whose line they are following, are not forces, are principles. They are only methods. And those powers which they so triumphantly behold are not primal but transmitted powers; not creating but only reproducing ... I would say that Laws are God's way seen by men, while Principles are God's thoughts of himself, ... Now the knowledge of these Laws I would call Science, and the apprehend of Principles I would call Philosophy, and our men of science may be quite right in their science and altogether wrong in their philosophy. ... So I do not fear the advance of science... for I know that all true working and real discovery... can rest in no other theory than truth, and no other goal than God.³⁴

In early 1880, the Maine election was in dispute and on the verge of Civil War at the state capital in Augusta. Chamberlain, who had been appointed Major General of the state militia, was contacted by the outgoing governor for militia support to protect public property and institutions. Chamberlain, not wanting an armed conflict at the state capital, went alone, depending on local law enforcement to maintain order. At one point, he confronted a group at the State House that was planning to assassinate him over perceived bias on the election results. "Men, you wish to kill me, I hear. Killing is no new thing to me. I have offered myself to be killed many times, when I no more deserve it than I do now. Some of you, I think, have been with me in those days. You understand what you want, do you? I am here to preserve the peace and honor of this State, until the rightful government is seated, - whichever it may be, it is not for me to say. But it is for me to see that the laws of this state are put into effect, without fraud, without force, but with calm thought and sincere purpose. I am here for that, and I shall do it. If anybody wants to kill me for it, here I am. Let him kill."³⁵ With the great respect the public had for Chamberlain, he was able to maintain order in the state capital for the twelve days it took the courts to finally rule on the matter.

In his later years, Chamberlain tried his hand in land speculation in Florida, raised money for the railroad, lectured on the Civil War and enjoyed time sailing. He delivered the Maine State oration at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, which prominently displayed the Liberty Bell. He represented the United States as Commissioner to the Paris Exposition in 1878 and at the Maine Monument dedication at Gettysburg in 1889. He spent his remaining years in Maine working as surveyor for the city of Portland until his death. He lost his wife Fannie Chamberlain in 1905. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain died on February 24th, 1914 in Portland, Maine at the age of 85.

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was born during the country's Second Great [spiritual] Awakening. Chamberlain was one of many men who were raised up by God to safeguard His gifts of Liberty and Freedom. In fulfillment of God's long term plan for America, He needed men of faith to be the protectors of their country; to assist their nation in Her second "Great Struggle" for survival [Second Peril]. He was "called by some, the 'Christian General,'"³⁶ a reflection of his strength of belief, virtue and fortitude. Set on a solid Biblical foundation, his early life's experiences formed the man as an unseen hand helped shape and prepared him for what lay ahead in life. He joined the Civil War, because he felt it was his calling from God to do so. He understood on a spiritual level, that "the cause for which we fought was higher" and it was. Of the Civil War and the cause they fought for, he said it was an "upward path of history, to God. Every man felt that he gave himself to, and belonged to, something beyond time and above space—something which could not die."³⁷ "This is the mystery of the Christ, -to give life's best for such high sake that it shall be found again unto life eternal."³⁸ In his life and during the war, he experienced many coincidences and miracles, which he saw as the mysteries of God at work. One of those miracles was the battle of Little Round Top. It has been written up in many military journals, because it was a battle they should not have won. It was also a battle that Chamberlain should not have limped away from alive, but he did. He was interviewed about the battle of Little Round Top and the ghost of George Washington near the end of his life. While not personally a witness to the apparition of Washington, some in his regiment were. This is what he said:

Yes, that report was circulated through our lines and I have no doubt that it had tremendous psychological effect in inspiring the men. Doubtless it was superstition, but who among us can say that such a thing was impossible? We have not yet sounded or explored the immortal life that lies out beyond the bar.

We know not what mystical power may be possessed by those who are now bivouacking with the dead. I only know the effect, but I dare not explain or deny the cause. I do believe that we were enveloped by the power of the other world that day and who shall say that Washington was not among the number of those who aided the country that he founded?³⁹

When a people lose their history, they lose a part of who they are.
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