His Soul is Marching On: An Annotated Bibliography of William Weston Patton, Abolitionist and Educator of Freedmen

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Introduction

Long before President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, the battle for the conscience of the nation was being fought by religious groups using both the pulpit and the press. These attempts to sway public opinion against the institution of slavery through pamphlets and religious newspapers have been well documented, but the writings of one of the abolition movement’s instrumental figures has, surprisingly, languished in obscurity.

William Weston Patton (1821-1889) is perhaps best known today simply as one of the early presidents of Howard University, serving from 1877 to 1889, but what is less known is the bibliographic record documenting this man’s lifelong commitment to abolishing slavery and later, educating freed African Americans. A fiery evangelical pastor in the Congregational Church and prolific writer of anti-slavery tracts, in 1862 Rev. Patton traveled from Chicago to the White House to meet with President Lincoln and present a proclamation to emancipate the slaves. During the Civil War, Patton served as vice-president of the Northwestern Sanitary Commission where he inspected army camps throughout the central United

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States. During this time he penned new lyrics to an abolitionist song, then familiarly known as “John Brown's Body,” which were published in the Chicago Tribune and soon thereafter modified by Julia Ward Howe into the version that is now known as “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

Late in life Patton was able to put his passion of educating Freedmen into practice when he assumed the presidency of Howard University in 1877. During his tenure there he was a frequent contributor of theological pieces to the New Englander and Yale Review and penned many items relating to the education of African Americans in The American Missionary, the official publication of the American Missionary Association. Soon after retiring from Howard University, William Weston Patton died at his home in Westfield, New Jersey, on December 31, 1889, at age 69.

Biographical Sketches

Patton’s biographical story has been largely ignored in print, both during his life and after. No entry for him appears in the two major biographical encyclopedias, Dictionary of National Biography and American National Biography. The titles below represent the two most complete and reliable sources for biographical information regarding William Weston Patton.


Published prior to his death, this brief encyclopedic entry provides basic biographical information, including: his education at New York University, Union Theological Seminary, and DePauw University; Patton’s early pastoral duties in Hartford, Connecticut and Chicago; his teaching at Oberlin College and Chicago Theological Seminary; his meeting with President Lincoln to present an emancipation proclamation; his work with the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War; his presidency at Howard University; as well as an abbreviated list of publications.

Patton, Cornelius H., and Caroline Patton Hatch. Honour Thy Father. A Sermon in Memory of William Weston Patton. 1890. [3]-75 p., frontispiece (portrait); 23 cm.²

² Available at https://archive.org/details/honourthyrathers00patt
Authored, and presumably self-published, by two of Patton’s surviving children, this pamphlet contains the most detailed biographical information published. Includes not only a sermon by Patton’s son detailing his father’s life, but a tribute by the First Congregational Church of Chicago, and a testimonial from the faculty of Howard University.

Connecticut Abolitionist Writings

In January 1846, Rev. Patton assumed the pastorate at the Fourth Congregational Church of Hartford, Connecticut. During his eleven year tenure, his fervent opposition to slavery collided with The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, an evangelical association which did not forbid its members in Indian Territory from owning slaves. Patton’s missionary zeal on the topic of abolition led to attempts to depose him by other pastors in Hartford. Patton stayed with the Fourth Church until January 1857, when he moved west to become the head of the First Congregational Church of Chicago. Many of Patton’s early writings were published in pamphlet form by William H. Burleigh, a Hartford abolitionist and editor of the religious newspaper, The Christian Freeman.


Written soon after assuming pastoral duties at the Fourth Church in Hartford, Patton takes on the evangelical missionary organization, The American Board, for their position of allowing slaveholding of some of its members. In his fiery denunciation, Patton notes that the American Board’s policy is in conflict with the foundation of the missionary enterprise, (p. 14) and concludes by asking followers to withdraw contributions as well as steadily voice their concerns to the press. (p. 47).


In this passionate sermon, Patton furthers the case for martyrdom of Charles Turner Torrey, an abolitionist from Massachusetts arrested and imprisoned in Maryland for freeing slaves. Torrey’s death in prison of tuberculosis on May 6, 1846 prompted this stirring pamphlet arguing that slave laws are against the Decalogue

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\(^3\) Available at [https://archive.org/details/americanboardsla02patt](https://archive.org/details/americanboardsla02patt).

and therefore not binding. On the freeing of slaves in violation of slave laws, Patton concludes and urges his followers, “I should feel free to violate it whenever I safely could.” (p. 12).

*Slavery – The Bible – Infidelity. An Attempt to Prove that Pro-Slavery Interpretations of the Bible are Productive of Infidelity. By Rev. Wm. W. Patton, Pastor of the Fourth Cong. Church, Hartford, CT.* (Hartford: William H. Burleigh, 1846). 20 p.; 18 cm.⁵ In this pamphlet, Patton takes on those he considers to be infidels, who argue that because portions of the Bible sanction slaveholding, one must either denounce the entire text or accept the proslavery stance. Patton argues that the result of proslavery views will likely be infidelity to scripture and “if the Bible sanctions slaveholding, then the argument for its inspiration derived from its system of morals is forever destroyed.” (p. 4). He further suggests the authority of missionaries would be undermined because allowing for slaveholding causes skepticism of the Bible among slaves. (p. 13). A four page pamphlet extracted from this speech was later issued by the Union Anti-Slavery Society.⁶


Patton, William W. *The Young Man’s Book; Or, Lectures for the Times.* Auburn [N.Y.]: Derby and Miller, 1851. vii, 1 leaf, [11]-213 p.; 19 cm.⁷ This book is sort of self-help through prayer and devotion title intended for a general audience. Patton surprisingly spends little time discussing the abolition of slavery except in general terms, stating, “The time will be, when it will be universally execrated as one of the vilest children of sin, and one of the most fruitful parents of woe.” (p. 197).

*Conscience and Law; or a Discussion of our Comparative Responsibility to Human and Divine Government; with an Application to the Fugitive Slave Law. By Rev. Wm. W. Patton, Pastor of the Fourth Congregational Church, Hartford, CT.* (Mark H. Newman & Co.: NY; Brockett, Fuller & Co.: Hartford; S. C. Griggs & Co.: Chicago, 1850) 64 p.; 16 cm.⁸

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⁷ Available at [https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100592267](https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100592267).
Patton goes into great detail here to challenge recent “pro-slavery” acts by Congress, particularly the Fugitive Slave Act, arguing that his religious brethren who remain silent, “aid in the deeds of despotism equally at war with the rights of man and the law of God.” (p. [3]). This small pamphlet, issued in stiff boards, was clearly intended to be distributed widely. Published by a consortium of religious pamphlet jobbers, this title was likely printed by Brockett, Fuller & Co. in Hartford, and apparently at the direction of Patton. A handwritten note by the author in one of the extant copies states, “I will present one hundred copies of this work to the Am. Reform Book & Tract Society. They may sell or give them away at their option.”

Patton, William W. *What It Is to Preach the Gospel*. Cincinnati, Ohio: American Reform Tract and Book Society, [1853?]. 24 p.; 16 cm. Although a general religious tract, Patton’s abolitionist philosophy comes through as he explains how the divinity of the Gospel trumps the legality of man-made laws, (p. 13-14) and addresses slavery in arguing that because legislators could not be relied upon to uphold the Wilmot Proviso, the Church must now be the catalyst for the abolition movement. (p. 23).

William W. Patton, John Hooker, Milo Doty, and William Jay. *The Unanimous Remonstrance of the Fourth Congregational Church, Hartford, Conn., Against the Policy of the American Tract Society on the Subject of Slavery*. New York, N.Y.: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1855. 36 p.; 19 cm. Patton and his co-authors issued this scathing report of their findings as the committee to investigate the policy of silence pursued by the American Tract Society on the topic of slavery. The authors resolve that their confidence in the American Tract Society is impaired, and note a similar “feeling of displeasure and disgust spreading rapidly throughout the North.” The charges against ATS by the authors include both a suppression and a striking out of condemnations of slavery in reprinted works, and a policy of omission in the publications of the ATS not to condemn slavery. The pamphlet, under both imprints, was widely circulated to religious newspapers around the country. This imprint, issued as number

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9 Item held by Southern Illinois University School of Law Library.
11 Available at [https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100781955](https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100781955).
16 of the Anti-Slavery Tracts, exists also under a Hartford, Connecticut imprint from the Foundry of Silas Andrus & Son, 1855.\footnote{Fourth Congregational Church (Hartford, Conn.). \textit{The Unanimous Remonstrance of the Fourth Congregational Church, Hartford, Conn., against the Policy of the American Tract Society on the Subject of Slavery}. (Hartford: Foundry of Silas Andrus & Son, 1855).}

Patton, William W. \textit{Thoughts for Christians, Suggested by the Case of Passmore Williamson; A Discourse Preached in the Fourth Cong. Church, Hartford, Conn., by Rev. William W. Patton, October 7, 1855} (Press of Montague & Co.: Hartford, 1855). 23 p.; 16 cm.\footnote{Available at \url{https://archive.org/details/ASPC0001901300}.}

Passmore Williamson, an abolitionist from Philadelphia was arrested under the Fugitive Slave Law for assisting the escape of a female slave, Jane Johnson, and her two children. The “escape” occurred while Johnson’s master, John Wheeler and his family and slaves were en route to board a steamer to South America. Before boarding in New York, Wheeler brought the slaves on a layover trip to Philadelphia where Williamson informed them that under existing state law, if a master brings a slave into a free state, that slave becomes free. The case pitted “slave power” over state law, and Patton here adds an abolitionist argument of judicial tyranny over “friends of liberty and Christianity,” (p. 11) noting “there should issue from every Christian mouth an indignant remonstrance against this glaring outrage.” (p. 13).

\textit{Slavery and Infidelity, or, Slavery in the Church Ensures Infidelity in the World} (Cincinnati: American Reform Book and Tract Society, [1856]). 70 p.; 15 cm.\footnote{Available at \url{https://archive.org/details/slaveryinfidelit00patt}.}

Penned ten years after his Hartford printed pamphlet on the same topic, Patton’s argument, now issued by the American Reform and Tract Society out of Cincinnati, illustrates the bibliographic transmission of Patton outside of New England. Although the argument is much the same as it was in the prior imprint, Patton has updated it with references to the recently published Harriet Beecher Stowe’s \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin} to illustrate his points. (p. 45).


The author takes Patton to task for his undisguised anti-slavery positions, and for Patton’s enduring criticisms of the body of Christian ministers who remained silent on the subject in the United
States. He describes these attacks as "unjust" and Patton himself as "thoroughly inimical to New England in all her highest interests."

In the first sermon in this pamphlet, given in January 1856, Patton reflects on ten years as pastor of the Fourth Congregational Church. Although he does not specifically address his early conflicts with local churches regarding their approach to slaveholding members, his congregation must surely have understood thinly veiled statements such as, "But, not even the conservatism of Hartford can quench the fire of truth, or defeat the friends of God and humanity." (p. 24). The second, "farewell" sermon, given a year later as he was to leave Hartford to begin overseeing the First Congregational Church in Chicago, Patton states, "If I have anything to regret, it is, that I have said so little in behalf of the outraged slave, rather than I have said so much." (p. 46).

Chicago Writings

In part because of his outspoken anti-slavery views which were receptive to many in the Chicago area, Patton was installed at the First Congregational Church in Chicago on January 1857. His pastoral oversight of the church resulted in it becoming the center of a large missionary undertaking. While there, he helped to organize the Chicago Theological Seminary and was president of its board of directors. In addition to his abolitionist writings, Patton traveled Europe in 1866 to promote the cause of the Freedmen. Patton resigned his pastorate at the First Church in 1867 to serve as editor-in-chief of The Advance, a Congregational weekly newspaper, and although Patton does not appear to have authored articles for this title, under his stewardship, which lasted until 1873, it was used as a powerful vehicle to spread the abolitionist message.

Patton, William W. The Death of a Mother: a Discourse Delivered in the 1st Congregational Church, Chicago Illinois, Sabbath, August 2, 1857. Chicago: Scripps, Bross & Spears, 1857. 22 p.; 19 cm. The genesis of this heartfelt sermon was the news that Patton's mother, Mary Weston Patton, of Stonington, Connecticut, died suddenly on July 25, 1857. Here Patton describes the unique love between a mother and her child. He concludes by reminding congregants to be kind to their mothers now, and urges "those whose

15 Available at https://archive.org/details/deathofmotherdis00patt.
mothers have departed, to cherish their memory with special care.” (p. 20).


Patton, William W. Spiritual Victory: Or, Thoughts Upon the Higher Christian Life. (Boston: Congregational Pub. Society, 1874). 311 p.; 14 cm. This lengthy book, produced by the Congregational Church, is a collection of essays by Patton addressing spiritual aspirations such as “victory over evil habit,” “victory over pride,” “victory through sorrow,” etc. Curiously absent is any discussion regarding the abolition of slavery or education of Freedmen.

Patton, William. Bible Wines: Or, The Laws of Fermentation and Wines of the Ancients. New York: National Temperance Society and Pub. House, 1874. 139 p.: illustrations; 19 cm. In this interesting temperance tract, Patton, bases much of his text on the writings of others and concludes that alcohol is not found in nature and, as such, is not a product of God but rather “an artificial thing prepared by man through the destructive process of fermentation.” (p. 118). This title was the subject of renewed interest in the late twentieth century and was reprinted several times.

Patton, William W. Prayer and its Remarkable Answers; being a Statement of Facts in the Light of Reason and Revelation (Chicago: J. S. Goodman, 1876 [c.1875?] 408 p.: front.; 20cm. This book, clearly designed to appeal to a wide audience, intends to promote and reaffirm scriptural piety through prayer. Noticeably absent is any discussion of Patton’s familiar writing on slavery and education of Freedmen. One brief exception is a short piece titled “How a slave obtained freedom.” (p. 196.)

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16 Available at https://archive.org/details/rightsofcongrega00cong.
17 Available at https://archive.org/details/spiritualvictory00patt.
18 Available at https://archive.org/details/biblewinesorlaw00pattgoog.
19 Available at https://archive.org/details/prayeranswers00nattrich.
A pamphlet collection recording the exercises of the First Congregational Church quarter centennial, Rev. Patton’s address appears on pages 45-55. He discusses how the anti-slavery movement led to the founding of the church despite its unpopularity in the community.

U.S. Sanitary Commission Writings

Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, Patton was elected Vice-President of the Northwest chapter of the newly organized U.S. Sanitary Commission. Although based in Chicago, Patton’s administrative duties required him to travel to various army camps throughout the Midwest to inspect sanitary conditions and make recommendations to the federal agency.

This report to the U.S. Sanitary Commission provides modern readers a window into conditions of army camps throughout southern Illinois and St. Louis at an early point in the Civil War. Patton details the deficiencies of army camps caused by the unexpectedness and extent of the war, “which took the nation by surprise, and found the government wholly unprepared for the supply of so vast an army as it has been compelled to call into the field.” (p. 7). He lists among the deficiencies, lack of proper clothing, bedding and food, as well as “the ignorance and inefficiency of surgeons.” (p. 8).

Patton, William W. The Compensated Agency of the U.S. Sanitary Commission Explained and Defended (Chicago, Ill., Dunlop, Sewell & Spalding, Printers, 1864), 8 p.; 22 cm.22
Patton responds to criticisms that the Sanitary Commission should be run as a volunteer, unpaid agency. In doing so, he describes in detail the duties the agency performs and the need for a paid staff in order to run efficiently and effectively. In justifying the expenses,

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20 Available at https://archive.org/details/quartercentennia00good.
22 Available at https://archive.org/details/compensatedagency00patt.
Patton notes the following services the agency provides: distribution of hospital supplies; assisting discharged soldiers; recording the names of all soldiers who enter army hospitals; employing a large number of physicians who go from camp to camp inspecting the condition of the men and the situation of the camps, recording diet, clothing, and hygiene regimens; and the operating of Soldier’s Homes which provide food, clothing, and lodging for soldiers coming to or from the army.

Writings Related to John Brown

In October 1861, while on a Sanitary Commission trip from Chicago to southern Illinois by train, Patton “scribbled off on the back of an envelope a ‘New John Brown Song,’ in which he sought to express the moral issues of the war in relation to slavery.” Patton’s new lyrics to the battle song, “John Brown’s Body” were published in the Chicago Tribune on December 16, 1861. Patton’s new stanzas exemplify his abolitionist passion - glorifying John Brown, describing his execution, and comparing him to John the Baptist. Two months later, the Atlantic Monthly published further modified lyrics by Julia Ward Howe with the new song title, “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”


Old John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave,  
While weep the sons of bondage, whom he ventured all to save;  
But though he lost his life in struggling for the slave,  
His soul is marching on; Glory, Hallelujah!

John Brown he was a hero, undaunted, true and brave,  
And Kansas knew his valor, where he fought, her rights to save,  
And now, though the grass grows green above his grave,  
His soul is marching on; Glory, &c.

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25 “War Songs for the Army and the People – No. 2; The New John Brown Song,” Chicago Tribune, Dec. 16, 1861.
He captured Harper’s Ferry, with his nineteen men, so few,
And frightened “Old Virginny” till she trembled thru and thru;
They hung him for a traitor, themselves the traitor crew,
But his soul is marching on; Glory, &c.

John Brown was John the Baptist of the Christ we are to see—
Christ who of the bondmen shall the Liberator be;
And soon throughout the sunny South the slaves shall all be free,
For his soul is marching on; Glory, &c.

The conflict that he heralded, he looks from heaven to view,
On the army of the Union, with his red flag, white and blue;
And Heaven shall ring with anthems, o’er the deed they meant to do,
For his soul is marching on. Glory, &c.

Ye soldiers of Freedom, then strike while strike ye may,
The death-blow of oppression, is a better time and way;
For the dawn of old John Brown has brightened into day,
And his soul is marching on; Glory, &c.

Execution of John Brown, a Discourse, Delivered at Chicago, December 4th, 1859, in the First Congregational Church (Chicago, Church, Goodman & Cushing, printers: [1859?]). 14 p.; 23 cm.26

Patton delivered this forceful sermon only two days after John Brown’s hanging. Defending Brown’s actions, Patton states, “He did in life what he thought God called him to do” (p. 12), and “that we should have sympathy with John Brown in the general object of securing freedom to the slaves, follows not merely from our Christianity but from our very manhood.” (p. 7). Patton, firm in his abolitionist resolve, concludes that Brown was “the seed of Liberty divinely planted at this critical period that by ‘dying’ he ‘might bring forth much fruit.’” (p. 14).

26 Available at https://archive.org/details/executionofjohnb00patt.

Written later in his life, Patton provides details regarding his October 1861 additions to “The John Brown Song” written while on a train from Chicago to Cairo, Illinois. While visiting an Illinois regiment in Paducah, Kentucky, Patton gave his verses to the chaplain, Rev. Joel Grant, who, in turn, distributed them to the troops to sing. Patton soon thereafter submitted the verses to the _Chicago Tribune_ under the title, “The New John Brown Song.” The stanzas were published in that paper on November 16, 1861, “and were at once issued also in sheet music by Root & Cady, principle music firm of the West at that time. It thus went all over the West and into the army at the South.” (p. 341).

_Proclamation of Emancipation_

Perhaps Patton’s greatest accomplishment as an abolitionist was his role in petitioning President Lincoln to free the slaves. In 1862, as the result of a multi-denominational meeting in Chicago on the topic of abolition of slavery, Patton penned a memorial requesting universal emancipation and presented it to President Lincoln – meeting with him for over an hour. Lincoln’s Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton is quoted as telling the Chicago Tribune, “Tell those Chicago clergymen who waited on the President about the Proclamation of Emancipation that their interview finished the business.” It is astonishing that Patton’s meeting with Lincoln has been largely overlooked by historians.


This pamphlet, authored by Patton late in life while president of Howard University, recalls and memorializes his role in drafting a proclamation for emancipation of the slaves which was presented and read aloud to President Lincoln on September 13, 1862. Also recorded is Lincoln’s verbal response, spanning fourteen pages, detailing the president’s hesitation in freeing the slaves. He asks of Patton, “What good would a proclamation of emancipation from me

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29 Available at [https://archive.org/details/presidentlincoln00patt](https://archive.org/details/presidentlincoln00patt).
do? ... How would my mere word free the slaves, when I cannot even enforce the Constitution, in the rebel states?"

**Writings in the New Englander and Yale Review**

Although this literary journal covered a wide range of contemporary issues in the mid- to late-1800s, including politics, law, economics and history, the theological writings by Patton recorded here echo the periodical’s evangelical origins. Several of his pieces were subsequently issued in pamphlet form.


Reprinted soon thereafter in pamphlet form by the *New Englander*.


This fiery essay is Patton’s response to Rev. Hermann Schmettau, Foreign Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, who felt that the recent resolution adopted by the [American] Evangelical Alliance regarding the Civil War was “cold, stately, restrained, and cautious.” (p. 291). Patton forcefully rebuts this accusation that the Alliance was not committed to the abolition of slavery – not only in the south, but in the District of Columbia and the Territories as well.


Patton takes strong issue with the contemporary “Liberal Christian” belief that all men will be granted salvation. He concludes with the warning, “Let it be generally believed that heaven is sure to every man at last, and the flood-gates of sin will be wide open.”


Patton attempts to clarify the meaning of a statement recently inserted into the Constitution of the National Council [of the Congregational Church] which reads: *They [the Congregational Churches] agree in belief, that the Holy Scriptures are the sufficient and only infallible rule of religious faith and practice.*

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30 *The New Englander and Yale Review* is digitally available as part of *Making of America*. [http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/i/nwng/nwng.html](http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/i/nwng/nwng.html).
Patton, W. W., Rev., D.D. “The Religious Element of Education and the Public School System” 32(123) New Englander and Yale Review 201-217 (April 1873). Patton discusses the need for a “double education” of intellectual and spiritual intelligence for all young men, as “mere intellectual culture never can of itself produce a complete and healthy manhood.” (p. 202). He further argues that it is the primary responsibility of the parents but the State cannot absolve itself in their role of a universal education, otherwise “infidelity will claim to be unsectarian and secular, and will be taught under State patronage.” (p. 211). Patton also addresses the need to educate Freedmen, a philosophy he carried into practice when he became president of Howard University four years later.

Patton, William, Rev., D.D. “Current Fallacies concerning Ordination” 32(125) New Englander and Yale Review 635-649 (October 1873). Patton disagrees with the Papal, Presbyterian, and Episcopal position that the outward ceremony of laying of hands is all that is required for one to be ordained a minister and have spiritual powers conveyed upon them. Patton contends that spiritual gifts are more inward and abstract, deriving internally and from direct teaching.

Patton, W. W. “Revivals of Religion. How to make them Productive of Permanent Good” 33(126) New Englander and Yale Review 38-51 (January 1874) Patton expresses his concern that revivals are considered by many to be only a temporary excitement about religion and provides an outline of how they can be used as part of a permanent religious force.

Patton, William W., Rev. “Lay-Preaching” 35(134) New Englander and Yale Review 126-145 (January 1876) Patton argues that lay preaching comes natural to some men and is akin to giving common sense advice which men do naturally. Acknowledging some of the “dangers” of lay preaching, Patton nevertheless believes that it is a right which all men possess and should be allowed to exercise.

Patton, W. W., Rev., D.D. “The Last Century of Congregationalism; or, the Influence in Church and State of the Faith and Polity of the Pilgrim Fathers” 35(137) New Englander and Yale Review 634-660 (October 1876). *Reprinted in pamphlet form two years later when Patton was president of Howard University:*
Patton, William W. *The Last Century of Congregationalism; Or, The Influence on Church and State of the Faith and Polity of the Pilgrim Fathers.* (Washington: W.M. Stuart, 1878). 31 pages 23 cm.\(^{31}\)

Patton, while working in Chicago, notes the falling off of the growth of Congregational church as compared to the growth of the country’s population. He attributes this primarily to: geographically limiting themselves to New England; the anti-slavery position of the church turned away many slaveholding members; lack of national organization; too strict adherence to Calvinistic doctrine and other doctrinal peculiarities; lack of an influential method of preaching; a perception that they were aligned with aristocratic class prohibited denominational growth.


Patton disagrees with the contemporary fondness for Matthew Arnold’s definition of culture as, “a harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, which goes beyond religion, as religion is generally conceived among us.” (p. 774). Patton argues against this notion that culture prepares one to achieve goals in their present life while religion merely prepares those for the afterlife.


In this densely theological piece, Patton examines a single verse from the Book of Peter regarding preaching to “spirits in prison” to determine if it address those figuratively imprisoned by sin, or those literally imprisoned. It includes much analysis by grammarians and Greek scholars.


Patton, William W. *The United States Supreme Court and the Civil Rights* [s.l.: s.n., 1884?] 19 p.; 23 cm.

Patton strongly disagrees with the Supreme Court’s narrow interpretation of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments in the

\(^{31}\) *Available at* [https://archive.org/details/lastcenturyofcon00patt](https://archive.org/details/lastcenturyofcon00patt).
Civil Rights Cases\textsuperscript{32} which held that the Civil Rights Act of 1875\textsuperscript{33} was unconstitutional and that congress lacked the authority to prohibit racial discrimination by individuals and organizations.

In this lengthy article, Patton attempts to explain what he perceives as an increase in spiritual skepticism among women. Patton finds several culprits, including: fashionable literary circles; women becoming more educated and thus falling “temptation to assert a pseudo-independence”; “a revolt from corrupt Christianity”, and what can only be described as some sort of misdirected enthusiasm and women’s “tendency to extremes of feelings.”

Patton, William W., Rev. “Weak Points of the Evangelical Faith, as it is Commonly Stated” 45(190) New Englander and Yale Review 44-62 (January 1886)

Although not specifically written as a commentary on the salvation of Freedmen, Patton addresses the topic, quoting the 18th Century English abolitionist Hannah More's poem on the slave trade and the duty of evangelicals to preach Christianity to the “heathen African.” Patton provides a scathing indictment that many evangelicals ignore the opportunity for salvation of African Americans and instead “industriously connect the race with Adam, in respect to sin and ruin.” (p. 57).

President of Howard University

William Weston Patton was the fifth president of Howard University and served in that position from 1877 to 1889, when health concerns forced him to resign. In addition to his presidency he also served as chair of Natural Theology and Evidence of Christianity in the Theological Department. His inaugural address to the university and his frequent contributions to The American Missionary magazine illustrate his philosophy on both the Christianization and education of African Americans in the late 19th Century. The American Missionary, which carried many pieces penned by Patton, was the official publication of the Protestant abolitionist group, American Missionary Association (AMA), whose main purpose was to abolish slavery, and later, to educate African Americans.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} Civil Rights Cases, 109 U.S. 3, 3 S. Ct. 18, 27 L. Ed. 835 (1883).
\textsuperscript{33} An Act to Protect All Citizens in their Civil and Legal Rights, Ch. 114, 18 Stat. 335 (1875).
\textsuperscript{34} The American Missionary is available digitally as part of Making of America, http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/a/amis/amis.html.
In this stirring speech, Patton details his moral and educational philosophy. He lauds Howard’s “thoroughly democratic basis of giving equal educational advantages to all, irrespective of race or sex, and its special encouragement of the race which hitherto has been largely excluded from literary institutions.” (p. 11). Describing the unique mission of the university, he states, “Howard University is a child of Providence, and on heir to the new future, born out of the great civil war, which, in saving the National Union, gave freedom to four millions of slaves. That, be it remembered was an emancipation of four millions of minds, as well as so many bodies.” (p. 11). Opposing racially segregated education, Patton explains, “Colored youth educated wholly apart from the whites lose the stimulus of the competition which they need to have.” (p. 13).

Issued by Howard University, this pamphlet records the speech made by Patton to the students of that school. In his introduction he reiterates his philosophy described in his inaugural address that the instructors at Howard “are as faithful in pointing out the defects and sins of the negro as they are in standing up for his civil, intellectual, and religious rights.” (p. [2]). The body of the speech details this philosophy through three topics: industrial, intellectual, and moral. Regarding the topic of educating freedmen, Patton states, “They must learn to speak correctly, to think clearly, to understand ordinary matters with intelligence, to cultivate a taste for reading, for art, and for all elevating influences.” (p. 9). An advertisement for the university on the final page summarizes the advantages and opportunities offered by Howard University under Rev. Patton in the education of freedmen.

A single paragraph describing an increase in religious interests at the university, “greatly aided by the week of prayer held by the Young Men’s Christian Association of the University in concert with other Associations.”

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35 Available at [https://archive.org/details/inauguraladdress01patt](https://archive.org/details/inauguraladdress01patt).
36 Available at [https://archive.org/details/gilgalofcoloredr00patt](https://archive.org/details/gilgalofcoloredr00patt).
An interesting account of the 1879 graduation ceremonies at Howard University which was attended by members of Congress. Speakers included ex-slaveholder and officer in the Confederate army, Thomas J. Kirkpatrick, and Frederick Douglass, who “cordially welcomed the ex-slave-holder to the common work of sustaining Howard University as a grand instrumentality for elevating the oppressed negro race.”

Here Patton describes how his father, a pioneer among evangelicals, began a Presbyterian church in New York in the 1820s and developed it into one of the largest in the city. Patton notes that his father’s church emphasized both missionary work and the importance of education. Five hundred copies of this pamphlet were produced for private distribution.

In describing the 1880 commencement exercises for the Theological Department of Howard University, Patton notes that it was attended by “a large audience of white and colored people... and it marks the rapid and healthful progress of public opinion.”

Patton discusses the raising of admission standards at Howard University, and lamenting the lack of funds, concluding “colored people must have educated leaders in church and state.” He also touts the school’s medical faculty who not only treated President Garfield and later performed his autopsy.

Patton discusses the 1882 commencement ceremonies for the five graduates of the Theological Department, concluding, “[W]e are prepared to receive and train young men, white or colored, for the Gospel Ministry of all Evangelical denominations.”

In this fascinating editorial piece, Patton reflects on five years as president of Howard University and uses Darwin as a model for arguing that changing the “intellectual and moral atmosphere” of African Americans by placing them in a “civilized” environment can only result in their improvement. He argues for removal from “communities of prevailing ignorance, superstition and immorality, where they live in miserable hovels, see only examples of coarseness and rudeness and hear only a negro dialect.” Patton not only insists that they be removed from their “depressing and degrading” surroundings, but that they be sent to universities, such as Howard, where “the standard of living is different and elevated; where religion is intelligent; where language is grammatical; where clothing is whole and neat; where public sentiment is on the right side of disputed questions.”

In support of the work of Howard University (with Patton at its helm) in training African American students (and a thinly veiled appeal for funds), Abbot reprints a letter from the prosecuting attorney from Amelia County, Virginia. The letter's author praises the work of one Howard educated minister in not only helping to reduce crime in the area, but notes, “there has been such a marked improvement in conduct, character, morals and intelligence of the colored population.” The author concludes that although “the result of liberating the vast number of colored people of the South” was a dramatic increase in crime, Howard University has provided the remedy: “to educate and Christianize the race.”

Patton details commencement exercises for 1884, noting that the Theological Department was comprised of 385 students, coming from 34 states.

Patton uses this editorial piece to reaffirm his philosophy, which is stated here in the form of the question: “How is any race to rise without intelligent leaders of their own in every locality?” Acknowledging that “every race has certain peculiarities...and to these we have a degree in regard to our intercourse with them,” Patton, nevertheless, argues that African Americans “must have the chance that others have.”
President Patton of Howard University. “Editorial: The Impressions of Ten Years” 41(7) *The American Missionary* 193-195 (July 1887) A reflection upon his ten years educating Freedmen, Patton argues for “a more rigorous academic training to pervade the colored colleges of the South.” Patton includes his familiar plea to “furnish the Negros with intelligent, well principled leaders, of their own race, to save them from being made tools by wily politicians among the whites.”


Patton, Wm. W. “Editorial: More about the John Brown Song” 41(12) *The American Missionary* 339-341 (Dec 1887) Patton provides details regarding his October 1861 writing additions to the John Brown Song while on a train from Chicago to Cairo, Illinois. While visiting an Illinois regiment in Paducah, Kentucky, Patton gave his verses to the chaplain, Rev. Joel Grant, who, in turn, gave to the troops to sing. Patton soon thereafter submitted the verses to the *Chicago Tribune* under the title, “The New John Brown Song.” The stanzas were published in that paper on November 16, 1861, “and were at once issued also in sheet music by Root & Cady, principle music firm of the West at that time. It thus went all over the West and into the army at the South.”

**Death of William Weston Patton**

Several newspapers carried news of Patton’s death except *The Appeal*, an African American newspaper based in St. Paul, Minnesota, provided the most detailed account of Patton’s final days. The front page for Saturday, January 4, 1890 contained the following report: Rev. Dr. William Weston Patton, president of the Howard University, Washington, died in Westfield, N.J., Tuesday. He was in apparent good health on Monday and went out for a walk that afternoon. At 5 o’clock he was taken ill with congestion of the lungs and at 1 o’clock this morning he died. Before Dr. Patton left Washington for the holidays he sent in his resignation as president of the Howard University. The resignation was to take effect on Jan. 1, 1890. It had been accepted and Rev. Dr. J. E. Rankin is to succeed him. The funeral

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37 See, e.g. *Indianapolis Journal*, Jan. 1, 1890; *Evening World* (New York, NY), Jan. 1, 1890; *Salt Lake Herald* (UT), Jan. 1, 1890; *Evening Star* (Washington, DC) Jan. 1 & 3, 1890.
services were held in Westfield on Thursday. The body will be taken to Hartford, Conn. for internment.

Patton, Cornelius H., and Caroline Patton Hatch. Honour Thy Father. A Sermon in Memory of William Weston Patton. 1890. [3]-75 p., frontispiece (portrait); 23 cm.\(^{38}\)

Authored, and presumably self-published, by two of Patton’s surviving children, this pamphlet contains the most detailed biographical information published. Includes a tribute by the First Congregational Church of Chicago, and a testimonial from the faculty of Howard University.

\(^{38}\) Available at https://archive.org/details/honourthyfathers00patt