



St. Paul's Church, Chestnut Hill 150th Anniversary Speakers Series

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Many, probably most, people would think of the time in which St. Paul's Church was founded as a time of stability, order, and tranquility. After all, it was the high Victorian age, an era we imagine to be one of strict and widely-agreed-upon values. We are the people who live in an age of unprecedented change and technological innovation.

People in 1856, however, faced most of the challenges we face. There was not universal stability, order and tranquility. Some of the most significant changes in human history were well underway. The 19th century was the age of the industrial revolution. Many millennia before, human beings had abandoned hunting and gathering and had developed agriculture and settled villages. Now people were leaving agriculture for mills and factories and leaving rural villages for rapidly growing cities. That change in the manner of work and living was enormous, and we have not fully addressed all its consequences. Except for some wood and coal for heating and cooking and for small-scale production such as the making of wrought iron and charcoal, energy had come from animals and people. By 1856 coal and steam power dominated. In this supposedly peaceful era there were nine known attempts on the life of Queen Victoria. When British military bands began to play Sunday afternoon concerts in London parks, crowds protested this desecration of the Sabbath. At one large protest 79 people were arrested, 10 for picking pockets, and the remainder for riot.

Technological changes affected everyday life. Chestnut Hill and St. Paul's Church exist because of a technological innovation: the railroad. Not only did railroads provide the first cheap and efficient land transport; they also were the nation's first truly big businesses. Another technological innovation enabled the railroad to function, and that was the telegraph. For the first time in human history instant communication at a distance was possible.

Until 1844 when Samuel Morse sent his first telegraph message from Washington to Baltimore, a quotation from Numbers 23:23, "What hath God wrought!," the sending of a message meant that someone had to carry and convey it. A messenger was much more than a cipher for that person often had to negotiate and make decisions on site. He bore the authority and acted in the name of the king, general or provincial governor who had sent him and had substantial power, often plenipotentiary power. That power is reflected in Hebrew where the word for king is *m'lek* and the word for messenger is *m'lak*—only a vowel shift.

All that changed in 1844, and here are two famous examples of the difference it made. Abraham Lincoln died shortly after 7 o'clock on the morning of April 15, 1865. Because the transcontinental telegraph was not complete, some relays were necessary; but the news was known throughout the country by the end of the day. Ten years earlier British politicians learned the hard way about the power of instant news to shape public opinion. During the Crimean War (1854-1856) William Howard Russell, war correspondent for the *Times* sent his dispatches each day from Istanbul to London. There they were transcribed and printed, and newspapers were loaded on trains around midnight to be distributed and sold throughout England and most of Scotland the next morning. When Parliament assembled in the afternoon, many members had the *Times* in hand and wanted to know what the government planned to do about this mess. This may sound familiar. Is it equivalent to watching the towers of the World Trade Center collapse on television? Perhaps not, but the change from all previous history is overwhelming.

The point is that every age is one of change and development; it is part of the arrogance of the 21st century to think that no one else has ever dealt with it before. As Adam said to Eve upon leaving the Garden of Eden, "My dear, we live in an age of transition."

By 1856 the Episcopal Church in the United States and the city of Philadelphia had established most of their present organization. Three movements of great importance in the church at that time still influence us today. The first is the evangelical revival which began with John Wesley in England and the Great Awakening beginning in 1740 in the United States. I do not think that we can understand Victorian society if we do not understand the evangelical mentality which so profoundly shaped both church and culture for many years. In the United States this was a time of a largely unquestioned Protestant hegemony. To be an American was to be a Christian and to be a Christian was to be a Protestant. Of course teachers read from the King James Bible in public schools.

Evangelicalism then and now was a complex religious movement, but certain characteristics united all evangelical Protestants. One was the importance of a personal experience of Jesus Christ as savior, a conversion experience. These personal religious experiences took many forms; some were sudden and dramatic conversions; others grew over time. All believers were expected to articulate their faith and to tell others how they came to know and accept Jesus and find forgiveness of sin through faith in him. A second characteristic was a very high view of Scripture. The Bible was the firm foundation on which faith and religious life were based, and one powerful incentive for education was so that all could read and know the Bible. Thirdly, evangelicals took evangelism and missionary work seriously. All Christians had a responsibility to proclaim the Gospel and bring others to Christ, and some were called to make that their life's vocation. Evangelicals were serious people who took themselves, their faith, and their causes seriously for this was God's work and God's call to them.

To be a Protestant was in large measure to be an evangelical. Evangelicalism was not a fringe movement, not a conservative party within the church; it permeated Protestant Christianity at every level. When Dwight Lyman Moody came to Philadelphia and pitched his revival tent on South Broad Street, clergy and laity from all churches came—Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, rich and poor, the well-educated and those with little education. John Wanamaker paid all the bills.

Evangelical Protestants embraced many social causes in the Victorian age, and today these causes strike us as progressive. The first and perhaps greatest crusade was for the abolition of slavery both in England and in the United States. John Wesley was an outspoken opponent of slavery; and as his long life neared its end, he urged the younger William Wilberforce who would lead the campaign for abolition in Parliament to stay the course, not to be discouraged by the inevitable failures and disappointments which would come, for this mattered. Wilberforce, a staunch evangelical layman in the Church of England, introduced the first bill to abolish the slave trade in the House of Commons in 1792. Slavery was finally abolished throughout the British Empire 41 years later in 1833, the night before Wilberforce died. Fifty years earlier even a man so committed as William Wilberforce probably could not have prevailed. The industrial revolution had weakened the power of the sugar planters in the West Indies, and he and his associates knew that.

In the United States it would take thirty more years and a bloody civil war to end slavery. We think of William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Beecher Stowe among many others. President Lincoln said of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that it was "the little book that started the big war." In Philadelphia we know much of the Quaker work and that is important, but in most places abolitionism was an evangelical crusade

A second cause was almost equally important and that was the campaign to regulate hours and conditions of work in factories, mines, and mills. The leading evangelical advocate in England was Lord Shaftsbury who had the immense advantage of a hereditary seat in the House of Lords. His victory came in 1847 when Parliament enacted legislation limiting the workday to 10 hours. Even Karl Marx acknowledged that this was a significant gain for the working class. As with the abolition of slavery external factors mattered for by the 1840s the mill owners were more secure and decided that they could afford the 10-hour day.

In the United States child labor engaged evangelicals for many years. Several statutes were struck down by the Supreme Court, and advocates for ending child labor unsuccessfully tried to enact a constitutional amendment. What finally ended child labor was rising affluence. It was not until 1927 that 50% of teenagers attended high school. By then there had been a substantial expansion of secondary education both public and private, but also by the 1920s wages were high enough that parents could afford to manage without the labor of their teenage children, and they could continue in school.

Dorothea Dix was active in the campaign to improve care of the mentally ill. Education at all levels was stressed and that included education for women. Many of the girls' prep schools and women's colleges were evangelical foundations. Temperance, including the call for prohibition, was closely linked with the women's suffrage movement. There was truth in the caricature of the workingman who drank up his paycheck at the local saloon on Saturday night. My grandmother was president of the Ladies' Aid Society in the Sandy, Utah, Congregational Church, and her ladies closed four saloons. Then she went out to bring voters to the polls to vote for Woodrow Wilson.

There were many other campaigns and causes, some national in scope, others local. Organizations formed to work for good causes, and especially in England they chose elaborate names such as the National Society for Educating the Children of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. The prime minister William Gladstone was a patron of the Church Penitentiary Society for the Reclamation of Fallen Women.

Today evangelicals are again active in the public square, but their social and political causes seem conservative to many. Evangelicalism both in 1856 and now was not a monolith, but it is safe to say that at present more people think of Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, James Dobson and the Christian Coalition than of Ron Sider, Jim Wallis, Jimmy Carter, and Evangelicals for Social Action.

The second movement prominent in the church in 1856 was largely a concern of the Episcopal Church, and that is the Oxford Movement, the Anglo-Catholic revival. The first cause embraced in England by the Oxford Movement was opposition to state control of the church. They believed that the church was an entity above and apart from the world and should in no way be subject to civil authority. That was not in issue for the American church for Episcopalians had learned how to be a free church in a free state. If the General Convention wished to create a new diocese, that was of no concern to the government. With this high view of the church also came a high view of the clergy and of their powers, privileges and prerogatives. The romantic movement played its part, even if the Middle Ages were not so idyllic as they were often portrayed.

Mostly, however, ordinary laypeople associated the Anglo-Catholic revival with ritual and ceremonial: “all that stuff”. Much of what the Oxford Movement advocated is not controversial today. There were rectors who were fired for putting a cross and candles on the altar; in England some priests went to jail for pouring water into the wine in the chalice at the offertory to symbolize the mingling of the human and divine natures of Christ. (I was pleased a few weeks ago when one of the acolytes asked why I did that.) Observance of the seasons and use of the liturgical colors is now the norm; and although most priests wear chasubles and stoles, if someone does not, it is considered a bit odd, but not an occasion for scandal. Probably most people appreciate the immense contributions the Anglo-Catholic movement has made to art, architecture and church music.

But some of what the high church party wanted is still controversial. To see that, go to St. Clement’s! The moderate Anglo-Catholic party prevailed, but it would take time. Today we take a “live and let live” attitude toward ritual and ceremonial. If people want incense, they can have incense. If they do not, they can cross the street. And there was a harbinger of present controversies in the 1890s when the prominent Anglo-Catholic social missionary Stewart Headlam caused a stir throughout London when he put up bail for Oscar Wilde. What was that all about? Headlam’s own marriage was rumored to be very strange!

Looking back it is hard to understand the bitterness and intensity of “the ritual wars”. In 1879 the prominent Anglo-Catholic James DeKoven, after having been in several episcopal elections, was elected Bishop of Illinois. He did not receive the consent of a majority of the standing committees and withdrew his name, and that has not happened since. In light of recent history

that denial is quite extraordinary. Barbara Harris received the necessary consents, as did Gene Robinson. The votes were not unanimous, but they do not have to be.

Finally, the Episcopal Church and the Church of England provided a place for what came to be known as the broad church, the thinking person's church. Both evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics were part of this intellectual movement, but they were moderates; the extreme voices from both parties were absent. The broad church party sought to reconcile Christian theology and faith with modern thought. Their writings and influence did much to prevent a split in the church over evolutionary biology, but even before Darwin, some church people had difficulty with new scientific thought. Some clergy (male, naturally) objected to the use of anesthesia in childbirth, quoting Genesis 3:16; "In pain you shall bring forth children." Sir James Simpson, the Scottish obstetrician who discovered chloroform, countered by quoting Genesis 2:21; "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs..." If it was good enough for Adam, it ought to be good enough for everyone else!

The great test came in 1859 when Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species*. Even the most rabidly secular found it somewhat disturbing to learn that instead of being made a little lower than the angels, human beings were made a little higher than the apes. Most Anglicans eventually came to terms with a new understanding of how God acted in creation and became theistic evolutionists, but it took time. Now that evolution is again in the news, my passions stir. I do not think it is particularly difficult to reconcile evolution and Christianity. God is ever alive and active in the world and that can include continuous creation. The age of the earth and the vastness and age of the universe inspire awe and proclaim God as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. As the Victorians wrestled with this new knowledge, many remembered Galileo. When he was sentenced to house arrest by the Inquisition in 1633, he said that it would be 100 years before science would again flourish in Italy, and he was right. Scientific research and publication moved to the Netherlands, Germany, England, Scotland and other Protestant countries of northern Europe. Educated Victorian Christians knew that, and they did not want something like that to happen again.

In many ways evolution was not the greatest challenge. The higher criticism of the Bible probably was much harder to accept by Protestants who believed the Bible to be the Word of God and the final authority. By the 1850s word was coming from Germany that Moses did not write the first five books of the Old Testament, that there were two creation stories, and the first was written several centuries after the second. Mark, not Matthew, was probably the first gospel to be written, and Paul did not write all the letters attributed to him. Instead of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch scholars talked about J, E, P, and D, and, for the gospels, Q. If Christians could not believe the Bible to be true, what foundation was there? Where would this lead?

Now let us turn to the 20th century so recently ended. Many of the issues that would be defining for Christians in that century had their origins in earlier times, and often the links are quite direct.

The evangelical revival was a pan-Protestant movement, and it did much to bring both the Episcopal Church and the Church of England into closer relationships with other Protestants. In the United States the Episcopal Church had always been part of the Protestant hegemony that

dominated religious life and culture whereas in England differences between Anglican and Puritan had been among the causes of a civil war. The Oxford Movement began the much more difficult process of reconciling Protestant and Catholic, and that would take longer; at least some of the old anti-Catholic stereotypes still remain. Most church historians, however, regard the formal beginning of the ecumenical movement to be the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. Although delegates from the United States, Canada, and the British Isles were in a substantial majority, there were representatives from France, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and what is now the Czech Republic, and the proceedings were conducted in several languages. It was a Protestant only gathering to be sure, but it was the most ecumenical official meeting of Christians since the Reformation of the 16th century.

The purpose of the conference was to devise programs and strategies for world missions, recognizing that the divisions among the churches were themselves a deterrent to spreading the gospel. The presiding officer of the conference the American Methodist layman John R. Mott enthusiastically called for “the evangelization of the world in this generation”. Again, technology played its part for by 1910 mail could cross the Atlantic in a few days instead of several months, and delegates could travel in comfort by steamship—the middle classes traveled in 2nd class. When they arrived at Southampton or Liverpool or Greenock, they could board a train and travel easily and safely to Edinburgh, and there find hotels, restaurants, libraries and other amenities in both city and university.

After World War I the ecumenical movement continued through a series of conferences on Faith and Order. Charles Henry Brent, Bishop of Western New York and of the Philippines, was the most prominent Episcopal leader of this movement, and in 1948 it led to the formation of the World Council of Churches. Ecumenism moved beyond Protestantism in the 1960s with the Second Vatican Council, and all Christians owe an enormous debt to Pope John XXIII. We are not yet one, but we are much closer than we were a century ago, and most Christians know that what unites us is far more important than what divides us. Sharing of the Eucharist is not yet universal; but although Protestant-Catholic sharing is not officially sanctioned, people do it every Sunday. In the Episcopal Church we no longer require confirmation prior to receiving communion, a potent sign of Anglican snob appeal. Only the “right people” were at our altar rails.

An important consequence of and contributor to the widening ecumenical movement was the liturgical revival which led to the Eucharist being the norm for the principal service on Sundays and to the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*. In the 19th century many liturgical manuscripts were discovered in the Middle East, and British and French armies stole them fair and square. Many of these ancient texts now reside in the British Library in London and in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. There first French and then many other scholars began learning about the worship of the early church. When Archbishop Thomas Cramner prepared the first *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549, he could not go back further than the 8th century for sources, something he greatly regretted. Now we have access to manuscripts from the early 3rd century, among the most important *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*. Protestant and Catholic alike began to revise their liturgies based on these much more ancient texts, and the process continues today.

In 1789 the founding General Convention of the Episcopal Church adopted a *Book of Common Prayer* for the new church in the new nation, and there was one very important change from the Prayer Book of 1662. When Bishop Samuel Seabury was consecrated at the home of the Bishop of Aberdeen on November 14, 1784, the Scottish bishops lived up to their ethnic stereotype and made a deal. They would participate in this somewhat irregular consecration if Seabury would lobby for adoption of the Scottish Communion Service in the American church. He agreed to do so and was successful. That *Prayer Book* was revised in 1892, and had I been a rector or church treasurer at that time, I would have objected strongly to having to spend all that money for new prayer books when there were so few changes.

The changes which came in 1928 seem small compared to what would follow in 1979, but each was significant. The marriage vows were made equal; “obey” was dropped from the bride’s vows. Wallace Conkling, a clergy deputy who would become Bishop of Chicago, denounced this change as a concession to “flapperism and unnatural notions of femininity”. (My parents were married in 1931 so it was good the change had been made in time!) Also, for the first time, a collect, epistle and gospel were provided for use at weddings and funerals, a sign that the Eucharist was becoming more important. Although at first the Eucharist was celebrated at weddings and funerals only in high Anglo-Catholic parishes, today it is common to have it at these services.

The moderate Anglo-Catholic movement prevailed. The Eucharist is central to our worship; no longer is it celebrated only once a month or once each quarter. It is common for the priest to sing at least part of the service, and most of the objections come when priests who cannot sing attempt to do it anyway! The sacraments receive much more attention, and maybe there are seven after all. My parish is definitely the Protestant Episcopal Church, thank you very much, but I have used the words “the sacrament of confirmation,” “the sacrament of marriage” and although the lights flickered and the chandeliers swayed, the walls still stand!

Another significant change was the separation of the order for visitation of the sick from the ministration to the dying; the two rites had been one since 1549. That change reflected that scientific medicine was beginning to do some good, and a person could be very gravely ill and recover. Although antibiotics and much else were in the future, anesthesia, aseptic surgery, understanding the causes of infectious disease and vast improvements in sanitation and public health were beginning to make a difference. Although notions of illness as a punishment for sin lingered, the changes represented a major theological shift. Finally, for the first time since 1552, the *Book of Common Prayer* provided for prayers for the dead. That was a consequence of World War I; both high church and low church people wanted to pray for friends and relatives who had died in the war to end wars.

The 20th century also saw the increasing equality of men and women in the church. Many factors contributed to that change—education, including higher education, for women, the active role women took in missionary work, the guilds and service organizations for women in both church and society. Altar guilds were at first considered radical-revolutionary-red for in that role women could go inside the altar rail, touch the sacred vessels.

There is little point in belaboring this matter since my views are well known, but the changes which have come in a generation are extraordinary. It was at the 1967 General Convention that legislation was passed allowing women to serve as lay deputies. Most diocesan conventions quickly did the same. Women had begun to serve on vestries in many parishes, and that was made legal. By action of the House of Bishops soon after girls were permitted to serve as acolytes and women as lay readers and chalice bearers. In 1970 the ordination of women as deacons was approved and in 1976 our ordination as priests and bishops. So much attention has been given to the ordination of women that we overlook how much has changed for laywomen. Bishops no longer write letters which begin, "Dear Brethren". We now have nine active and three retired female bishops. Only three bishops will not ordain women as priests nor accept women ordained as priests elsewhere into their dioceses. When Mary Adelia McLeod, the first woman to be a diocesan bishop, was consecrated in Vermont in 1993, the protests went on for 45 minutes. That no longer happens; those who do not approve do not attend. Pockets of resistance are still there, but they are seen as pockets of resistance. Their persistence should surprise no one for we are looking at less than 40 years out of 2,000 years of church history. It is particularly gratifying to me that the churches in South Africa, Kenya, Uganda and Japan and several other African and Asian countries now ordain women as priests; this is no longer simply the will of the Anglo-American churches.

In 1945 there were approximately 40 million Anglican Christians; today they are more than 70 million. That growth has not come because we have converted the heathen of the United States, Canada and the British Isles, but because of the tremendous growth of Christianity in Asia, Africa and the Pacific islands. Foreign missions were one of the great Christian undertakings of the 19th century, and gold, glory and the gospel were usually intertwined. Far too often the missionary had an altogether cozy relationship with the commercial trader and the gunboat captain. But in 1945 all of them packed up their Stars and Stripes and their Union Jacks and went home. They had planted the seeds of deeply rooted indigenous churches; today at the Lambeth Conferences the majority of the bishops are not white and do not speak English as their first language. There are Anglican churches in 160 nations; only the Roman Catholic Church is more widespread throughout the world. Uganda with a large Anglican Church has a far greater claim to be a Christian nation than does the United States; it is estimated that on the average Sunday 90% of baptized Christians there attend church.

The tension and conflicts that are so painfully obvious in 2006 probably should have been expected. We cannot have it both ways—to rejoice in a church that is truly worldwide, but be angry when the churches of Africa and Asia say something with which we disagree. Then West is best, after all. We hear much these days about contextual theology, but often it seems that the only acceptable context is that of liberal intellectuals in Philadelphia and London.

Even the specific issue which threatens to tear the Anglican Communion apart could have been anticipated. When Gene Robinson was elected in New Hampshire, Bishop Chung, the Primate of Southeast Asia, said in expressing his opposition, "God wants a large church." The separation of sexuality and procreation is not welcome in much of the Third World.

In 1930 the Lambeth Conference adopted a resolution saying that contraception and birth control were moral options for Christians, that people should not have children they could not care for,

could not support. The American, Canadian and British bishops introduced and supported the resolution; the missionary bishops from Africa and Asia largely opposed it. One went to King George V and asked him to overturn the resolution, something he could not do. Another bishop refused to attend the closing Eucharist at Westminster Abbey. The parallels to the 1998 Lambeth Conference are obvious. How all this will end, none of us knows, but if the Communion breaks apart and the 38 churches go their separate ways, something of great value will be lost. Many have come together from East and West; will they be able to continue to sit down together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom on earth? No one knows.

Past and present are linked; some of the great movements of the Victorian era continue to shape our church life today, and some of the most significant developments of the 20th century have strong links to the past. Yet we also know that much is different. Secularism is the order of the day; the Protestant hegemony in which the Episcopal Church played a leading role has ended. The United States today is the most religiously diverse nation on earth although Christians are still an overwhelming majority. The end of school prayer and Bible reading reflects that new reality, and some have great difficulty coming to terms with it. The social expectations that once supported religious observance are gone. Sophisticated indifference is the order of the day.

Secularists no longer hide or apologize for their views either in public or in private. There were secular intellectuals and other nonbelievers in the Victorian era, but they knew their limits. Certain things were said only in private. Higher education both public and private is now very secular; universities founded by religious people for both religious and educational purposes now disregard or officially sever those ties. A civil wedding is no longer considered low class. That staunch atheist Sigmund Freud got married in a synagogue; Prince Charles got married in the registry office.

The rise of secularism is probably not the most important change. We do not have the confidence in western civilization of which Christianity is an essential part; we do not have unshaken confidence in the values of the Anglo-American middle classes; we do not fully expect the future to be better than the past as was the case for many people a century ago. The achievements of the 19th century were impressive. Governments became more efficient, but they also became more humane. Brazil abolished slavery in 1888, the last nation to do so. The status of women and children improved substantially, and social reformers accomplished much. Basic literacy in one's native language became the norm in the West. The benefits of the industrial revolution finally began to reach and improve the lives of the working classes. Advances in medicine and public health made an enormous difference for rich and poor alike. For example, smallpox was not eliminated, but that terrible scourge began to be controlled; vaccination worked. The Congress of Vienna, which came at the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, was a peace conference that actually made peace. As the century progressed, there were numerous peace organizations and peace movements; and the British statesman Sir Norman Angell said that war was impossible. He stressed that technology had made weaponry so fearsome and powerful that the victor would suffer as much as the vanquished, and therefore no nation would start a war. The victor would and did suffer as much as the vanquished, but the nations of Europe did it anyway.

It is hard for Americans to appreciate the impact World War I had in Europe. Our involvement was intense, but brief; that was not so in Europe. At the Battle of the Somme in 1916 60,000 men

died the first day, 50,000 the second, and many other battles were little different. The 20th century would be the century of Auschwitz, Hiroshima and the Soviet gulag; of Hitler and Stalin; of Pol Pot in Cambodia; and the genocide in Rwanda. Human beings proved themselves to be fallen creatures; the doctrine of original sin once written off as old fashioned came back to theological importance. The American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr has said that original sin is the only Christian doctrine that can be proven.

As the 21st century begins, we do not know what the future holds for humanity and for Christians. But that has always been true. We are still here; each Sunday we gather and worship God and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as Christians have done for 2,000 years. No other institution from the 1st century survives; we are still here in spite of wars and rumors of wars and 2,000 Caesars. For, in the eloquent words of Revelation 21:5-6, “And he who sat upon the throne said...Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true, and he said to me, ‘It is done’. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.”