

A MONOGRAPH ON THE REV. ISRAEL EVANS A.M. B.1747 D.1807; CHAPLAIN IN THE AMERICAN ARMY

Chaplain in the American Army during the entire Revolutionary War 1775-1783

The Second Settled Minister of Concord, New Hampshire 1789-1788.

“Washington’s Chaplain”. Also, Chaplain to Major-General John Sullivan (LL.D.); General Enoch Poor, Major-General John Stark, General Gates, General Montgomery, Colonel Scammel, Colonel Van Cortlandt.

Chaplain Evans’s imperturbable coolness in battle was proverbial, and rather sought than shunned the post of danger.

He was with the Continental Army at Valley Forge, 1777-1778. Here he was able to do much by his ardent and patriotic spirit, to inspire the soldiers, in those darkest days of the war, with a love for liberty and country.

The Reverend Israel Evans was of Welsh descent born in Trdyffrin, Chester County, State of Pennsylvania in the year 1747. His father and grandfather were ministers in this country, and his great-grandfather was a minister in Wales.

He gained his education at “Nassau Hall “(now known as Princeton University) and graduated in the class of 1772 at the age of twenty-five years, receiving the A.M. degree in 1775. Fourteen of the twenty-two members of the class entered ministry. In his later years was a trustee of Dartmouth College.

When the Revolutionary War broke out, being an ardent patriot, he offered himself as a chaplain in the army. He was first licensed to preach by First Philadelphia Presbytery in 1775, and by the same was ordained as chaplain in 1776. He went at once to the field., and was not at another meeting of the Presbytery until 1786 when he was dismissed to take a church in Weymouth, Mass.

On July 1, 1776, General Washington writing Congress, Respecting the chaplains of the army, the need of affixing one to each regiment, with the salaries competent to their support,” congress immediately adopted his views, and at New York on July 9 he issued the following general order:

The honorable Continental Congress having been pleased to allow a chaplain to each regiment, with the pay of thirty-three and one third dollars per month, the

colonels, or commanding officers, of each regiment are directed to procure chaplains – persons of good character and exemplary lives- to see that all inferior officers and soldiers pay them suitable respect, and attend carefully upon religious exercises. The blessings and protection of heaven are at all times necessary, but especially it is in times of public distress and danger. The general hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor so to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country.

Many of those who were appointed chaplains served only for a short time and simply performed their prescribed routine of duties; others served for longer period and became especially distinguished for their faithful labors and noble patriotism, to whom the country owes a great debt of gratitude. Says J.T. Headley (author of *The Forgotten Heroes of Liberty*). “The one who perhaps stood as prominently in history as a representative chaplain, and who with a clear head, a strong patriotic zeal, assisting in sustaining the cause of the colonies was the Rev. Israel Evans.” Attached to the New Hampshire Brigade.

Eugene Franklin Williams (author of *Soldiers of God the Chaplains of The Revolutionary War*) says, ‘Israel Evans was a native of Pennsylvania and a warm, uncompromising patriot. There is no chaplain, of the Revolution, about whom so little is known. By nature, he was better fitted for military life than for the quiet routine of a pastor. Humility was not a prominent trait of his character

Chaplain Evans was at Saratoga, at Hackensack, Valley Forge, and many more including with General Washington at Yorktown where he narrowly escaped death from a stray cannon ball. The Chaplain was unperturbed.

Before a battle he usually prayed that the Lord of Hosts would lead the army to victory, but always added if this should not be in accordance with divine will then he begged God to stand aside and let flesh and blood decide the issue.

Standing over the bloody field of Yorktown after Cornwallis surrendered, he shouted peons of praise to Washington and his shout of thanksgiving to God.

He preached a sermon from Psalm 115 closing it exhorting “to fidelity and sacrifice the lives of all true Christians. He desired to have a building in which to hold divine service, and a number of officers felt the need of a large room to have

dancing and parties. This the church and the world joined forces, and the “New Building” as it was officially styled, was the result. Chaplain Evans wished to call it the “Temple of Honor and Virtue”, but modestly or desire of brevity led officers to drop the latter part of the designation and the building was commonly spoken of as the “Temple”.

His portrait hangs in the New Hampshire state house where he delivered many sermons to the legislature. He pastored the historic Old North church. He and his wife Huldah Kent Evans are buried in the Old North Cemetery in Concord NH with this inscription “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”.

Meticulously collected for publication by the research of The Patriot Pastor of the 21st Century Black Robed Regiment Garrett Lear Chaplain and past president NHSSAR