

PARTIES, VISIONARIES, INNOVATIONS

William Augustus Muhlenberg and Phillips Brooks and the Growth of the Episcopal Broad Church Movement

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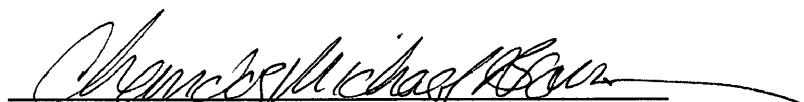
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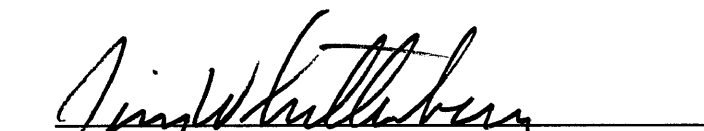
Master of Arts


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For my parents

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ABSTRACT

The nineteenth century was a time of growth and transition in the Episcopal Church. Nearly dead after the American Revolution, it reorganized and rejuvenated itself during a century of religious tumult, becoming by 1900 an influential medium-sized denomination.

Anglicanism had historically been divided into subsets called *church parties*, and the nineteenth-century growth of the Episcopal Church took place in the context of these parties vying for influence within the denomination. The high church highlighted the unique institutions of Anglicanism, while the evangelical party emphasized the necessity for each person to have an individual, sudden, and supernatural experience of conversion. A third party, the Oxford movement, which became influential in the 1840s, underscored Anglicanism's connection with the Roman Catholic Church. Not only did this movement (also called tractarianism) lead to the recovery of a more catholic theology among high church Episcopalians, but it offered liturgical innovations as well. Members of a fourth group, the broad church, rejected the notion of parties altogether. Its adherents claimed that the church must address the intellectual and physical needs of modern people. Members of the broad church wing typically advocated tolerance of all beliefs and open-mindedness about new breakthroughs in science and theology.

During the nineteenth century the broad church grew to overshadow the other parties. The lives of William Augustus Muhlenberg and Phillips Brooks, Episcopal clergymen reared in the evangelical world, demonstrate how this shift occurred in two instances. Not only did the two become broad churchmen themselves, but they also lead other Episcopal clergy toward the broad church.

Muhlenberg, a schoolmaster, innovative rector, and advocate of the poor, influenced many of his students to found schools and hospitals and adopt new liturgical practices. Theologically conservative, Muhlenberg was also ecumenical and socially progressive. He instituted Sunday and day schools, choirs, free meals, a clinic, and an employment society in his New York parish, and he supported various shelters throughout the city.

The sermons of Phillips Brooks, intellectual rector and bishop, were a sensation in Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and London. He taught a new way of thinking—positive, open to new ideas, tolerant of diversity, and adaptable to modernity. Brooks believed that the force of Christ within people made their potential limitless, and he encouraged his influential and wealthy audiences to feel confident in human progress.

The Episcopal Church of today is in some ways a synthesis of Muhlenberg and Brooks. Primarily urban and open-minded, it appeals mainly to society's elites, yet it sees a mandate to reach out to the disenfranchised. In its efforts to be socially relevant, it has sometimes sacrificed orthodox theology. It values toleration and recognizes the need to communicate and cooperate with other churches. The Episcopal Church is indebted to Brooks and Muhlenberg, the pioneers of these trends.

PARTIES, VISIONARIES, INNOVATIONS

**William Augustus Muhlenberg and Phillips Brooks
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CHAPTER ONE

PARTIES

Revolutions in politics, demographics, and science shook the United States during the nineteenth century. But no less important were radical changes in religious belief and practice during those tumultuous hundred years. The Second Great Awakening and the advent of camp meetings inspired new religious fervor. Visionary preachers founded new denominations and sects. And novel interpretations of scripture rocked the religious establishment.

The Episcopal Church, the American descendent of the colonial Church of England, also changed profoundly during the nineteenth century. Its formal services of old-fashioned prayers, its disdain for emotionalism, its hierarchical structure, and its establishment reputation made it the bastion of the upper classes in 1900 as well as in 1800, but innovations and transformations were nonetheless dramatic.

At the opening of the nineteenth century the Episcopal Church had been at its lowest ebb. In the South its membership had declined precipitously, a result of Baptist and Methodist missions among the poorer classes and religious lethargy among the wealthy. In the North, on the other hand, small groups of elites in

New York City, Philadelphia, and other cities had clung to Anglicanism without reaching out to the world beyond the church walls.

Energized by immigration and missions, by 1900 the Episcopal Church had taken its place as one medium-sized American denomination in a dizzying array of religious choices.¹ Its study groups, policy-making bodies, and individual clergy were addressing many questions of profound national importance. Episcopalians were beginning to forsake biblical literalism and legalistic behavioral restrictions; they were seeking to accommodate Darwinism, various forms of biblical criticism, and other modern ideas into their faith.

During the nineteenth century the Episcopal Church was transformed by liberal-minded ministers and lay people who broke traditions and refused to be caught up in the conflicts that deeply divided the Episcopal church. Chief among these reformers were William Augustus Muhlenberg (1796-1877) and Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), who met the physical and mental needs of those around them and preached the timeless gospel message in a context relevant to urban Victorians. Thus, while in 1800 the Episcopal Church had appeared to be on the edge of collapse, a century later it was poised to meet the new challenges of the

¹ Episcopalians in 1900 had the seventh largest number of congregations among American denominational families: Methodists, 53,908 congregations; Baptists, 49,905; Presbyterians, 15,452; Lutherans, 10,787; Roman Catholics, 10,339; Disciples of Christ, 10,298; Episcopalians, 6,264.

Although less precise, statistics for membership also put Episcopalians in seventh place in the order of denominational families: Roman Catholics, approximately 12 million members; Methodists, nearly 5.5 million; Baptists, approximately 4.5 million; Presbyterians and Lutherans, approximately 1.75 million each; Disciples of Christ, nearly 900,000; Episcopalians, slightly more than 700,000. For these and similar statistics for other years, see Edwin Scott Gaustad, *Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (revised ed., New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 43-55, 111.

twentieth century.

* * *

Although its ramifications were profoundly political, the American Revolution was an upheaval for the colonial Church of England as well. In the South, Anglicanism had been established by law in all colonies before 1776; in the North, an influential British missionary organization, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, had paid the salaries of many clergymen. The Revolution brought an end to British financial support, and one by one the new states began to revoke the special legal status of (and tax support for) Anglicanism.

The resultant financial crisis was compounded by an absence of Episcopal leadership. The Church of England, like the Roman Catholic Church, had always been governed by bishops, but no bishops had ever come to the American colonies. American ecclesiastical leaders expressed lofty desires in their 1789 decision to call their church *episcopal* (from the Greek word for “bishop”), but Americans had no bishops of their own. Directed from London since 1607, the Church of England in America was now on its own, facing the future with “a paucity of ideas, models, and metaphors that could hold [the members of] a group together and provide them with a perceived identity and a vision of their role in the new society.”² While many parishes continued to function, state and national

² Charles C. Tiffany, *A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America*, American Church History series, vol. VII (New York: Scribner, 1900), 385; Robert Bruce Mullin, *Episcopal Vision/American Reality: High Church Theology and Social Thought in Evangelical America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 9.

reorganization had to begin at ground level.

The resurrection of the Episcopal Church in the nineteenth century was effected by the rejuvenation of Anglican *church parties* in the new United States. Since the sixteenth century Anglicans had identified themselves according to their opinions on ecclesiastical matters. While the definitions of these amorphous groups have never been official or static, Americans adopted the partisan terminology to explain the wings of their own form of Anglicanism. On both sides of the Atlantic, party conflicts provided a sense of loyalty for individuals within a diverse church.

In England and America, *high church* referred to those who emphasized the institutional and corporate nature of the church. They stressed the significance of the sacraments, and they studied the writers of the early centuries of Christendom (called the “patristic” age) and attempted to apply patristic teachings to their own churches. Most importantly, members of the high church group believed that the apostles of Jesus had established three orders of ministry for the Christian church: bishops, presbyters (or priests), and deacons. According to the high church party, ultimate spiritual authority was vested in bishops, and all true churches must be organized around them.

Although members of the same Church of England, the *low church* party had a very different set of ecclesiastical assumptions. Members of this group believed that the authority of a church comes from the individual members.

The materials from which it is constructed are separate individuals, who have given in their adhesion to Jesus Christ by an avowed act of faith. Having established their Christianity as individuals, each independently of the other, they

draw together because they are like-minded, and band themselves into a society which becomes a Church. It is open to them to constitute this society in whatever fashion they see fit.³

Members of the low church wing usually emphasized preaching and simple worship rather than formal ceremony and the sacraments. They respected their bishops but saw them as administrators and shepherds, not the single essential element of corporate Christianity. While both the high and low church parties disavowed Roman Catholicism, members of the low church movement were more sympathetic to the Reformation and more Calvinist in theology than their high church co-religionists.

In spite of their differences, both the high and low church parties, and the *central church* party that occupied the broad middle ground between the extremes, agreed on a few things—the Bible, the historic creeds, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the Book of Common Prayer. The Bible and the Nicene and Apostles' creeds were the primary documents of Christian belief, but the Thirty-Nine Articles, created during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), were based on a uniquely Anglican interpretation of those historic texts. The Articles set forth the official doctrines of the Reformation Settlement, a balance between the Catholicism of Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII (reigned 1509-1547), and the Calvinism of her brother, Edward VI (reigned 1547-1553).

The Book of Common Prayer was the work of Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury under both Henry VIII and Edward VI. A book of rites

³ S.D. McConnell, *History of the American Episcopal Church* (Milwaukee: Young Churchman, 1916), 173.

for morning and evening prayers, marriages, burials, the eucharist, and other ceremonies, Cranmer's book was a distillation of Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and other liturgies. Its use was required by law after 1559, and in time the Book of Common Prayer became the single most important unifying factor in a national church.

* * *

In the new United States, late eighteenth-century low churchmanship manifested itself in two varieties. On the one hand, ecumenical but *unevangelical* civic leaders like William White (1748-1836), first bishop of Pennsylvania, were the heirs of the English low church party. They de-emphasized the apostolic authority claimed by high churchmen and shunned elaborate ceremony. But they also distanced themselves from the emotionalism associated with the evangelicals, who formed the second subset of the low church party.

Evangelical preachers, such as George Whitefield (1714-1770), John Wesley (1703-1791), and their successors, "emphasized the centrality of the personal experience of salvation as the basis of faith." They saw the world as evil, and human nature itself bent toward hell, and so they understood their mission to be the abolition of human nature, the rejection of the "things of this world," and their replacement with the nature and things of God—self-sufficiency, love of neighbor, wholesome family living, and piety. Their conservative theology relied both on the scriptures and on the Thirty-Nine Articles, but the evangelicals taught that not even belief in the validity of those important documents would save the

soul. Instead, evangelicals demanded that each believer experience a personal conversion in an identifiable way at a precise moment. Their emphasis on post-baptismal awakening in addition to intellectual assent placed Whitefield, Wesley, and other like-minded evangelicals at the forefront of the Great Awakening.⁴

After the war for independence left American Anglicanism friendless, Episcopal evangelicalism was reborn in the midst of the subsequent religious malaise. Ambitious young men and pious matrons worked together to revive the church, and they took their cues from both from British models and from the various conversion-centered religious movements already in the United States.

Both within and outside the Episcopal Church, evangelicalism spread quickly in the 1820s and 1830s. All evangelicals shared the common experience of “new birth,” and, because of this tie, were willing participants in various ecumenical fellowships. They took part in interdenominational Bible, tract, and mission societies and the temperance and abolitionist movements. Richard Channing Moore, bishop of Virginia, even served as president of his state’s branch of the American Bible Society.⁵

⁴ David Hein, “The High Church Origins of the American Boarding School,” in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42:4 (October 1991), 586, quotes the evangelical Stephen H. Tyng: “God has never promised conversion to the Confession of Faith, or to the Thirty-Nine Articles, or to the Westminster Confession.”

See also Stephen H. Applegate, “The Rise and Fall of the Thirty-Nine Articles: An Inquiry into the Identity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States,” in *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 50:4 (December 1981), 411, 413; Richard Rankin, “Bishop Levi S. Ives and High Church Reform in North Carolina,” in *Anglican and Episcopal History* 57:3 (September 1988), 298.

⁵ Kenneth M. Peck, “The Oxford Controversy in America: 1839,” in *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 33:1 (March 1964), 56-57.

Another trait of evangelicalism was that it called on Christians “to renounce all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit and strive to perfect holiness, in the fear of God.” Unless people lived holy lives, the evangelicals said, God would have no pleasure in them, and they no pleasure in God. The “worldly” activities often condemned included dancing, drinking alcoholic beverages, attending the theater or horse races, raising racehorses, cockfighting, playing games of chance (such as cards or dice), dressing lavishly, engaging in idleness and “dissipation,” dueling, spending time with “fashionable” people, and working or traveling on Sundays.⁶

While Episcopal evangelicalism was expanding in the post-Revolutionary period, the high church party was also re-establishing itself. The chief apologist for this group was John Henry Hobart (1775-1830), bishop of New York. He and his followers opposed the evangelical movement, emphasizing instead the historical distinctiveness of the Episcopal Church among the myriad denominations of the United States.

⁶ Charles Minnigerode, *Sermons* (Richmond, Va.: Woodhouse & Parham, 1880), 219; J.F. Hoff, “The Christian Must Be Holy,” in *Plain Sermons for Servants by the Rev. T.T. Castleman and Other Ministers of the Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1851), 202.

The examples of forbidden activities are from T.T. Castleman, “Those Who Are Confirmed Should Give Up All Worldliness,” in *Plain Sermons for Servants*, 404, 405; Devereux Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1806), 20; John Johns, *A Memoir of the Life of the Right Rev. William Meade* (Baltimore: Innes, 1867), 84, 87, 95, 99; William Wilson Manross, *The Episcopal Church in the United States 1800-1840: A Study in Church Life* (New York: AMS, 1967), 187-89; Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, Chicago History of American Religion series, ed. Martin E. Marty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 130; William Meade, *Sermon Delivered at the Consecration of the Right Reverend Stephen Elliott, D.D.* (Washington: J. & G.S. Gideon, 1841), 20; Minnigerode, *Sermons*, 260; Mullin, 79; John Sumner Wood, *The Virginia Bishop: A Yankee Hero of the Confederacy* (Richmond, Va.: Garrett and Massie, 1961), 82.

The high church and the evangelicals agreed on many essentials of faith. Both groups embraced the Bible, the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer. And both claimed the same mission for the church. The high churchman William R. Whittingham (1805-1879) of the General Theological Seminary, who later became bishop of Maryland, wrote in 1829:

Unquestionably, the proper office of a minister of the blessed Gospel is to proclaim salvation to a world lying in wickedness and condemnation; to offer the blessings of redemption to fallen man; to present the atoning blood of Jesus as the only means of reconciliation between sinful mortals and their just and holy Maker.⁷

Neither the high church nor the evangelical party found fault with such an assessment of the church's mission.

Although the two parties agreed on the church's fundamental purpose, the high church vision of the *nature* of the church was profoundly different from that of the evangelicals. High churchmen such as Whittingham based their understanding of ecclesiology on the "covenant-apostolic order argument" of Thomas Bray (1656-1730), the English founder of both the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. Like the Puritans, Bray "believed that God chose whom he wished for salvation, but then offered them a reasonable covenant; if they lived with faith and repentance, God guaranteed salvation." But Bray added a condition to this covenant: He claimed that apostolic succession (the transmission of church

⁷ William R. Whittingham, "Defense of the Worship, Doctrine, and Discipline of the Church," in *Readings from the History of the Episcopal Church*, ed. Robert W. Prichard (Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1986), 90-91.

authority from bishop to bishop over generations) was an indispensable part of it. Because members of churches outside the apostolic succession lacked bishops, they could not have their salvation assured the way Anglicans could.⁸

Evangelical Episcopalians, like other members of the low church party, believed that episcopacy was a biblical and efficient method of church governance. Some, however, doubted whether the apostolic succession was really unbroken from the time of Christ, and many considered the high church emphasis on episcopal authority too exclusive and insufficiently tolerant of other Christian denominations.

On the other hand, Bishop Hobart and his supporters accepted the covenant-apostolic order argument of Thomas Bray. As members of the high church party, the Hobartians looked to the writers of Christendom's first centuries for models for faith and order. In the patristic writings they read about *bishops*—guardians of the faith and successors to the apostles. “The Church [is] . . . a society divinely constituted—its ministry divinely commissioned by God's providence and Holy Spirit, in those three orders that distinguish it as Episcopal,” Hobart wrote. “Union with this Church, as the mystical body of Christ, [is] . . . the divinely prescribed mode of union with its divine Head. . . .” Like other members of the high church party, Hobart and his followers concluded that denominations without bishops were not true churches.⁹

⁸ Prichard, 59, 22, 23 (comments by the editor).

⁹ John Henry Hobart, *The High Churchman Vindicated* (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1826), 16.

Because Hobart idealized the patristic era of Christian history, he desired to teach “primitive” Christian theology as much as possible. Moreover, he and fellow high churchmen discouraged participation by Episcopalians in ecumenical Bible or mission societies, which neither possessed apostolic orders nor taught their necessity. High churchmen also suspected that evangelical Episcopalians were trying to add something spurious—specifically, a post-baptismal conversion experience and a disavowal of secular amusements—to the Gospel and the teachings of the early church.

Repudiating the evangelicals’ insistence on conversion and their strict piety, high churchmen instead taught that personal holiness came about because of a gradual process of sanctification. They saw man as an integral part of nature, the same natural world that God called “good” at its creation and Christ sanctified by his incarnation. Therefore, said Hobart,

Our divine Master surely, who supremely seeks our happiness, cannot forbid those pleasures which unbend the mind without making it effeminate, which gratify the heart without corrupting it. The gentleness and meekness which his Gospel inculcates, will dispose us to enjoy with superior relish all the innocent relaxations of life, and eminently fit us for the pure and virtuous pleasures of social and domestic intercourse.

Incarnational theology could see nothing but absurdity in the condemnation of harmless pleasures like the theater and the ballroom.¹⁰

Both evangelicalism and high churchmanship grew out of the turn-of-the-century doldrums that afflicted much of mainline Protestantism, but by the 1820s

¹⁰ John Henry Hobart, “Sermon XXXI: The Friendship of the World Enmity with God,” in *The Posthumous Works of the Late Right Reverend John Henry Hobart, D.D.* (New York: Swords, Stanford, 1832), II, 415-416; Mullin, 80; Rankin, 299.

both parties were firmly established. While Episcopalians of all persuasions could be found throughout the republic, the high church party had its center in Connecticut and New York. New Yorkers founded the General Theological Seminary in 1822 to teach the doctrines of the apostles as the high church party understood them.

On the other hand, evangelicals were found especially in Ohio, Pennsylvania, parts of New England, and most notably in Virginia, where evangelical bishops Richard Channing Moore (1762-1841), William Meade (1789-1862), and John Johns (1796-1876) led the diocese from 1814 until well after the Civil War. The leading training school for evangelical ministers, Virginia Theological Seminary, was founded in the early 1820s near Alexandria to counteract Hobartianism.

In the late 1830s and 1840s a new church party coalesced in the Episcopal Church. Like the others, this new alignment, called “tractarianism,” “Puseyism,” or “the Oxford movement,” was a British import—in this case, the result of a series of pamphlets published at Oxford. The pamphlets were called *Tracts for the Times*, and within just a few years of their publication, they revolutionized the English and American churches and created a new set of intramural conflicts.

A group of British high church theologians, including Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882), John Henry Newman (1801-1890), and John Keble (1792-1866), began publishing the *Tracts* in 1836. Their goal was to counteract both

evangelicalism and the vestiges of Enlightenment liberalism that had remained in Anglicanism from the eighteenth century:

The English tractarian response was twofold. First of all, it reemphasized the traditional high church claim to apostolic succession. For the tractarians, however, apostolicity took on a new meaning; it became a reminder to Anglicans of their linkage to a purer and more primitive Christianity, and a challenge to recapture something of that earlier apostolic spirit.

Like the earlier high church party, the Oxford movement emphasized the historic episcopate. But like the evangelicals, the tractarians (some of whom had been reared as evangelicals) called for a renewed sense of personal piety.

Tractarianism, like evangelicalism before it, maintained the primacy of feelings: it was a religion of heart over head; and its strong accent on the evocation of emotions such as mystery and awe indicated tractarianism's connection with the larger Romantic movement.

Tractarianism, then, combined the evangelicals' emotional appeal and demand for purity with the Hobartians' emphasis on apostolic succession and the authority of the primitive church. High churchmen tended to embrace Oxford "innovations," but evangelicals hotly refuted them.¹¹

In the United States, the furor over Tractarianism did not begin in earnest until 1839, three years after the original publication of the *Tracts*, when *The Episcopal Recorder*, an evangelical periodical, began to attack them as a substantial step on the road to Roman Catholicism. Later that year, several Episcopal periodicals began waging war. High-church newspapers, such as *The Churchman* of New York City, were at first only cautiously supportive of the *Tracts*, but after attacks by *The Episcopal Recorder*, the *Gambier Observer* (an evangelical newspaper

¹¹ Rankin, 299. See also Peck, who describes high church and evangelical reactions to the *Tracts*.

published at Kenyon College, an Episcopal school in Ohio), and other evangelical publications became more virulent, high churchmen became defensive. Their initial cautious support turned to strident defense of Oxfordism.¹²

Most attacks on tractarianism associated it with Roman Catholicism. Indeed, opposition to the Church of Rome was a longstanding and deeply ingrained bias of Protestantism; nearly all Protestants viewed “papists” with some hostility, and anti-Catholicism permeated the laws of England, most of the American colonies, and the early Republic. For example, until 1835 North Carolina law required holders of public office to uphold “the truth of the Protestant religion,”¹³ and other states and localities had similar restrictions. When tractarians began to experiment with and accept beliefs and practices traditionally associated with Rome, evangelicals balked. The tractarians’ acceptance of monastic orders, their encouragement of formal confession of sins to clergy, their new vestments, and their emphasis on the sacraments were seen as alarmingly similar to Roman Catholic practice.

A twentieth-century researcher, Kenneth M. Peck, suggests that part of the vehement antagonism to “popery,” and, by association, tractarianism, may have come because of a new influx of Roman Catholic immigrants in the late 1830s and 1840s. Many U.S. citizens felt threatened by demographic changes, especially since the newcomers were mostly poor and seemed “un-American.” Americans

¹² See Peck, especially p. 62.

¹³ Rankin, 309.

also felt threatened by the religion of the (mainly Irish) immigrants, who came accompanied by Roman Catholic priests. When Episcopal clergymen also began to adopt innovations derived from Rome, conservatives within the church envisioned their society collapsing. Their worst fears were confirmed when some Episcopal churchmen—including North Carolina’s Bishop Levi S. Ives (1797-1867)—renounced Protestantism altogether and joined the dreaded Roman Catholic communion.¹⁴

Peck also proposes that the deep hostility between evangelicals and tractarians may also have been grounded in a larger socio-political division within American society:

Surely the emphases of revivalism have a number of profound relationships with the dominant Jacksonian democracy of the day. Likewise, the churchly reaction to this revivalism had parallels with the federal unionism of Daniel Webster.

Whiggish conservatives reacted against the political forces of Jacksonian democracy by attempting to strengthen the institutions of the state, Peck explains. Similarly, these same conservatives attempted to moderate the democratizing forces of evangelical revivalism by reinforcing the objective, institutional nature of the church.¹⁵

Within Presbyterianism this conflict led to the Old School/New School schism of 1837, and Congregationalists, Southern Baptists, and Dutch Reformed encountered similar controversies over the relationship between individual and

¹⁴ Peck, 49; Rankin, 317.

¹⁵ Peck, 62.

corporate Christianity. Within the Episcopal Church the dispute played itself out as tractarians, who embraced “objective” Christianity, reacted against evangelicals, who placed more emphasis on the conversion of one soul than on the traditions, history, and institutions of corporate religion.¹⁶

The post-Civil War period was an era of many profound changes, and the development of science as a source of authority rivaling the scriptures dealt a severe blow to Episcopal evangelicalism. Cosmopolitan, relatively well-educated Episcopalians in the North were even more powerfully affected by scientific discovery than were rural Southerners, who faced many of the new ideas from Europe only indirectly.

Science had not always been perceived as antithetical to Christianity. Indeed, since the time of Newton, Protestants had noted parallels between nature (the divine demonstration of natural law) and the scriptures (which revealed spiritual law). “The old order of American Protestantism was based on the interrelationship of faith, science, the Bible, morality, and civilization,” historian George M. Marsden claims. The discovery of dinosaur fossils began to upset this partnership during the nineteenth century, but science proved extremely controversial after 1859, when Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* first appeared. He and others theorized that the diversity of species was the result of an undirected process called “natural selection,” and even humans themselves were

¹⁶ Peck, 56-57, 61.

products of biological evolution. That the presence of a divine being was not an essential part of this development proved scandalous.¹⁷

These new ideas deeply divided Christians. Many feared and shunned the new scientific postulations, which so clearly contradicted their literal reading of the Bible. Others, however, accepted the role of science as a source of authority separate from and equal to the scriptures, and they attempted to reconcile the Bible with rationalism and empirical discovery.

Because in some cases science and scripture could not both be true—for example, because natural selection was not compatible with a six-day creation—a new set of rules for interpreting the scriptures emerged near the end of the nineteenth century. Facing vocal opposition and even ecclesiastical heresy trials, theological liberals armed with European ideas fought for and gained a following within the established denominations, and not least within the Episcopal Church. During the course of the century, Americans had developed a tradition of allowing all people to practice religion according to the dictates of their own consciences. But this liberty had traditionally been exercised in the context of revivalistic religion, and most sect leaders claimed the infallible Bible as their own source of authority. Now this freedom of religious expression was turned on its head: Once taught from the pulpit, new interpretations of the scriptures—demythologization and textual criticism, for example—eventually caught on among the laity, too.

One historian has suggested that evangelicalism was rendered impotent

¹⁷ See George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 11-21, especially 17.

once people stopped believing in the “Augustinian anthropology.”¹⁸ Evangelical Protestants within all denominations appealed to the sinner’s perceived need for personal salvation. While preachers designed emotional sermons to awaken or enhance awareness of this need, some kind of assent to the Augustinian doctrine of original sin was essential to the evangelicals’ message. Without teaching that the unconverted were destined to damnation, the evangelicals would not have convinced their hearers of their need for an instantaneous and miraculous work of “saving grace.”

Darwin’s explanation of human origins, combined with increasing affluence and a belief in “progress,” allowed doubts about original sin to creep into many minds. The idea of progress connected Darwinism to innovations and improvements in manufacturing, marketing, transportation and distribution of goods, education, medicine, architecture, and social welfare. Darwin and his followers taught that humans were the most evolved of all creatures. At the end of the nineteenth century, human beings—the “highest” animals—were making their physical and social environment better in virtually every area of life. To many the need for “salvation” seemed less compelling as day-to-day life became easier and medical improvements made premature deaths less frequent.

The broad church party, which grew out of declining evangelicalism, addressed the perceived needs of such post-Augustinians. Called “broad” because

¹⁸ McConnell, 316-17.

its members rejected both the low and high wings of the Episcopal Church, it was the heir of early nineteenth-century theological liberalism. Broad churchmen accepted the European theology that was beginning to infiltrate the American religious consciousness, but they were not especially interested in theological constructions per se. Members of the broad church party believed in intellectual self-determination and toleration, and they were more interested in asking questions than in defending timeworn beliefs. They were seekers after truth but suspicious of dogmatism.¹⁹

The broad church was and continues to be notoriously hard to define. Found mostly in northeastern cities, its members disliked party names altogether, only reluctantly accepting their appellation. Furthermore, they were typically independent spirits. Ecumenically and liturgically they belonged to the low church camp—they were not evangelicals, but they welcomed relations with other denominations and played down the distinctiveness of Anglican ritual and ecclesiology. Many were sympathetic to the Unitarian ethos of rationality, skepticism, and tolerance. Some questioned the literalness of the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and other biblical miracles. Others continued to believe much of evangelical theology, but even these affirmed that conventional piety must be accompanied by an effort to meet the intellectual, philosophical, and social needs of the changing world. Members of the broad church party were united by the conviction that the church must become more relevant to the culture at large,

¹⁹ Edward Clowes Chorley, *Men and Movements in the American Episcopal Church* (New York: Scribner, 1946), 284-86, 295, 304.

addressing pertinent social and ethical questions of the day.²⁰

The anti-authoritarian intellectualism of the broad church movement proved to be exceptionally appealing to younger Episcopalians after the Civil War. Many young men agreed with William Wilberforce Newton (1843-1914), the son of an evangelical clergyman, who found his father's party "inadequate to the mental and spiritual necessities of the hour." He and his peers agreed that broad churchmanship was far more appealing.²¹

The growth of the broad church party, however, was not effected *primarily* through pamphlets, periodicals, biographies, or other impersonal media. Broad churchmen were not proselytizers. They did use those media, but they also preached in churches, taught in schools, founded hospitals, organized congresses, lectured at meetings, and wrote letters, and many people found their optimism, ambition, and tolerance very attractive. Two of the most inviting and interesting characters in this drama of transition were William Augustus Muhlenberg and Phillips Brooks. They inhabited different spheres, and they reached different audiences with the message of broad churchmanship. But their large circle of influence, especially among members of the younger generation, earn for them the title of fathers of broad churchmanship.

²⁰ Chorley, 285; James Thayer Addison, *The Episcopal Church in the United States 1789-1931* (New York: Scribner, 1951), 250; also see Alexander V.G. Allen, *Freedom in the Church: Or, The Doctrine of Christ* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), who questions many cherished evangelical doctrines.

²¹ William Wilberforce Newton, *Yesterday with the Fathers* (New York: Cochrane, 1910), 164.

CHAPTER TWO

VISIONARIES

Nathan O. Hatch has written comprehensively about “the democratization of American Christianity” during the nineteenth century. In his 1989 book by that name, he has presented two closely related arguments. First, he states that an “individualization of conscience” followed the war for independence. The common people of the United States refused to be ruled by elites, either political or intellectual. Demanding the right to self-determination in every sphere, they willingly discarded politicians, bureaucrats, and even ministers who displeased them.

This quest for intellectual and religious independence resulted in both fractious sectarianism and the development of what Hatch calls the “sovereignty” of the audience. Most Americans were uneducated and unsophisticated, and they demanded simplicity and directness from their religious leaders as well. For most populist Christians of the nineteenth century, the Bible was the sole source of direction for matters of faith and conduct, and such leaders as circuit-riding Methodist bishop Francis Asbury, Mormon founder Joseph Smith, and Adventist prophet William Miller appealed to the masses in part because their deference to

the revealed Word of God reinforced their charisma. In the end, each American believed that he or she had the right not only of political freedom, but of intellectual and religious liberty as well.²²

The wave of “democratization” that marked popular religion in the nineteenth century almost completely bypassed the Episcopal Church, however. South of New England, Episcopalianism had been an elite establishment from the very beginning of English settlement. The rich and powerful were born into its ranks, and social climbers found their way to its respectable pews. Even in the Puritan and Unitarian northeast, Anglicanism became a genteel option for the wealthier members of society in the late eighteenth century.

In this church made up of society’s elite, a reverence for order and position predominated. Clinging to hierarchy, formal institutions, and liturgical conformity, Episcopalians looked with disdain at the egalitarianism, informality, and showmanship of the Mormons, Baptists, Methodists, and others. While those sects de-emphasized everything that implied that ordained elites were closer to God than the mass of humanity, Episcopalians, the aristocratic counterculture, attended to their bishops and repeated their Elizabethan prayers.

Like other denominations, the Episcopal Church underwent significant changes during the nineteenth century. Unlike other churches, however, the changes within Episcopalianism were largely wrought from the top down. The Oxford movement, which engendered the great churchmanship conflict of the

²² See *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

1840s, was itself the work of a few ivory-tower English dons. Likewise, the broad church, which revolutionized late-nineteenth-century Anglicanism, was the product of influential ministers—sons of wealthy and established families—who coaxed conservative Episcopalians down the road to innovation.

Much of the broad church movement's appeal, and much of its influence, can be traced to two men, Phillips Brooks and William Augustus Muhlenberg. Both of these clergymen were reared in conservative low church parishes, both became leaders in the broad church party, and both were personally transformed in different ways and through different methods. Each was a well-loved minister during his own life, and each nurtured a generation of followers—presbyters, bishops, missionaries, and schoolmasters. An examination of the lives of these two men may help to explain why and how the broad church was finally able to supersede evangelicalism and overshadow the Oxford movement.

William Augustus Muhlenberg has always been a source of consternation for those who like to identify Episcopalians by party label. He named himself a “Liberal Catholic”;²³ others called him a tractarian.²⁴ One commentator calls him an “Evangelical presbyter of distinction” and “the first Ritualist in the Church” in the same paragraph.²⁵ In a church marked by “the general

²³ Chorley, 200.

²⁴ Alvin W. Skardon, *Church Leader in the Cities: William Augustus Muhlenberg* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 189.

²⁵ Chorley, 58.

tendency . . . never to start anything new,” Muhlenberg was “always starting something new.”²⁶ He is rightly called “a reformer and innovator,”²⁷ but he was also a man of conservative morals and theology. Perhaps his willingness to try new things, coupled with his eclectic tastes, is what earns him a place “among the pioneers” of the broad church.²⁸

Muhlenberg was born in Philadelphia and grew up under the influential leadership of Bishop William White. White was the longest lived and best loved of the first four Episcopal bishops in America—neither emotional nor evangelistic, yet fiercely ecumenical and extraordinarily civic-minded. Muhlenberg admired Bishop White, and within ten days of receiving his A.B. with honors from the University of Pennsylvania, he had expressed to the bishop his desire for ordination in the Episcopal Church.²⁹

As Episcopal seminaries were then nonexistent, Muhlenberg was trained using the apprenticeship method. Visiting the sick, writing essays, and reading and reciting from theological books took up his time as a candidate for the ministry. Named an assistant at Philadelphia’s United Parish of Christ, St. Peters, and St. James, of which White was rector in conjunction with his duties as bishop of Pennsylvania, Muhlenberg became very active in the parish. He founded a

²⁶ James Thayer Addison, *The Episcopal Church in the United States 1789-1931* (New York: Scribner, 1951), 164.

²⁷ Addison, 169.

²⁸ Chorley, 297.

²⁹ Anne Ayres, *The Life and Work of William Augustus Muhlenberg, Doctor in Divinity* (5th ed., New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1894), 38.

Sunday school and a Bible class for young men, and he attempted some minor reforms in the liturgy.³⁰

Upon ordination, the young deacon was called to St. James's Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Here he became a reformer in education and liturgics, fields that interested him throughout life. He again established a Sunday school, and here he also built a church schoolhouse and helped to establish a public school in that city. He also set out writing hymns. Muhlenberg's conservative mentor-bishop considered the expansion of the hymnal an unnecessary novelty—it was then bound as part of the Book of Common Prayer, an addendum of metered Psalms and only 57 hymns. But the young clergyman was confident, like his contemporary William Meade in Virginia, that new and relevant hymns would both beautify and edify church services.³¹

For the rest of his life Muhlenberg was busy with other new projects. In 1826 he was elected rector of St. George's Parish in Flushing, New York. Two years later he had established there the Flushing Institute, a school for boys, and eight years after that he founded St. Paul's College. In 1848 he moved to New York City to begin a pastorate at the innovative Church of the Holy Communion; five years later he was planning the construction of St. Luke's Hospital, having already established a magazine called *The Evangelical Catholic*. In 1866

³⁰ Ayres, 41 ff.

³¹ Addison, 164-65; Ayres, 59-61; Jane Rasmussen, *Musical Taste as a Religious Question in Nineteenth-Century America*, Studies in American Religion series, vol. 20 (Lewison, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1986), 123; Skardon, 33.

Muhlenberg began the last great project of his life, St. Johnland, a Long Island orphanage, vacation spot, and retirement center for New York's urban working poor. Although this was not his most successful venture, Muhlenberg loved St. Johnland, and when he died in 1877, he was buried on its grounds.

Phillips Brooks was perhaps the best-known preacher of his day. Like Muhlenberg, he remained unmarried throughout life. But unlike that ambitious educator, Brooks started no great movements, reformed nothing, founded nothing. Instead, he was an orator, a well-traveled intellectual, and a devoted pastor who for two decades was the unassailable religious authority of Massachusetts.

Brooks was born in Boston, the scion of two old and wealthy Puritan families. At the time of his birth, his father was a secular-minded Unitarian, his mother a conservative Congregationalist. As a compromise the family became Episcopalian in 1839, attending St. Paul's Church in Boston, where in 1842 Dr. Alexander Hamilton Vinton (1807-1881) became rector. Like Brooks, this imposing evangelical became a broad churchman in later life, and the two remained close confidants until Vinton's death.

After graduation from Harvard in 1855, Brooks began a brief and unsuccessful stint as a teacher at his alma mater, Boston's Latin School. However, his rambunctious charges soon proved that he was no disciplinarian, and after a few months the school's headmaster asked the timid new instructor to resign. As

yet unsure what his calling in life would be, Phillips called on the president of Harvard for advice. The president encouraged him to become a clergyman, and Brooks brought up this counsel to his parents and then his rector. Dr. Vinton suggested the Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary near Alexandria, Virginia, probably hoping that a concentrated dose of evangelical piety would be good for Phillips, who had not yet been confirmed in the church or even made a profession of conversion. Thus, almost by accident, Phillips Brooks soon found himself at the little school on the hill overlooking the Potomac.³²

“I shall never forget my first experience of a divinity school,” he said in an address at Yale in 1877:

I had never been at a prayer-meeting in my life. The first place I was taken to at the seminary was the prayer-meeting; and never shall I lose the impression of the devoutness with which those men prayed. . . . On the next day I met some of those same men at a Greek recitation. . . . Their whole way showed that they had not learnt their lessons; that they had not got hold of the first principles of hard, faithful, conscientious study.³³

The fervency of his classmates’ devotion awed Brooks, but he was put off by their academic ineptitude and their “amateur, premature preaching.” His ambivalence extended to his feelings about his physical surroundings and the Southerners he met. Although fascinated by the city of Washington, Brooks called the town of Alexandria a “little mudhole” and stereotyped Virginians as “wretched, shiftless, uninteresting, lazy, deceitful.”

³² Alexander V.G. Allen, *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1901), I, 122n., 142.

³³ Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching Delivered Before the Divinity School of Yale College in January and February, 1877* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1877), 44.

Since Brooks found his fellow students intellectually unstimulating, he generally avoided them. “I live almost entirely by myself, see little or nothing of the other students,” he wrote to his parents shortly after his arrival at Alexandria late in 1856. He seems to have been generally unhappy throughout his time at the seminary, for he complained constantly of isolation, poor teachers, and the “degrading” institution of slavery. Brooks even considered transferring to Andover Seminary in order to return to the familiarity of his home state.³⁴

As no alternatives seemed to work out, however, Brooks continued at the Virginia Seminary. Spurning both fellow students and teachers, he turned to his books for comfort. His professors required him to read the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New Testament in Greek, and the church fathers in Latin, but Philo, Goethe, Bacon, Coleridge, Jerome and Augustine were his extracurricular companions.³⁵

Brooks’s fellow students at the seminary were more inclined to prayer and preaching than classical literature. “He heard much in the Virginia Seminary of the love of souls as the motive of the Christian minister,” writes Brooks’s friend and biographer Alexander V.G. Allen (1841-1908). “It was the motto of the Evangelical school. It was now becoming the motive of his own life.”

But Brooks put a new twist on this theme of “love of souls.” He argued that “before the human soul could be loved, it must be known,” and he set out to

³⁴ Allen, *Life and Letters*, I, 151; Alexander V.G. Allen, *Phillips Brooks 1835-1893* (single volume abridgment of *Life and Letters*; New York: E.P. Dutton, 1907), 40-57; see esp. 40, 42-43.

³⁵ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 62-64.

know the soul by immersing himself in the writings of the great thinkers of all ages.³⁶ He had already turned the corner from classic evangelicalism to broad churchmanship.

While reading, Brooks the student kept elaborate and detailed journals of his own musings. These “note-books” display the breadth of his interest in the human condition. “He was meditating upon,” says Allen,

. . . the mountains, the rocks, and their crevices, the ocean, the waves, the tide, . . . the phenomena in the life of man, his toil, his suffering, his evil and sin; but the aspiration also,—the hunger and the thirst for good; . . . the cares of business, country lanes, the flowers, the sabbath bells, the churches; the Christian festivals . . . the roll of past centuries, the great works of the past, the hopes of the present, human progress, its faith, its hopes and fears.³⁷

Here, consoled by his books in the isolation of the Virginia countryside, Brooks nurtured the intellectualism that was later to make him the darling of the educated Episcopalians of Philadelphia and Boston. Here too, only a few miles from Washington on the eve of the Civil War, he cultivated an interest in politics that was later to blossom into unqualified Republicanism.

On July 10, 1859, at the age of 23, a newly ordained Phillips Brooks preached his first sermon as rector of the Church of the Advent in Philadelphia. He proved an adequate preacher, and his new congregation appreciated him and asked him to remain at the end of his three-month probation. Brooks found that he enjoyed the life of a clergyman, and although he did not find sermon-writing

³⁶ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 81.

³⁷ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 77.

easy, he took great interest both in his studies and in parish life.³⁸

As his reputation as a preacher grew, however, the little Church of the Advent could not keep him, and after two years Brooks moved across town to the larger Church of the Holy Trinity. He remained there, his fame as a speaker growing, until 1869, when he accepted an invitation to return to his native city as rector of Trinity Church, “the centre and home of Episcopal traditions and prestige” in Boston.³⁹ From that year until 1891, when he was elected bishop of Massachusetts, Brooks enjoyed an enviable life: an expansive town house in which to study and entertain visitors; frequent visits to England and the Continent (and audiences with Tennyson, Gladstone, and Queen Victoria, among others⁴⁰); many social engagements; voyages to California, Japan, India, and Palestine; honorary degrees from Harvard and Oxford; the adoration of the elites of New England, New York, Philadelphia, and London. In return he preached frequently, often overtiring himself with his rapid-fire delivery, which could be heard by thousands of congregants even in an era before public-address systems.

Both the few evangelicals who remained the Episcopal Church in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the emerging ritualist (or Anglo-Catholic) party harbored some questions about Brooks’s theological orthodoxy, for he consorted with Unitarians and refused to state unequivocally his views on some

³⁸ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 107-08.

³⁹ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 231.

⁴⁰ [William Wilberforce Newton], *The Child and the Bishop* (Boston: J.G. Cupples, 1894), 65, 74.

biblical miracles. Nevertheless, he was elected bishop of Massachusetts in April 1891 and consecrated on October 14. Fifteen short months later he died after a brief illness, to the surprise and consternation of many friends on both sides of the Atlantic. Some, such as his associate William Wilberforce Newton, later hinted that his intimates had known that he was “very tired and worn” before becoming bishop and afflicted by “infirmities and besetments” during his short episcopacy. However, another confidant, Bishop Thomas M. Clark (1812-1903), claimed that a month before Brooks’s death nothing indicated that his demise was immanent. In any case, lack of rest, combined with obesity (he admitted to weighing 300 pounds), probably contributed to his inability to fight the fatal illness.⁴¹

Seven bishops, the governor of Massachusetts, the mayor of Boston, hundreds of Harvard students, many state legislators, and thousands of others mourned for Brooks at his Trinity Church funeral, and thousands more stood in the square outside waiting for the open-air memorial service held afterwards. The busy city stood still—the Stock Exchange was closed, and many of Boston’s businessmen shut their doors for the day—to honor a man known for his preaching and loved for his humanity.⁴²

The selection of Muhlenberg and Brooks as pioneers of the broad church

⁴¹ [Newton], *The Child and the Bishop*, 83; Newton, *Yesterday with the Fathers*, 181; Thomas M. Clark, *Reminiscences* (2nd ed., New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1895), 206; William Lawrence, *Life of Phillips Brooks*, Creative Lives series, ed. Harold E.B. Speight (New York: Harper, 1930), 118.

⁴² Clark, *Reminiscences*, 209. For the complete description of both his death and burial, see Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 639-646.

has two bases. First, their lives tell the story of the transformation that was taking place in the Episcopal Church at large. Second, they were popular men who each encouraged a generation of followers to carry on the mantle that they had taken up. They were liaisons between two movements, evolving evangelists who educated their own disciples in the ways of broad churchmanship.

Both Muhlenberg and Brooks were reared in firmly Protestant environments. They were familiar with churches notable for the absence of “Romish” ritual and mystery; they were trained under the influence of venerable and conservative men who expounded the traditional and orthodox teachings of the English Reformation. Yet their lives took vastly different paths. Both Muhlenberg and Brooks moved away from their conservative roots, although in different ways.

Brooks, on the one hand, evolved intellectually. He remained skeptical of ritual throughout life. The new Trinity Church built for him on Boston’s Copley Square after the old structure burned was not designed in the then-popular Gothic style, with lofty spires and pointed arches evoking the mysteries of medieval Roman Catholicism, but instead in the heavy and earth-bound Romanesque.⁴³ Brooks’s parishes in Philadelphia and Boston were never havens of advanced ritual; instead, Brooks addressed his parishioners’ souls in typically Protestant fashion—through the spoken word.

Unlike his evangelical forebears, however, Brooks became more and more

⁴³ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 287. According to [Newton], *The Child and the Bishop*, 71, the church was erected without outstanding debt.

intellectually open throughout life. He made contacts with Buddhists and Moslems, liberal German theologians and American revivalists. He invited Unitarians to the communion table. And he rejected the evangelicals' dogmatism and behavioral restrictions.

Although one commentator has contended that Brooks continued "the great tradition of evangelical conviction,"⁴⁴ Brooks certainly altered the *message* of traditional evangelicalism. "God is good and man is good," he announced in a sermon published near the end of his life, "and as man becomes more good, he becomes not merely more like God, but more himself. As he becomes more godly, he becomes more manly too." Elsewhere Brooks says that even those who know nothing about the divinity of Jesus or who deny traditional church doctrines can be Christians if they follow Christ.⁴⁵ Such teachings as these were *not* consonant with the orthodoxies of evangelicalism, but instead echoed the Unitarian thinking that was influential at Harvard and in New England intellectual circles. Far from his conservative rearing, Brooks had become at his maturity a champion of theological and intellectual freedom for Christians.

On the other hand, William Augustus Muhlenberg moved in a complementary direction during his long life. He never gave up the theology of the evangelical party, but he did show himself to be a pioneer in the social and

⁴⁴ Jerome F. Politzer, "Theological Ideas in the Preaching of Phillips Brooks," in *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 33:2 (June 1964), 157.

⁴⁵ Phillips Brooks, "The Light of the World," in *"The Light of the World" and Other Sermons* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1891), 13; Phillips Brooks, "The Christ in Whom Christians Believe," in *Addresses* (New York and Boston: H.M. Caldwell, n.d.), 131.

liturgical worlds. Like Brooks, he had an ecumenical consciousness, but Muhlenberg was more interested in adopting the best new ideas of the ritualist movement into evangelicalism than in sharing ideas with Hindu ascetics. By founding an order of Protestant “sisters” and celebrating communion weekly, he blurred the distinctions between high and low Episcopalianism. By founding a hospital and a retirement/vacation home for the poor, he showed his concern for social justice. By establishing a school and a college, he trained others to carry on his ideas. If for nothing else, Muhlenberg was influential because a generation of religious leaders began to think that the church had more to offer people than pious lectures, Bible study, and weekly services of morning prayer.

Muhlenberg and Brooks were influential men because they were popular men. Muhlenberg, for one, seems to have had a magnetic personality. Romantic Victorians used words like “radiancy,” “heavenly,” “marvelously impressive,” and “old school . . . courtesy” to describe him. In his old age, magazines and newspapers commented on his sanctity and generosity, claiming that he was “an ornament to the human race” who proved the contemporary relevance of the Christian church.⁴⁶

Not only was Muhlenberg well liked, but he was a remarkable fund-raiser. Spending his life soliciting financial support for his various charities, he met with success for as long as his voice could carry his appeals to gathered crowds. The Astor, Vanderbilt, Morgan and Roosevelt fortunes contributed to St. Luke’s

⁴⁶ Skardon, 257; Ayres, 491.

Hospital and St. Johnland, but Muhlenberg's sermons encouraged broad-based popular support for these and other projects as well.

On the negative side, overdependence on the personal appeal of one man may have weakened the long-term viability of the institutions he sought to support. St. Johnland, for example, suffered from a devastating drop in donations after an enfeebled and elderly Muhlenberg was no longer able to solicit contributions personally. Likewise, St. Paul's College survived only a few years after its founder resigned. Although almost none of the charitable works he established in the middle nineteenth century have remained influential in the twentieth, his programs were well suited to his own time. The loyalty of his personal contacts, coupled with his earnest addresses made to a public becoming aware of new urban difficulties, made Muhlenberg's schools and charities successful while he was at the helm. But his institutions, like the hymns he penned, were limited by the same generation that popularized them.⁴⁷

To say that Muhlenberg's projects did not remain viable after his death is not, however, to belittle his role in Episcopal history. Influential parents trusted him with the education of their sons, in spite of his innovative methods. Indeed, the self-proclaimed Evangelical Catholic continued to speak long after his death through the voices of his proteges. "The students of Muhlenberg," notes biographer Alvin W. Skardon, "were . . . the chief instruments in his expanding influence. . . . His most notable achievement was that he profoundly influenced

⁴⁷ Skardon, 259; Ayres, 180. Two Muhlenberg hymns were included in the Episcopal hymnal of 1916; none remain in *The Hymnal 1982*.

a group of younger men who were to play an important part in the life of the Episcopal church in the years after the Civil War.”⁴⁸

Chief among these Muhlenberg disciples was James Barrett Kerfoot, student at the Flushing Institute and later chaplain at St. Paul’s College, founder of St. James College (now a secondary school) in Maryland, and first bishop of Pittsburgh. Another Flushing alumnus was James Lloyd Breck, founder of the semi-monastic Nashotah House seminary in Wisconsin, while an influential St. Paul’s student was Henry Augustus Coit, first rector of St. Paul’s School in Concord, New Hampshire. Two others of Muhlenberg’s students—Gregory Thurston Bedell and William H. Odenheimer—became bishops of Ohio and New Jersey, respectively. Still other “Muhlenberg men” were ministers Edward A. Washburn, Edwin Harwood, John Cotton Smith, Heber Newton, William Wilberforce Newton, and Bishop Thomas Hubbard Vail; and laymen John Jay (grandson of the Federalist), Samuel D. Babcock (president of the New York City Chamber of Commerce), and Charles Key (son of Francis Scott Key).

Muhlenberg influenced all these men, but not all in the same way. Bishop Bedell, for example, followed in Muhlenberg’s doctrinal footsteps, becoming “a leader of the most extreme wing of the Low Church party.” His episcopal counterpart William Odenheimer was more strongly influenced by his mentor’s sympathy with the Oxford movement; he became a confirmed Anglo-Catholic. Kerfoot, Coit, and Breck established schools using Muhlenberg’s own St. Paul’s

⁴⁸ Skardon, 33, 265.

College as a model of how evangelical doctrine might be combined with the regular and intimate life of a religious order. Both Bishop Odenheimer and still another Flushing Institute alumnus, John Ireland Tucker, imitated their teacher by becoming popular church musicians.⁴⁹

Just as Muhlenberg contributed to the growth of the broad church by embracing the social gospel while relaxing the walls between evangelicalism and ritualism, so did his supporters continue in this vein. Members of all factions within the church called him their spiritual mentor, and, partly because of Muhlenberg's influence, classifying an Episcopalian as a member of a particular party became more difficult. He "believed that Christians of widely different theological opinions could all be united in one church" without factional battles—a shockingly innovative tenet during his own life, but one that was soon to catch hold in American Protestantism. He coupled this belief in the "comprehensive character of the church" with a deep interest in the social welfare of the urban dwellers who lived around him.⁵⁰ These two fundamentals of Muhlenbergian thought, passed on to many loyal proteges, produced churchmen who were concerned about the spiritual, moral, *and* physical welfare of Americans and who believed that the church, as an inclusive institution, could do something to improve the condition of the world.

⁴⁹ Skardon, 90-92, 97, 99, 265.

⁵⁰ Skardon, 265.

Muhlenberg was well loved and influential, but Phillips Brooks was possibly the closest thing the Episcopal clergy has ever had to a genuine celebrity (except for Bishop James Pike, the twentieth-century television preacher). Like Muhlenberg, Brooks was a prominent figure for many young ministers, but he also developed a remarkable following among lay people.

At first glance Brooks seems an unlikely candidate for such terrific popularity. He evidently had no special dramatic flair; he was a natural loner and a great lover of books. His listeners commented that he spoke extraordinarily quickly (up to 213 words per minute), and some had to strain to understand his words. “He had no arts of elocution,” his friend Bishop Clark commented, “but rather trampled them underfoot. . . . But he did attain that at which eloquence aims—the rapt attention of crowded congregations.” Somehow this preacher who “defied every rule of oratory” became immensely popular.⁵¹

Although his old mentor Dr. Vinton thought that “a great part of his power lay in his voice,” it may be closer to the truth to say that he became well known as a preacher *in spite of* his voice. The real draw was not the style but the content of his messages. “The old gospel was in his sermons,” comments biographer Allen, “but it came with a new meaning and force, stripped of the old conventionalities of expression.”⁵²

⁵¹ Clark, *Reminiscences*, 213; Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 122, 547. A laudatory work published in tribute to Brooks after his death, *Phillips Brooks: The Man, the Preacher, and the Author* (Boston: John K. Hasting, 1893), devotes several pages to descriptions of his rapid delivery and includes the statistics of 194 and 213 w.p.m. See pp. 164-169.

⁵² Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 106, 122.

His enthusiastic hearers were members of all ages and both sexes. Businessmen and housewives jockeyed for seats at his noon Lenten lectures in 1890, the men complaining that they were unable to get seats because their employment prevented them from arriving early, as the women could. That same year, Brooks chose to exclude women entirely from a series of lunch-hour lectures at Trinity Church, New York, in order to accommodate men, who, unlike middle- and upper-class housewives, did not usually attend weekday religious services. Businessmen filled every seat of that immense Wall Street edifice—an amazing attendance considering that men were stereotyped as less inclined to religion than women.⁵³

Yet another typically irreligious group which embraced Brooks's preaching was college students, and several times during his career he declined appointments to prestigious academic positions—the presidency of Kenyon College (which had been founded as an evangelical institution), the professorship of church history at the Philadelphia Divinity School, a provostship at the University of Pennsylvania, and even the chair of Christian ethics at his alma mater, Harvard. After refusing this full-time appointment, he did accept a position as one of Harvard's part-time chaplains. In addition, he preached regularly at chapel services of the Episcopal Theological Seminary, also in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where many students of both institutions came to hear him speak.⁵⁴

⁵³ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 545-46.

⁵⁴ Brooks nearly accepted the Harvard position. See Allen, *Life and Letters*, II, 404ff., for a description of his involvement with Harvard and the seminary in Cambridge.

Brooks's appeal to the working classes does not appear to have been quite so strong as it was to the educated elite, however. He did publicly express his desire that "the poor and the rich [might] live together in more cordial brotherhood," and Bishop Clark writes that once Brooks preached to a crowd gathered from the slums. Moreover, Allen claims that Brooks ministered "to all classes of men" and that "he . . . bridged the gulf which divides the people."⁵⁵ But seldom did Brooks actually reach out to those beyond the Episcopalian/Unitarian establishment. Well-read, cosmopolitan, reared and educated in an atmosphere of leisure, Brooks was too interested in answering the great questions of life to be bothered with the problems of poverty or the needs of immigrants. He did leave room in the new Trinity Church on Copley Square for non-pledging parishioners, but the poor were relegated to the expansive galleries, while pew renters occupied the fashionable ground-floor seats. To be sure, he preached sermons about the Christian responsibility to help the poor, but the messages themselves were mostly directed toward successful people.⁵⁶

Although dozens of examples might demonstrate Brooks's amazing popularity, like Muhlenberg his most important legacy may have been the group of younger men who surrounded him. They defended him from detractors

⁵⁵ Phillips Brooks, *Phillips Brooks Year Book: Selections from the Writing of the Rt. Rev. Phillips Brooks, D.D.*, by H.L.S. and L.H.S. (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1893), 364-65; Clark, *Reminiscences*, 217; Allen, *Life and Letters*, II, 402.

⁵⁶ For an example of Brooks exhorting his hearers to help the poor, see the sermon "My Brother's Keeper," pp. 115-132 in Phillips Brooks, *The Law of Growth and Other Sermons* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1902).

during his lifetime and carried on his ideas after his untimely death at age 57. While Muhlenberg's followers were mostly students at one of the schools he founded, Brooks found a convenient vehicle for discussing his ideas with younger clergy in an informal monthly gathering, the Clericus Club. The society had no bylaws or real organization, but was instead a regular forum for optimistic (and mostly young) Episcopal clergymen to discuss the relationship of science, literary criticism, and faith. They did not, as others might, reminisce about the past, but they looked forward with happy anticipation.

The Clericus Club had begun in Philadelphia about 1868, but within a year of Brooks's move to Boston he began a similar association there. Brooks himself naturally assumed the leadership of the group, which eventually met exclusively at his house. In Boston, the members at first limited their number to 20, but they later raised the ceiling to 25, and then 33. Among the founding members of the club was Alexander Allen, the Brooks biographer, who claimed that

it formed a prominent feature in [Brooks's] life, as it surely did in the lives of all its other members. Those who had the privilege of meeting him there saw him and heard him in familiar and yet impressive ways which will never be forgotten.⁵⁷

These proteges inherited from their mentor a positive view of the world and the sense that Christianity could be relevant to modern men and women. They embraced scientific and theological advances; they embodied the generous and forward-looking spirit of the broad church.

The Philadelphia Clericus Club also spawned an offshoot in New York,

⁵⁷ [Newton], *The Child and the Bishop*, 53-55; Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 216, 255.

sponsored by Edward A. Washburn, rector of Calvary Church. These three groups, which nurtured the broad-church clergy of the three most influential cities in American Episcopalianism, cooperated to organize the first Episcopal Church Congress in the fall of 1874. The Congress was patterned after similar conferences in England which had begun in 1860.

In the United States the Church Congress begun as a protest against the irrelevancy and inaction of the General Convention. It brought together broad churchmen and others who were concerned about the “significant issues of society—political, economic, social, and moral.” Held annually from 1874 until 1934 and then irregularly until 1949, the Congress used the seminar format to address such issues as “Relations of the Church to the Colored Race” and “Socialism in Relation to Christianity.” The Congress covered several pertinent topics each year, allotting time for discussion as well as the presentation of position papers and speeches.⁵⁸

Phillips Brooks was present at the organizational meeting for the first Congress, and his spirit pervaded subsequent Congresses as well. Tired of the debates about ritual that had dominated several General Conventions, delegates began to discuss more secular concerns, and especially those issues that were important in a changing world. The identity of the Episcopal Church, long ensconced in its own private microcosm, “conservative, self-interested, inward-

⁵⁸ William Wilson Manross, *A History of the American Episcopal Church* (New York: Morehouse-Goreham, 1950), 309; Newton, *Yesterday with the Fathers*, 55-58; Richard M. Spielmann, “A Neglected Source: The Episcopal Church Congress, 1874-1934,” in *Anglican and Episcopal History* 58:1 (March 1989), 50-54.

looking,” was being transformed. And Phillips Brooks was at the forefront of this change.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Chorley, 311-313; Spielmann, 50-51.

CHAPTER THREE

INNOVATIONS

In *The Democratization of American Christianity*, Nathan Hatch asserts that the most popular religious leaders of the nineteenth century attacked the prevailing social order. They railed against upper-crust refinements, university education, ecclesiastical art and architecture, and doctrinal niceties. Even traditional methods of communication came under the fire of the religious democrats: Carefully crafted sermons were forsaken in favor of spontaneity, classic hymns gave way to upbeat gospel choruses, heavy and serious volumes of sermons were shunted aside in favor of inexpensive tracts. What Hatch calls a “Jeffersonian” revolution seemed to turn American Protestantism upside down, and religious entrepreneurs were prophets and priests of the new forms.

Unlike fiery and radical itinerant preachers such as Baptist-turned-“Christian” Elias Smith and Methodist Lorenzo Dow, William Augustus Muhlenberg and Phillips Brooks were clergymen in America’s most elite denomination—the church of refinement, wealth and privilege. They resided in America’s cultural meccas, and they were born into families with connections among the richest and most influential members of society. The sway exercised

by these two men within their small, prestigious universe is not completely surprising. What is remarkable is that within a denomination whose membership rolls contained *many* well-connected establishment-type figures, Muhlenberg and Brooks had such large and dedicated followings.

To be sure, Muhlenberg and Brooks appear to have possessed the illusive and unpredictable qualities of charisma and personal magnetism. But their widespread influence may also be related to the power of the religious entrepreneurs described by Hatch. Just as the democratic, anti-elitist messages of Mormon Joseph Smith and “Christian” movement leader Alexander Campbell resonated with common people, so also the members of the upper classes found in Muhlenberg and Brooks something with which they could identify.

In some senses, these two respectable Episcopalians were paragons of traditionalism. Yet, within their framework, they were also innovators. Vision, energy and new ideas percolated together in Muhlenberg and Brooks; the result was not just personal popularity, but drastic change within their denomination.

Muhlenberg and Brooks were more than unique celebrities. They were nineteenth-century moderns, looking forward to new discoveries in the intellectual, liturgical, and ecclesiastical worlds, and forward-looking hearers embraced them. In learning to welcome the new without disparaging the old, they became the crucial hinge figures between the evangelicalism of their parents and the more self-conscious liberalism of the next generation.

Each man had his own sphere of endeavor. Muhlenberg concerned himself

with ecumenism, liturgics, education, social action for the poor, and new roles for women. Brooks, on the other hand, was known for his sermons, in which he presented a new theology of progressivism, hope, and tolerance. Their interests rarely overlapped, but taken together, the two wrought substantial changes in the Episcopal Church.

As a clergyman, administrator, and educator—and as “an inspirer of religious, though not theological, liberalism”⁶⁰—William Augustus Muhlenberg combined tradition and change. In many ways this great innovator was surprisingly old-fashioned. For example, like evangelicals before him, he opposed the theater, calling it “one of ‘the pomps and vanities of this world,’” and he supported “a strict observance of the Sabbath.” His magazine, *The Evangelical Catholic*, published critical articles on Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, and Robert Owen, accusing all three of irreligion. In his own pulpit Muhlenberg found camaraderie with his evangelical predecessors. “I never preached a sermon,” he explained, “except with a view to save souls.”

Theologically, Muhlenberg always embraced the old evangelical doctrines. He gave the Thirty-Nine Articles “a high place among the doctrinal standards of the Church.” His hymns propounded traditional evangelical theology—including, for example, the belief in an eternal hell as the destination for “the lost ones that sought not the throne of His grace.” Muhlenberg himself claimed that “I have

⁶⁰ John F. Woolverton, review of *William Augustus Muhlenberg: Church Leader in the Cities*, by Alvin W. Skardon, in *The Catholic Historical Review* 60:1 (April 1974), 109.

never been charged with unsound doctrines, certainly not by Low Churchmen.”⁶¹

A synopsis of Muhlenberg’s evangelical theology is found in his essay “Christ and the Bible: Not the Bible and Christ.” In that work he explains how “faith in Christ,” engendered by the Holy Spirit and by reading the gospels, precedes belief in the divine origin of the Bible. Belief in Christ equalizes all people before God, since both “the door-keeper of the divinity hall” and “the most learned professor” can understand the simplicity of putting one’s hope, faith, and trust in a person.⁶²

Muhlenberg had little tolerance for the attempts of “infidel criticism and science” to discredit “the integrity and truth of the HOLY SCRIPTURES.” He argued that an affirmation of the validity of the Bible must follow faith in Christ. The Evangelists must be believed if Christ himself is believed, he concluded. Furthermore, since Christ quoted and believed the Old Testament, Christians must also put their trust in that part of the scriptures. Muhlenberg did not say that belief in Christ requires Christians to accept any particular dogma of divine inspiration concerning the Bible, but he insisted that it does require Christians to

⁶¹ Ayres, 25, 198, 390; Skardon, 167-68, 262. On pp. 205-06 Skardon explains how Muhlenberg was in sympathy with the grievances of the Reformed Episcopal schismatics.

W.A. Muhlenberg, *“I Would Not Live Aaway” and Other Pieces in Verse by the Same Author* (New York: Robert Craighead, 1860), is a collection of Muhlenberg hymns. The line quoted is from “Hymn for Advent,” pp. 25-26. Other examples of his support for traditional evangelical theology can be seen in “The Blessed Name Jesus” and “I’ll Worship the Lord,” found in the same volume.

⁶² Muhlenberg’s essay, “Christ and the Bible: Not the Bible and Christ,” is found in *Evangelical Catholic Papers: comprising Essays, Letters, and Tractates from Writings of Rev. William Augustus Muhlenberg, D.D., During the Last Forty Years*, ed. Anne Ayres (1st series, New York: T. Whittaker, 1875). He frequently makes use of the phrase “faith in Christ” (e.g. pp. 398, 399, 403). See p. 418 for the doorkeeper/professor analogy. See also pp. 398-99.

believe in miracles: “The person of Jesus and His miracles stand together in history,” Muhlenberg maintained. “They never have been separated, nor can they be.”⁶³

Muhlenberg also wrote that the priority of Christ over the Bible serves as a vehicle for Christian unity. “If the Bible is the first in the order of belief,” he explained,

then there will be always as many denominations of believers as there are interpretations of the Bible, and there will be nothing to bring them together. But let that which is the supreme object of the Bible’s revelations be the first in the order of their faith, they have that in common which so far makes them one.

In other words, prioritizing the Bible leads to divisions over interpretation, but prioritizing the person of Christ leads to unity among Christians, because the “beginning [of the universal faith] is not history, not tradition, not church authority, not reformers, not fathers, not even prophets or apostles, but Jesus of Nazareth Himself.”⁶⁴

Christian unity was one of Muhlenberg’s most sacred ideals. Like his old friend Bishop William White, Muhlenberg was an ecumenist. He believed that the essential unity of the Gospel message was much more important than the particular traits of this or that denomination, a position that discomfited some of his fellow Episcopalians.

Muhlenberg’s biographer and friend Anne Ayres recounts how he gently

⁶³ Muhlenberg, “Christ and the Bible,” 397, 403-04, 414, 429.

⁶⁴ Muhlenberg, “Christ and the Bible,” 418n., 419.

suggested to some narrow-minded Episcopal colleagues that they broaden their horizons. Once a clergyman of “exclusive church views” told Muhlenberg that in heaven Episcopalians would be “in the first circle around the throne,” with Presbyterians and others in the more distant bands. Muhlenberg replied,

“Then you do expect other Christians to be there too, only not in so much honor.”

“Yes.”

“Well, then, since after all there’s a possibility of so much closeness in heaven, wouldn’t it be well to become a little acquainted on earth?”⁶⁵

Muhlenberg himself “regarded all orthodox Protestant denominations as part of Catholic Christianity,” while holding that the Episcopal Church was “doctrinally the most nearly complete of the churches.” He was always careful to avoid criticism of other branches of Protestantism, however, because he saw the Episcopal Church as primarily a church of the upper classes. He believed that the other denominations’ effective ministries among the poor complemented the Episcopalians’ work among the wealthy, and he therefore refused to see other Protestants as competitors. He was more judgmental about Roman Catholics, however. He admired some aspects of their worship, but taken as a whole he considered their church “hopelessly corrupt.”⁶⁶

Within the pale of Protestantism, however, Muhlenberg was as ecumenical as any nineteenth-century figure, and he was not hesitant to make his views known. Writing in a published collection of his sacred verse, he referred to

⁶⁵ Ayres, 390-91.

⁶⁶ Skardon, 176.

Christ's "Great Commission" to the Apostles (to "preach the Gospel to every creature") and added, "Bishops acting on that command should recognize all who fulfil the great object of that command, whether they be in the line of such [apostolic] succession or not." In his eyes, the Episcopal Church had both catholic and denominational characteristics, but he wished to recognize its essential unity with Christians everywhere, thereby emphasizing its catholic side.⁶⁷

Perhaps his best-known gesture toward inclusiveness was the "Muhlenberg Memorial," a public letter presented to the House of Bishops in 1853. Signed by twelve Episcopal clergy, the Memorial bemoaned the "divided and distracted state" of American Christianity, the increase of both "unbelief" and "Romanism" among the people, and the resultant "utter ignorance of the Gospel among so large a portion of the lower classes of our population, making a heathen world in our midst."

Next, the Memorialists lamented that the Episcopal Church, with its tradition and its fixed form of worship, was incapable of reaching "all sorts and conditions of men." As a partial remedy to this grave problem, Muhlenberg and his cosigners proposed that Episcopal bishops offer ordination to candidates of any denomination, thus unifying all Protestants in spirit without mandating

⁶⁷ Muhlenberg, *I Would Not Live Alway*, 67; William Augustus Muhlenberg, "Dr. Muhlenberg's Communication," in *The Memorial: With Circular and Questions*. . . , ed. Alonzo Potter (Philadelphia: E.H. Butler, 1857), 287-88.

organizational unity.⁶⁸

Muhlenberg anticipated that this gesture might appear outrageous, arrogant, and patronizing, and so he argued his case in an *Exposition* published the following year. In it he points out (1) that ministers of other denominations are necessary parts of Protestantism, since they reach the poor more effectively than Episcopalians can, and (2) that ordination at the hands of bishops is the *only* ordination recognized as valid by all Protestants. Therefore, he concludes, Episcopal bishops have the responsibility to ordain all “good men and true” who seek that ordination, whether or not they are members of the Protestant Episcopal Church.⁶⁹

Muhlenberg furthermore speculated that once bishops granted episcopal ordination without requiring allegiance to the Protestant Episcopal Church, many thoughtful aspiring clergymen of other denominations would seek it. Not only would they find it useful as an expedient to “enlarging their field of labor,” especially on the foreign mission field, but they would also esteem its value as a potent symbol of the gospel ministry.⁷⁰ Through this extension of the episcopal ordination, then, Muhlenberg hoped also to extend the reach of Christendom and unify Protestants under common symbols.

⁶⁸ Quotations of the Memorial are taken from [William Augustus Muhlenberg], *An Exposition of the Memorial of Sundry Presbyters of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (New York: Stanford and Swords, 1854), 1-3.

⁶⁹ [Muhlenberg], *Exposition of the Memorial*, 29.

⁷⁰ [Muhlenberg], *Exposition of the Memorial*, 33.

The Memorial shook the Episcopal Church and generated much heated discussion at subsequent General Conventions. Fellow clergyman Alonzo Potter even published a book containing the religious world's reactions, and since Muhlenberg felt his views had been misrepresented, he submitted an essay to Potter's volume. In the article Muhlenberg explained several short-term goals: (1) Hoping to add spontaneity to Episcopal services, in which all public prayers were required to be read verbatim from the Book of Common Prayer, Muhlenberg requested that the church permit extemporaneous prayers during church services. (2) Desiring more effective evangelistic outreach, which was hampered by a canonical requirement that missionaries conduct all services from the Book of Common Prayer, he suggested that they be exempt from this regulation when addressing congregations of non-Christians. (3) Muhlenberg moved that a variety of services be permitted in addition to Morning and Evening Prayer, thus allowing Episcopal ministers the flexibility to meet the differing needs of different people. (4) Finally, his eyes on a vision of cooperation between denominations, Muhlenberg proposed that a permanent Episcopal Commission on Church Unity be established.⁷¹

Although his suggestions sparked much discussion, the Episcopal Church of 1854 was too entrenched in traditional methods to adopt Muhlenberg's proposals. Ironically, as broad churchmanship became more pervasive in the Episcopal Church, questions about extemporaneous prayer and liturgical novelty

⁷¹ William Augustus Muhlenberg, "Dr. Muhlenberg's Communication," 274-286.

became non-issues. Broad churchmen embraced ecumenism, but they avoided wrangling over worship styles.⁷² But Muhlenberg, in this proposal to modify the canon law, demonstrated both his concern that the church become relevant to “all sorts and conditions of men” and his unparalleled ecumenical consciousness.

Muhlenberg’s broad-mindedness included all of Protestantism, stopping just shy of “Romanism.” However, he also admitted that he sympathized with the Oxford movement for three years,⁷³ and his acceptance of ritualistic innovations spilled over into both his school and his church services. At the Flushing Institute chapel, for example, he used incense and flowers on special days, lit candles for predawn holiday services, and placed pictures of the Nativity, the Virgin and Child, the Crucifixion, or the Resurrection on the altar according to the season. He established a boys’ choir and expected his schoolboys to kneel not only during prayers but also at times while singing.⁷⁴

Later, while rector of New York’s Church of the Holy Communion, Muhlenberg added to these innovations the custom of reciting the prayers with his own back to the people. An elaborate Communion table dominated the new Gothic-revival building, and the pulpit, which had been the centerpiece of Protestant churches up to that time, was pushed to one side. Protestants

⁷² McConnell, 350, 355.

⁷³ [Muhlenberg], *Exposition of the Memorial*, 5.

⁷⁴ Hein, 579; Skardon, 180-81.

considered these innovations evidence of Roman Catholic sympathies, and the Church of the Holy Communion became a gathering place for the ritualists of New York. In spite of his Oxford leanings, Episcopalians who came to know him well—whether evangelical critic or Anglo-Catholic admirer—realized that Muhlenberg was no Puseyite. He loved the atmosphere of ritual, not the theology of tractarianism, and he embraced Roman rituals only insofar as they advanced evangelical doctrine. This fence-sitting earned him friends and enemies in both high and low places.⁷⁵

The ecumenical and liturgical worlds were not Muhlenberg's only spheres of influence, of course. He takes a place of honor in the vanguard of educational reform as well. While his interest in education began during his tenure in Lancaster, his major educational endeavors were the Flushing Institute and St. Paul's College, which grew out of it. The success of the ideals of these two schools—"a wholesome Christian atmosphere, . . . a community in which the sense of family life prevails, and a spirit of comradeship between masters and boys"—is why Muhlenberg has been called "the pioneer and the inspiration of Church schools in America."⁷⁶

In 1828 Muhlenberg published a pamphlet, *The Application of Christianity to Education*, in which he set forth the principles of his planned school in Queens

⁷⁵ Addison, 166; Ayres, 173; Skardon, 192-93.

⁷⁶ Addison, 165.

County, New York. From the beginning he planned the Flushing Institute to be a self-consciously Episcopalian school. He considered the inculcation of morality just as important as the study of languages or the pursuit of scientific truth, and for this reason he emphasized the importance of a boarding school, where he could guide the lives of students from reveille until bedtime. “An ordinary day school,” he wrote to his friend Jackson Kemper (who later became first missionary bishop of the Northwest),

. . . would be of little service to the church compared with what would arise from a boarding school under proper regulations. Discipline is as important as a branch of education as instruction—there can be little of the latter of a religious nature in a day school.⁷⁷

Muhlenberg dreamed of a school that would not only teach academics but also shape the whole person.

Muhlenberg did not avoid offending people by teaching only widely accepted moral principles. The Institute would be more honest, he believed, if it proclaimed its allegiance publicly. Therefore he announced that he would base the school’s instruction on the Bible as interpreted by the Episcopal Church. “In applying Christianity thoroughly,” he wrote, “. . . it must be viewed in some one of its existing forms. We cannot take it in the abstract.” By steering a firmly denominational course, he hoped to avoid any charges of “latitudinarianism” by Episcopalians and to head off any confrontations about the doctrinal future of the

⁷⁷ Skardon, 62. Muhlenberg’s educational ideals are set forth in *The Application of Christianity to Education: Being the Principles and Plan of Education to be Adopted in the Institute at Flushing, L.I.* (Jamaica, L.I., New York: Sleight & George, 1828).

school.⁷⁸

Muhlenberg was proud of the thoroughly religious nature of the Institute, but there were other innovations as well. For example, he established a limited elective system. While he believed that “the ancient languages are the best ground work of liberal learning”—and Greek was especially valuable because it was the language of scripture—he allowed youths who showed some proclivity for mathematics or the arts or mechanics to de-emphasize the classics in favor of the field where their talent lay. “Education must accommodate itself, more or less, to the diversities of natural genius,” his pamphlet insisted. To that end, the Institute taught Spanish and French for the benefit of future businessmen, and science for budding natural philosophers. Muhlenberg was quick to point out that he did not favor rewarding ineptitude or laziness, but he did expect that teachers would recall to mind each pupil’s own abilities when making assignments.⁷⁹

Since Muhlenberg believed that “exercise, diet, and habits conducive to health, are legitimate objects of Education,” he added athletics to the school’s moral and intellectual instruction to create a well-rounded program. The school did not have a gymnasium (gymnasiums had not yet come into vogue), but afternoons at the Flushing Institute were devoted to exercise. The school’s location on Flushing Bay made swimming, boating, and ice skating possible; its six-acre rural campus allowed each student his own plot for gardening. By

⁷⁸ Muhlenberg, *Application of Christianity*, 7; Skardon, 66.

⁷⁹ Muhlenberg, *Application of Christianity*, 11-14, 18.

keeping his boys active during the day, he hoped that they would study diligently in the evenings and sleep soundly at night, too tired for riotous high jinks in the dormitory or study hall. His program of athletics would thus serve his larger goal of minimizing the need for discipline by offering an “environment . . . so organized as to give little inducement to disorder or rebellion.” In an age during which the rod was the chief instrument of maintaining order, Muhlenberg was far ahead of his time.⁸⁰

Just as Muhlenberg appears to have based some of his ideas for educational reform on the Round Hill School in Massachusetts, founded in 1823, the Flushing Institute itself soon became an example for like-minded educators. During the 1830s and 1840s, seven schools were founded based on the Flushing model; in turn, faculty, alumni and friends of these institutions founded several other influential boarding schools, including St. Paul’s in New Hampshire and Groton in Massachusetts. These various academies, with faculties that moved among them with some ease, established the tradition of boarding schools in the United States.⁸¹

Having achieved some success in the realm of education, Muhlenberg moved to New York City in the 1840s, partly because of his interest in social welfare. Again expressing his modern and innovative ideas, he established himself

⁸⁰ Muhlenberg, *Application of Christianity*, 7, 8, 12, 14; Skardon, 66-67.

⁸¹ Hein, 577-581.

at the forefront of evangelical social action. In most areas of the U.S. the Episcopal Church had a well-deserved reputation for elitism; it was a church of the well-to-do, the social climbers, the genteel families, the aesthetes, and the intellectuals. Most parishes received their income from pew rentals, and since the more expensive pews were nearer the front, wealthy parishioners made their presence strongly felt in every church. Moreover, pew holders elected the vestry and controlled nearly all parish activities.

Muhlenberg rebelled against both the materialism of his society and the pew rental system which was, he felt, a byproduct of it. Agreeing with him, his sister, Mary Ann Rogers, proposed to build a church in New York City in which all pews would be free. Her late husband, John Rogers, a wealthy businessman, had planned this project, but had died before it could be implemented. Now Mary Ann offered to build this free parish for her brother's use. Muhlenberg could not refuse her offer, and the construction of the Church of the Holy Communion was begun in 1844.⁸²

Free churches were not unprecedented in Episcopalianism. But most of the earlier free parishes, like St. Mary's in Manhattanville and Epiphany in New York, had not been self-supporting. Instead, mission societies, wealthy parishes, or

⁸² Skardon, 107. He penned a poem, recorded in Ayres, *Life and Work*, 212, on the subject of pew rentals:

If the Saviour drove out of the temple of old
 Poor ignorant Jews, who bought there and sold,
 What would He to Christians, so given to pelf,
 As traffic to make of the temple itself
 Woe, woe to the church, ruled by Mammon-made lords,
 When He cometh again with the scourge of His cords!

dioceses had supported them. They were charity cases, not on equal footing with the self-supporting majority of parishes. Muhlenberg and his sister decided that the Church of the Holy Communion was to be nearly unique among New York churches. Located at Sixth Avenue and Twentieth Street, it was in the center of the newest ward of New York, home of both poor squatters and wealthy estate-owners. Designed by the architect and high church Episcopalian Richard Upjohn (who had recently supervised the construction of the new Trinity Church on Wall Street), it was a fine example of Gothic-revival architecture, a newly revived style that emphasized religious mystery. Paid for out of the pocket of a wealthy benefactress, the church was a self-supporting but free parish open both to the wealthy landowners of upper Manhattan and to the immigrants and paupers who lived on the margins of society. “The Church of the Holy Communion embraced wealthy, and poor, and in-between in one congregation—a condition which was unique among the Episcopal churches of New York City.”⁸³

Free pews and magnificent architecture were not the only distinguishing aspect of Muhlenberg’s new parish. At Holy Communion he inaugurated several programs of benevolence to help the poor of the congregation and their neighbors. In addition, he used his status as a clergyman of New York’s most influential denomination to initiate and advocate important citywide social welfare programs.

After the opening of the Church of the Holy Communion, Muhlenberg

⁸³ Ayres, 197; Skardon, 107, 119.

immediately made benevolent activity a part of parish life. There was, of course, a Sunday school, that ubiquitous institution of nineteenth-century Protestant charity. He also began separate day schools for boys and girls, and a choir for boys. The Employment Society found needlework jobs for the poorer women of the parish, Thanksgiving suppers ensured that there was plenty of food for all on that feast day, and the Fresh Air Fund sent indigent members and their families to the Catskills or the beaches for short summertime holidays.⁸⁴

Muhlenberg aided church-related projects all around New York City. He supported St. Luke's Home for Old People, served on the board of managers of the Home for Incurables, and solicited funding for the Midnight Mission, a shelter for prostitutes. In 1852 he helped to establish a free cemetery on Long Island.⁸⁵ His best-known endeavor, however, was the foundation of St. Luke's Hospital, which grew out of the Holy Communion parish infirmary.

Almost immediately after coming to New York City in 1846, Muhlenberg had begun to consider the need for a church hospital in the city. Wealthy persons could bring doctors and nurses to their own homes, and seamen and paupers had the publicly funded Broadway and Bellevue hospitals, but Muhlenberg lamented that the working poor—especially Anglican immigrants from the British Isles—had no available source of health care. He hired a doctor and began an infirmary at the Church of the Holy Communion, but his dreams were grander.

⁸⁴ Ayres, 208.

⁸⁵ Ayres, 119-121.

By 1849 Muhlenberg's plans for a hospital were still unrealized, while both the Roman Catholics and the Jews of New York had begun hospitals for their constituents. A widespread cholera epidemic that year spurred Muhlenberg to action, and he began to preach about and publicize his plans: a free hospital open to all but operated by the Protestant Episcopal churches of the city.⁸⁶

Fund-raising appeals, the securing of the property (at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fourth Street), and planning took several years, and the cornerstone was not laid until 1854. In 1858 the first patients were admitted to the \$200,000 structure, and the annual reports, beginning in 1859, described the success of the institution. Open to all, it ministered to Civil War soldiers, draft rioters, and policemen. And, like many of his projects, the free denominational hospital served as a model for other social progressives. Liberals, conservatives, evangelicals, and tractarians united to support works of charity, church social work burgeoned, and similar projects sprang up in New York and in other cities.⁸⁷

The most innovative component of Muhlenberg's plan for St. Luke's Hospital was the role that women were to play in it. In the face of some opposition, he proposed that a semi-monastic order of women, already associated with the Church of the Holy Communion, act as nurses for the new venture. In spite of public trepidation about "Protestant nuns" (which, strictly speaking, they

⁸⁶ Ayres, 204-05; Skardon, 138-39.

⁸⁷ Skardon, 143-50; James Grant Wilson, ed., *The Centennial History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of New York 1785-1885* (New York: D. Appleton, 1886), 396-97.

were not), Muhlenberg was adamant: “No sisters, no St. Luke’s.”⁸⁸

In his writings Muhlenberg made clear what he envisioned for the sisterhood. It was to be, he wrote,

a very simple thing. It is a community of Christian women, devoted to works of charity as the service of their lives, or of a certain portion of them. For the most part they form a household of themselves; that being necessary in order to their mutual sympathy and encouragement, and to their greater unity and efficiency in action. They are held together by identity of purpose, and accordance of will and feeling. Their one bond of union is simply the “Love of Christ constraining them.”⁸⁹

Voluntarism, simplicity, and community formed the nucleus of Muhlenberg’s idea.

The idea of Protestant religious orders had percolated through the Episcopal Church since the Oxford movement had first begun to take hold, but Muhlenberg was the first Protestant to look seriously at women as a potential and untapped source of energy in the Church. He knew about the Sisters of Charity, a Roman Catholic order dedicated to charitable works and education founded by Elizabeth Seton, a former Episcopalian who had been a communicant of Trinity Church, Wall Street. He knew about the Episcopal Female Tract Society of Philadelphia and a dozen other associations of pious churchwomen. And he may have known of the proposal for Protestant nuns advanced in the eighteenth century by the archbishop of York. In any case, when Episcopal laywoman Anne Ayres, a 29-year-old New Yorker, requested in 1845 that he consecrate her as a sister, he was willing to do so. In a simple ceremony the sisterhood was born—

⁸⁸ Ayres, 214.

⁸⁹ W.A. Muhlenberg, “Protestant Sisterhoods,” in *Evangelical Catholic Papers: Comprising Addresses, Lectures, and Sermons from Writings of Rev. W.A. Muhlenberg, D.D., During the Last Fifty Years*, ed. Anne Ayres (2nd series, New York: T. Whittaker, 1877), 204.

although the organization and name were not established for several more years.⁹⁰

Muhlenberg was anxious to differentiate between his sisters and Roman Catholic nuns. He opposed the nuns' "corruptions and errors of faith, their perpetual vows, their constrained celibacy, their unreserved submission to ecclesiastical rule, their subjection of the conscience to priestly guidance, their onerous rounds of ceremonies and devotions." In contrast, Muhlenberg's sisters took no vows and were free to leave the association at any time. Poverty was not required of them; indeed, they were expected to provide for their own personal needs, while the church furnished their room and board. Anne Ayres and Muhlenberg expected the sisters to spend their time in works of charity performed efficiently and communally with fellow members of the sisterhood.⁹¹

Ayres was the sole member of the Sisterhood of the Holy Communion for eight years after her 1845 consecration, and even in 1857 there were only four members. However, these few worked tirelessly for their beloved mentor. In 1852 the association of the Sisterhood of the Holy Communion was officially established, and the following year construction on a "Sisters' House" was begun next door to the Church of the Holy Communion. When the house was finished in February 1854, the women opened an infirmary, although Sister Anne had been nursing on an ad hoc basis since the cholera epidemic of 1849. After that,

⁹⁰ Skardon, 126-27; Ayres, 189.

⁹¹ Muhlenberg, "Protestant Sisterhoods," 204; Skardon, 128-130.

the work of the Holy Communion sisters shifted from education to medical care; hence, Muhlenberg's plan for St. Luke's Hospital deemed the sisters an indispensable part of the institution's organization. For a free hospital, unpaid workers were virtually a necessity, and the women provided not only labor but also a steadfast dedication to the church and to Muhlenberg, the hospital's founder and chief supporter.⁹²

It is difficult to discover why Muhlenberg so staunchly supported the new idea of single women working together in a structured environment for the benefit of the church. It appears that he felt he could alter Roman Catholic monasticism to suit evangelical purposes—just as he chose to use quasi-Roman ritual when it suited his needs. He enjoyed toying with Roman Catholicism, but he used variations on its vocabulary⁹³ and institutions to advance his own brand of broad churchmanship—gospel preaching coupled with catholic ritual and social action.

For the small number of women who embraced the sisterhood, Muhlenberg's community of women served important purposes. It offered a singular opportunity for unmarried women—both spinsters and widows, but mostly middle-aged and bourgeois—to live and work together. In a society that

⁹² Muhlenberg, "Protestant Sisterhoods," 207n. (footnote probably added by editor Anne Ayres); Skardon, 127.

⁹³ Muhlenberg frequently used Roman Catholic vocabulary to identify his own Protestant institutions. For example, "sisters" were so called not because of their similarity to Roman Catholic nuns but because of their relationship to each other (Skardon, 128). (Muhlenberg considered and rejected the similar denotation of "deaconesses.") He also claimed that the name of parish and sisterhood, "Holy Communion," referred not to the eucharist but to "fellowship in Christ" (Ayres, 177).

valued women primarily as wives and mothers, it gave single women a respected role as educators and healers. And in a denomination dominated (as all were) by a male hierarchy, its members were valued participants in the work of the church. Alonzo Potter, bishop of Pennsylvania, suggested that “there are many women of education, refinement, and earnest piety who yearn for a sphere in which they can work for God and for the afflicted.”⁹⁴ For these women, Muhlenberg’s Sisterhood of the Holy Communion was a respectable outlet for their ambitions.

Although a member of American society’s educated elite, William Augustus Muhlenberg had no interest in ivory-tower intellectualism. He was active, perceptive to the needs of the society around him, willing and able to take some risks to accomplish ambitious goals. He was well liked by many, but more importantly he was forward-looking. Using his personal warmth and charm to encourage others to support his programs, Muhlenberg managed to engage his society in social action, to offer a new educational paradigm, to allow women new responsibilities and freedoms, and to break down walls within the Episcopal Church. Because he eschewed the narrowness of earlier evangelicals, enveloping all church parties within his generous embrace, he earns the label of broad churchmen. Because he opened the eyes of clergy and laity alike to the social problems of his era, and because he taught so many Episcopal boys to see the world through his eyes, he can rightfully be called one of the most influential

⁹⁴ M.A. DeWolf Howe, *Memoirs of the Life and Services of the Rt. Rev. Alonzo Potter* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1871), 258.

Episcopalians of the nineteenth century.

While William Augustus Muhlenberg is called a broad churchman because of the variety of his social, educational, and liturgical pursuits, the theology of his teaching and preaching was conventionally evangelical. Conversely, Phillips Brooks was in many ways a stereotypical New England aristocrat. He made his mark on the Episcopal Church not as a founder of institutions but as an intellectual “Brahmin of the Brahmins.” Brooks’s contribution to broad churchmanship was a new way of thinking. Just as Muhlenberg’s activities influenced the way the Episcopal Church was to *act* in the years after his demise, so Brooks’s ideas helped to shape the *mind* of Episcopalianism well into the twentieth century. His theological synthesis placed Christ in a preeminent position but also emphasized the goodness of man. He embraced ecumenism as well and based the entire construction on a foundation of evangelicalism. As one admirer explained, he was a paradoxical blend of William Ellery Channing and Jonathan Edwards.⁹⁵

Victorians loved Phillips Brooks best because he saw the sin of the world overshadowed by optimism and hope. Convinced of the sacredness of all humanity, he made enemies among some fellow churchmen by asserting that all people, regardless of religious belief or affiliation, are children of God. While

⁹⁵ *Phillips Brooks: The Man, the Preacher*, 174. For the comparison to Channing and Edwards, see Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 538.

evangelicals denounced society and called individuals to repent of their wickedness, Brooks gloried in humanity and encouraged people to realize the goodness within them. “Let us look forward and believe in men,” he told the Boston Chamber of Commerce in 1890. “Let us believe that every power of man put forth to its best activity must ultimately lead to the large consummation of the complete life. . . .”⁹⁶

Brooks was a progressive. As a young clergyman, he had been an outspoken opponent of slavery and rebellion during the Civil War. After that conflict, however, his progressivism began to express itself in other ways. He believed and taught that the incarnation of Christ had sanctified the whole world, and he maintained that American society was becoming better as Americans embraced the fullness of their humanity. In an exposition on one of Jesus’ famous pronouncements, Brooks declared, “‘I am the light of the world’ means the essential richness and possibility of humanity and its essential belonging to divinity.”⁹⁷

His belief that America could become better—and indeed *was* becoming better—struck a chord with many during the Gilded Age. The new theories of Darwin (specifically the idea that humans had arisen from the apes) seemed to imply that humanity was on an upward spiral. Moreover, northeastern, urban America was generally prosperous; technological innovations continued to make

⁹⁶ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 317, 538-43.

⁹⁷ Brooks, “The Light of the World,” 4.

life easier and healthier; the belief that America was a new Promised Land was strong. Rather than denying what the people already believed, Phillips Brooks seems to have provided a theological foundation for the popular philosophy of his day. Because Christ has sanctified everyone, he reasoned, man is good. Because man is good, he can create a good society. “The one thing that grew upon him as he grew older,” reported one listener to a Brooks sermon,

was the mysteriousness of human life and the absolutely unfulfilled powers that were in humankind. His one great assurance was that the world was bound to press onward and find an escape from the things that terrified it, not by retreat, but by a perpetual progress into the large calm that lay beyond.⁹⁸

This theology of hope left little room for the classical Augustinian language of original sin, which was a traditional part of evangelical theology. While evangelicals spoke of “total depravity,” Brooks claimed that Christ “rejuvenates [the soul], but it already had slow, sluggish life before.” He claimed that sin impeded the “purity of [man’s] essential nature,” and he equated salvation with “health—the cool, calm vigor of the normal human life.” Brooks believed that sin is not part of the essence of humanity, but is a corruption and an ugly intruder. Man, while made in the image of God, has “fallen from that state into a life of sin. He is essentially good and actually bad.”⁹⁹

At its core, Brooks’s conception of human weakness may not have been very far removed from the original sin dogma of the evangelicals. Both he and they believed that God had created people “very good” and that sin is a corruption

⁹⁸ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 542.

⁹⁹ Brooks, “The Light of the World,” 5, 9-10; Politzer, 163-64.

of the creation. Their difference lay primarily in emphasis. The evangelicals taught that sin was at the core of the human condition. Brooks, on the other hand, preached that human beings had been created good, and that Christ would help them strip off the unwelcome layer of sin and return to their original state of “pure health.”

Brooks’s emphasis on the essential goodness of humanity resonated with his hearers. Whereas the poor often appear content to be told that they are wretched—especially when circumstantial evidence validates the wretchedness of their physical condition—Brooks’s parishioners, who already enjoyed a measure of prominence, found his message of human dignity and worth more appealing. Brooks’s evangelical predecessor in the pulpit of Trinity Church, Manton Eastburn, had reveled in calling his powerful and wealthy parishioners “vile earth and miserable sinners, worms and children of wrath.”¹⁰⁰ Brooks, however, formulated his theology in the context of his hearers, and used more temperate language. “No man is ever to be saved except by fulfillment of his own nature,”¹⁰¹ Brooks announced, and Episcopalians agreed. Indeed, this was a theme that fed (and was fed by) the progressivism and Darwinism that were increasingly a part of American culture at large, and the material success and social superiority that has always been an ancillary part of Episcopalianism, with its history as the established church in England, Ireland, and several American

¹⁰⁰ Newton, *Yesterday with the Fathers*, 149; Chorley, 48.

¹⁰¹ Phillips Brooks, “The Christ in Whom Christians Believe,” 120.

colonies.

“True tolerance,” said Brooks, “consists in the love of truth and the love of man. . . . The love of truth alone is cruel; the love of man alone is weak and sentimental.” Perhaps more than any other nineteenth-century clergyman, Phillips Brooks was the evangelist for this virtue, for he considered it an integral part of human existence. “Tolerance is not a special quality or attainment of life so much as it is an utterance of the life itself. Intolerance is meagreness of life.”¹⁰²

As a man of optimism, Brooks rarely argued or condemned. He preached his own message—the incarnation of God in Christ and the limitless possibility of mankind—but he did so without denouncing others who did not agree with him. Indeed, he did not believe in any sort of religious litmus test, but was willing to accept as fellow Christians even those who denied Christ’s divinity and “the great doctrines of the Church.” “There is no other test,” he said, “than this, the following of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰³

Brooks detested all forms of theological censorship. He invited Heber Newton, a minister whose heterodox views of the Bible had put him at risk for a church trial, to speak at Trinity Church on “any Sunday that you will name.” In a sermon in 1888 he eulogized a Unitarian clergyman, James Freeman Clarke,

¹⁰² Phillips Brooks, *Tolerance: Two Lectures Addressed to the Students of Several of the Divinity Schools of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1887), 25-26, 108.

¹⁰³ Addison, 268; Brooks, “The Christ,” 131.

calling him “[our Heavenly Father’s] true servant, his true saint.” Phillips Brooks was “the apostle of tolerance,” a man who believed it his duty to try to understand those with whom he disagreed. He was confident enough to express his opinions clearly and without apology, but he was also humble enough to listen to the voices of other persons and other cultures.¹⁰⁴

Although Brooks did not condemn heterodoxy, neither did he publicly denounce evangelicalism. He refrained from criticizing *any* theological opponents during his sermons, and he was very guarded even in private correspondence. For example, although he wrote in a letter to his father that he considered Charles Spurgeon, the celebrated English evangelical preacher, “not graceful nor thoughtful nor imaginative,” he nevertheless added that Spurgeon was “doing a good work here” in London among the crowds of uneducated common folk.¹⁰⁵

Tolerance, said Phillips Brooks, is the combination of “positive conviction” and “sympathy with men whose convictions differ from our own.” Thus, the truest and best tolerance is only possible when men hold firm convictions and yet are willing to let others hold equally firm convictions. Having defined tolerance, Brooks also identified its six types and explicated them in order of ascending virtue.¹⁰⁶ The *tolerance of pure indifference* results when a person does not care enough about an issue to take a stand. If someone is not at all interested in God,

¹⁰⁴ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 439, 509; Chorley, 300-01.

¹⁰⁵ Phillips Brooks, *Letters of Travel* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1893), 11.

¹⁰⁶ Brooks, *Tolerance*, 7. On p. 19 Brooks describes the six types of tolerance in detail.

for example, he does not take sides in a debate about the existence of a supreme being.

The *tolerance of policy* is the allowance of error when eliminating falsity is more harmful to society than permitting it. *Tolerance of helplessness* is “the tolerance of persecuted minorities.” Weak groups, even if doctrinaire, must allow their adversaries to exist because they have no power to eliminate them.

Still higher on Brooks’s scale were the *tolerance of pure respect for man* (the acknowledgment that one’s fellows—as humans—have the right to their own opinions) and the *tolerance of spiritual sympathy*, which is the result of a feeling of “spiritual oneness” with adversaries, in spite of differences in opinion.

Topping the tolerance scale in Brooks’s paradigm was the *tolerance of the enlarged view of truth*. He explained that this is what “grows up in any man who is aware that truth is larger than his conception of it.” It is the acceptance of those who know that they do not know everything.

“The last infirmity of liberal minds,” said Brooks, is the inability to tolerate the intolerance of others. But he told his hearers that they must learn to tolerate intolerance so that they might explore and test the truth in all its facets. Even well-meaning intolerance “puts an end to manly controversy,” making a thorough, no-holds-barred investigation of truth impossible.

The championing of toleration did not, of course, begin with Phillips Brooks. William Penn and John Locke had written about it, and the Bill of Rights already guaranteed the toleration of religion. This kind of toleration, however,

was what Brooks would have called *toleration of policy* or *toleration of pure respect for man*. It was an official sanction of differences. Brooks, however, brought toleration into the nineteenth century. He called for not just an acceptance, but a *celebration* of diversity, and he asserted the importance of differences in a modern world. Both his life and his words showed that he was anxious to learn from many sources. This open-minded enthusiasm was part of his popular appeal, and it exemplifies a clear break with evangelical tradition and the initiation of the more forward-looking world view for which he was so well known.

While Brooks broke with most evangelicals in his advocacy of tolerance, his christology—that is, his view of the role of the person of Jesus Christ in the Christian faith—was surprisingly close to that of the evangelicals. “Not Christianity, but Christ” was the object of his preaching—“not a doctrine, but a Person.” He rejected the idea that the truth of Christianity could be divorced from the person of Jesus, or that Christ could be grouped with Plato, Mohammed, and other religious leaders and philosophers. When New England Transcendentalists such as Theodore Parker asserted that “the authority of Jesus . . . must rest on the truth of his words, and not their truth on his authority,” Brooks disagreed. In *The Influence of Jesus* he wrote that Christianity was not so much a system of theology as it was a “personal force . . . always struggling to fill mankind. The personal force is the nature of Jesus, full of humanity, full of

divinity. . . .”¹⁰⁷

Brooks made this idea of *personal force* a theme of his preaching. The force was, in Brooks’s mind, “the inmost nature and character” of Christ—his personality. It was a power “capable of dominating every soul, and of subduing all humanity” to God. This power, and not formulas or ethics, gave Christianity its strength, even two millennia after the Crucifixion. “It was not enough [for Brooks] to present Christ as a moral Guide . . . nor as the Master, imparting knowledge and conveying information about the spiritual world,” claimed his friend Alexander Allen. Rather, Brooks taught a Christ who was “indeed the *Way*, and He was the *Truth*, but He was these because He was first the *Life*.”¹⁰⁸

Brooks believed that in emphasizing the person of Jesus Christ he was addressing the day-to-day concerns of his parishioners. In his sermon “The Christ in Whom Christians Believe,” he outlined this practical christology:

There is in the world to-day the same Christ who was in the world eighteen hundred and more years ago, and . . . men may go to Him and receive His life and the inspiration of His presence and the guidance of His wisdom just exactly as they did then. . . . There is no single act of your life, my friend, there is no single dilemma in which you find yourself placed, in which the answer is not in Jesus Christ. . . . I am anxious to have you know that to be a Christian does not mean primarily to believe this or that. It does not mean primarily, although it means necessarily afterward, to do this or that. But it means to know the presence of a true personal Christ among us and to follow.¹⁰⁹

Like the evangelicals, Brooks invited his listeners to experience Christ metaphysically, and he claimed that this “true, personal Christ” would make a

¹⁰⁷ Chorley, 299; Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 313-315.

¹⁰⁸ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 316; italics original.

¹⁰⁹ Brooks, “The Christ in Whom Christians Believe,” 130, 136, 144.

difference in their lives as modern, nineteenth-century Americans.

Although Brooks's many overseas voyages were a strong influence on him—his visit to Palestine, for example, inspired him to write the Christmas carol *O Little Town of Bethlehem* in a burst of incarnational enthusiasm—no spiritual revelations during these journeys shook his belief in the preeminence of the person of Jesus. Returning from Japan in 1889 he jotted in his notebook (quoting the Gospel of John), “‘Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.’ Christ the key of existence, not Buddha, nor any other.” Whether this fragment was the beginning of a new sermon or just a random rumination, it is evidence that Brooks remained convinced even late in life that there could be no substitute for the person of Christ.¹¹⁰

Brooks would probably have argued that the best society is a liberal-minded Christian society that affirms the relevance of Christianity to the modern age and is open to new scientific and cultural truths. Science, he said, was “building up and completing man,” and he never feared what the influences of other cultures might do to America or to the Christian religion. While visiting India he mused about what might result when the religion of staid Europe was brought to the exotic East. “I long to see Christianity come here,” he wrote to a German friend, “not merely for what it will do for India, but for what India will do for it. Here it must find again the lost Oriental side of its brain and heart.” The Christianity

¹¹⁰ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 531.

Brooks advocated was not narrow-minded and inward-looking, but inclusive, liberal, optimistic—perhaps even mystical.¹¹¹

In spite of the liberal spirit that marked his adulthood, Brooks retained a respect for evangelicalism. His own ministry, however broad-minded, was based on certain foundations with which he was familiar as a child and a seminarian. At the center of traditional Episcopal evangelicalism was an uncompromising acceptance of the Apostles' Creed, and Phillips Brooks shared his mentors' high view of that articulation of doctrine. As an ordinand he publicly upheld the Creed, and in 1887 he again spoke on it. The mature Brooks offered a more sophisticated analysis of the traditional statement of faith, but even then he exuded confidence in the historic formula.¹¹²

Brooks displayed other evangelical characteristics as well. He stressed the importance of believing in traditional doctrines such as the Trinity and the Atonement. He persisted in monthly Communion, emphasizing the priority of Word over Sacrament, when many Episcopal churches were initiating more frequent eucharistic celebrations. Unlike most Episcopalians, he advocated extemporaneous prayers. Like evangelicals of all denominations, he frequently preached extemporaneous sermons, especially as he grew older. When Brooks himself prepared candidates for confirmation, he not only required them to renounce the devil, but consciously and actively to love God. He himself felt that

¹¹¹ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 543, 392.

¹¹² Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 47.

he shared with the evangelicals a strong sense of devotion to “the Person of Christ,” and he was sympathetic enough to evangelical causes that when Dwight L. Moody, holding a revival in Boston in 1877, was forced to miss a meeting, he invited Brooks to preach in his place.¹¹³

Although influenced by them, Brooks did not pretend that he agreed with evangelicals on every issue. Indeed, he differed with established evangelical theology on several points, as outlined by Allen:

1. [Evangelicalism’s] view of baptism as a covenant.
2. Its literal theory of inspiration and its conception of Scripture as a whole.
3. Its separation between things secular and sacred; its failure to recognize truth in other religions and in non-Christian men; its indifference to intellectual culture.
4. Its tendency to limit the Church to the elect.
5. Its view of salvation as escape from endless punishment.
6. Its insistence upon the necessity of acknowledging a theory of the Atonement in order to salvation.
7. Its insufficient conception of the Incarnation and of the Person of Christ.
8. Its tendency to regard religion too much as a matter of the emotions rather than of character and will.¹¹⁴

These serious differences illustrate the general shift of the broad church party away from evangelical theology, but Brooks did not use a list such as this as a wall to separate himself from more conservative Christians. In spite of fundamental disagreements, he seems to have chosen to emphasize his comradeship with the

¹¹³ Phillips Brooks, “The Witness of His Own Mouth,” in *Anglican and Episcopal History* 60:1 (March 1991), 89-99; Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 473, 574, 365, 326, 496n. Moody’s goodwill toward Brooks may not be surprising. He was also known to associate with others on the margins of evangelical orthodoxy such as Henry Drummond, an evolutionist from England, and George Adam Smith, a proponent of higher criticism. See Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (1984; New York: Penguin, 1985), 314. Of Moody, Brooks said: “Of all the great revivalists, I do not know where we shall find any one who has preached more constantly to the good that there is in man and assumed in all men a power of spiritual action than Mr. Moody.” See Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching*, 242.

¹¹⁴ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 496n.

evangelicals. Brooks saw their common devotion to Jesus Christ as a more important concern than doctrinal minutiae, and consequently he never fully renounced his allegiance to the evangelical wing of the Episcopal Church. As late as 1889 he addressed a session of the Evangelical Alliance in Boston, although his subject, “The Need of Enthusiasm for Humanity,” was hardly one that traditional evangelicals might have chosen.¹¹⁵

Phillips Brooks was reared in evangelicalism and died a broad churchman, but, unlike many contemporaries, he did not become open-minded gradually over time. Instead, he seems to have had the germ of broad churchmanship inside him all his life.

Brooks’s theological consciousness during his Harvard years is somewhat mysterious, as he had no need to write letters to his friends and relatives (whom he saw every weekend) and he had not yet begun his voluminous journals. Allen surmises that even as an undergraduate he rebelled against his mother’s and Dr. Vinton’s evangelicalism. While at college he was learning to listen with a critical mind, and religion was not immune to his criticism:

The Christian life, as presented by the Evangelical school, of which Dr. Vinton was a distinguished representative, called for a renunciation of much which he knew or believed to be good. The conventional denunciation of the intellect as a dangerous guide, and of wealth . . . , the condemnation of the natural joy in life and its innocent amusements, the schism between religion and life,—against all this he inwardly protested.

Brooks continued to attend Dr. Vinton’s parish in Boston, but he did not join the

¹¹⁵ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 496n., 538.

one Christian club at Harvard, and of course he spent much more time in the college library than he did in his parents' pew. His college essays showed also that he was beginning to grapple with the grand questions that refused simple dogmatic answers.¹¹⁶

By the time Brooks reached the Virginia Seminary it was clear that he would never be content with evangelical anti-intellectualism and arbitrary strictures. William Wilberforce Newton claimed that his "so called transcendental mind" was only influenced slightly by the "rather thin coating of Evangelical theology laid on by Dr. [William] Sparrow at the Virginia seminary."¹¹⁷ To be sure, Brooks was dissatisfied with the low academic standards at the school, with the lack of genius among students and faculty, and with the apparent laziness of white Virginians, which he concluded was a result of slavery. He determined to set his own academic course by reading far beyond what his professors required and by meditating on the works of European intellectuals.

Thus Brooks was already an anomaly as he graduated from the fountainhead of Episcopal evangelicalism. He did not want to be limited by fears of modernity, scriptural interpretation, or criticism; nor did he wish to be paralyzed by endless soul-searching and fruitless condemnations. Instead, he desired to be open to both old truths and new, to be encouraged by society's advances, to be willing to listen to the lessons of other cultures and religions, and

¹¹⁶ Allen, *Life and Letters*, I, 121, 79, 90.

¹¹⁷ Newton, *Yesterday with the Fathers*, 24.

to be able to help people recognize the continuing importance of religious faith in a world where scientific advancement was beginning to remove mystery from the everyday worlds of educated urbanites.

Phillips Brooks insisted that Christianity was adaptable to modernity. It did not have to cling to the old world view, to the superstitions and arbitrary behavioral restrictions of its unenlightened past, but it could change to suit the new world. The church could, for example, give up its insistence on adherence to certain formulas and instead emphasize “the personal relationship with Christ,” who is “the sun of all truth.” Christianity could stop condemning the progress of natural science and instead reiterate that the Creator “who works everything works *by* everything in the world”—even that secondary causes that scientists were just then discovering. Christians could stop arguing exactly how Christ’s death saved the world and instead emphasize that—whether by substitutionary atonement or another method—Christ has indeed redeemed the world. And perhaps most importantly, Episcopalians could renounce their exclusivity and welcome to fellowship the sincere members of other denominations. “Call any man a Christian who is following [Christ],” Brooks demanded. “Denounce no error as fatal which does not separate a soul from Him.”¹¹⁸

Phillips Brooks cannot be pigeonholed into either of the ecclesiastical wings that existed at his birth. He was clearly no high churchman, for he rejected both the theology and the ritual of that party. And although he was reared securely

¹¹⁸ Allen, *Phillips Brooks*, 309-10, 304, 311; Chorley, 300; italics added.

within the low church, he came to dismiss the theological and moral principles of evangelicalism as well, although he continued to embrace its rites, institutions and individual adherents to the end of his life. He was a nonconformist to be sure, but never a solitary one. The brilliance of his preaching made his parishes popular places for the elite to gather, and his fame catapulted him into a position of leadership with a new party that refused to be high or evangelical. Liberality, optimism, and a respect for all humanity were hallmarks of this broad church movement, and Phillips Brooks was its chief herald.

Phillips Brooks and William Augustus Muhlenberg were not contemporaries; Muhlenberg essentially retired to St. Johnland while Brooks was still a little-known young minister. Although they had mutual friends, they inhabited very different worlds within the Episcopal Church. Muhlenberg, a New Yorker for most of his adult life, complemented his evangelical preaching with liberal doses of ritual. He was concerned for the poor, and he was keenly interested in bringing up the young within the sheltering arms of the church. He was always asking for money, and people seemed always willing to give.

Brooks, the consummate Harvard man, was more aloof than Muhlenberg. He did not ask for money or found hospitals, and he failed miserably in his one attempt at teaching schoolboys. His world was not the realm of children or paupers. Instead, Phillips Brooks was at home among princes, civic leaders, and intellectuals, for he was a well-born reader and a natural scholar. He appreciated

intelligent conversation, international travel, and new ideas. Most important of all, he could hold his affluent audiences spellbound, and they loved him for this.

Inhabiting different spheres and ministering to different parishioners, Brooks and Muhlenberg are nonetheless useful examples of the same movement within Episcopalianism. They show the breadth of the broad church movement: On the one hand, it embraced (or at least tolerated) rationalism, unprecedented criticism of the scriptures, radical discoveries in science, and other intellectual innovations. On the other hand, it began to see the need for social services like education and health care, attempting to meet the physical and spiritual needs of its adherents. Both sides of broad churchmanship emphasized the breaking down of intra- and interdenominational walls. And both balked at the exclusivity of the high church (with its arrogance based on primitive doctrine and episcopacy) *and* evangelicalism (with its pride founded on legalism and theological conformity).

Thus, in spite of all the evident differences between Muhlenberg and Brooks, there is common ground. There is charisma, there is optimism, there is fearlessness, there is willingness to participate in changes. Because of these traits, and because the two were such successful leaders during a crossroads of Episcopal history, they are rightfully called fathers of the movement they helped to spawn.

* * *

Muhlenberg died in 1877 and Brooks in 1893. Although they were innovators in their own time, the Episcopal Church of a century later is a very different institution. Perhaps the most convincing proof of the influence of these

two church leaders is that many of the changes they pioneered have become common a hundred years later.

The twentieth-century Episcopal Church has not always agreed with Muhlenberg's insistence on preaching to save souls from damnation. But several of his new ideas have indeed become standard practice in the years since his death. For example, his followers copied his educational innovations even in his own lifetime, and the Episcopal boarding schools of today should credit Muhlenberg's own Flushing Institute as the founder of their line.

The increase in the number of boarding schools following the Muhlenberg model has been paralleled by a refinement in Episcopal aesthetic and liturgical sensibilities that would have pleased the founder of the Church of the Holy Communion. The Gothic-revival architectural style, which he favored, became virtually ubiquitous in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and even today is publicly recognized as a quintessential form of ecclesiastical architecture. Muhlenberg's placement of the communion table in the most prominent position in the church—at the center of the choir end—is still the preferred place in most churches. The use of colored vestments, liturgical singing, and candles, which he pioneered, is now common. (His practice of facing east during prayers, shocking during his own day, has actually become passé.) The expansion and reform of the hymnal, for which he was even willing to fight William White, is now the responsibility of an official denominational agency, the Standing Commission on Church Music. Muhlenberg was interested in combining Protestant theology with

religious symbols inspired by Roman Catholicism, a practice that many Episcopalians have imitated in the twentieth century.

Muhlenberg's ideal of the "comprehensive" church—a denomination in which high, low, and broad members would be welcome—was championed by other influential ministers during his lifetime and was on its way to acceptance by the time of his death. In 1841 his protege Thomas Vail had written *The Comprehensive Church*, which had advocated one national church for the entire United States. Denouncing sectarianism, Vail's book had explained why the Episcopal Church, with all its inclusiveness, was fit to be the one American church: Not only was it in unity with the ancient and universal faith, but because of its structure and canons it could include many kinds of belief and worship within its broad wings.

High churchmen and evangelical Episcopalians had immediately denounced Vail's book, but his broad outlook won acceptance over time, especially among younger men such as Phillips Brooks. Two years after Muhlenberg's death, in the preface to the second edition, Vail confidently claimed that "the idea of The Comprehensive Church is now quite generally accepted, and the phrase is becoming decidedly familiar."¹¹⁹ By the middle of the twentieth century, a General Theological Seminary professor claimed that the "*corpus permixtum*" ("mixed bag," by the professor's translation) of Episcopalianism enfolded conservative and liberal catholics, "rabid" and liberal evangelicals, just-plain-

¹¹⁹ Thomas H. Vail, *The Comprehensive Church; or, Christian Unity and Ecclesiastical Union in the Protestant Episcopal Church* (3rd ed.; New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1883), 16.

liberals, and moderates. And in the late 1970s, a Fuller Theological Seminary observer concluded, "There can be no doubt that the Anglican Church can satisfy churchmen of practically any persuasion: the biblicist, the pietist, the legalist, the sacramentalist, the moralist, the universalist, and the intellectual." Thomas Vail's goal of a single American church was as distant as ever, but his vision for Episcopalians to embrace a wide variety of doctrinal positions had been realized.¹²⁰

While the goal of comprehensiveness has become the norm in the twentieth century, the Episcopal Church remains a fellowship of society's elite. Most Episcopalians are white, well educated, and middle-class or wealthy. But many do seek to welcome visitors who do not fit the standard description. Many (primarily urban) parishes welcome homosexuals, while other congregations seek to become multiracial. Some parishes are primarily blue-collar. Theological and liturgical variations within the Episcopal Church are more pronounced than demographic differences. Evangelical, Anglo-Catholic, liberal, charismatic, and middle-of-the-road congregations coexist, although not without some contention. In these areas, comprehensiveness has been firmly established in this century.

Internecine fighting does plague Episcopalians, but most ecclesiastical battles are waged over issues that affect diocesan or national constituencies. For

¹²⁰ W. Norman Pittenger, "What is Disturbing Episcopalians?" in *The Christian Century* 61:19 (May 10, 1944), 586; Wayne B. Williamson, *Growth and Decline in the Episcopal Church* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1979), 20, 22. This final quotation comes from the chapter entitled "Anglicanism Is More a Loyalty Than a Doctrinal Position," an apt explanation of how comprehensiveness is sustained.

example, the question of whether the church should ordain women was a point of contention in the 1970s, because priests and deacons exercise leadership roles in the church at large. Similarly, John S. Spong, bishop of Newark, New Jersey, is a controversial figure because he has advocated his heterodox interpretations of the Bible in nationally distributed books. Individual Episcopal parishes, on the other hand, may tolerate almost any belief or activity. Not doctrine but tradition and the Book of Common Prayer bond church members together, and peaceful coexistence, though not a reality, is at least a goal for most members of the Episcopal Church.

The most influential movement that Muhlenberg helped to pioneer was that of Christian social concern. His efforts on behalf of prostitutes, children, the unemployed and the working poor reminded people that both the church and its members had a responsibility to meet both spiritual *and physical* needs. Today Episcopalians and members of other churches share Muhlenberg's concerns. Although government agencies now provide many services (such as health care) that were once the domain of religion, many Episcopal churches support homeless shelters, soup kitchens, houses for single mothers, career counseling and job placement services, programs for alcoholics and victims of abuse, and clinics. Like William Augustus Muhlenberg, many Episcopalians of the late twentieth century feel that the church should not be a place of worship and religious instruction only, but also a nucleus for various kinds of social welfare.

Since the nineteenth century the Episcopal Church has become convinced

of the importance of the social gospel. But the twentieth century has produced few Episcopal preachers who compare with Phillips Brooks, whose sermons stand out as his most important contribution to his era. The tradition of powerful preaching survives today in a few scattered places—for example, George F. Regas, rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California, and traveling evangelist John Guest, former rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, are relatively well known, although much less celebrated than Brooks was during his life. But for the most part Episcopalians have surrendered the role of celebrity preacher to other denominations.

Brooks is not, however, a mere historical footnote. His sermons were the vehicles for expressing his convictions, and in that realm—the world of the intellect—he proved himself a harbinger of new ideas.

Like most Episcopal preachers today, Brooks shied away from biblical miracles, prophecies, and the chronology of the ancient Hebrew world. Unable to reconcile them with advances in science and criticism, he and others like him looked for the “moral” and “spiritual” truths of the Bible rather than scientific or historical details. Thus they avoided both a retreat into anti-modernism and an outright denial of the validity of the scriptures.¹²¹ Brooks himself concentrated on his theology of optimism—“God is good and man is good”—and reminded his hearers that he was not so concerned with church teachings as he was with Jesus himself—Christianity, he said, is “not a doctrine, but a Person.”

¹²¹ For a discussion of the choice nineteenth-century Christians made between condemning Darwinism and redefining the relationship between science and religion, see Marsden, 20.

Brooks welcomed new ideas, celebrated differences, studied Asian religion, embraced higher criticism, and preached tolerance as a high virtue. This open-mindedness has been welcomed in the Episcopal Church of the twentieth century as well. A willingness to rectify longstanding injustices (such as racial discrimination) contributes to a general sense of expectancy. While not all Episcopalians are as forward-looking and optimistic today as Brooks was during the Gilded Age, as a whole the denomination has retained a sense of hope—Christians can help the world become better.

Like Muhlenberg, Phillips Brooks was a believer in comprehensiveness, unwilling to exclude anyone from the church. He succeeded in making religion palatable in a world of intellectual and social instability. True to broad church ideals, both he and Muhlenberg also believed in ecumenism and tried to weaken interdenominational boundaries. Today the Episcopal Church is struggling to be more inclusive, but it is one of the leaders in ecumenism. A charter member of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, it contributes to interfaith dialogues (which usually seek to establish common ground between members of various religions and denominations), and it participates in celebrations of religious diversity such as the second World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1993, the hundredth anniversary of the first World Parliament.

* * *

Members of the Episcopal Church in the United States have traditionally

exercised loyalty not only to their denomination, but to a party within that church. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, high churchmen (like John Henry Hobart) claimed that the Episcopal Church's apostolic succession gave it an absolutely unique place within the American religious spectrum. In the eyes of these high churchmen, only Episcopalians had preserved the primitive faith of the apostles passed down through the centuries, and therefore only they were members of the true church of Christ. Members of the high church party frowned on ecumenism.

On the other hand, low churchmen (such as William White) allowed that the Episcopal Church was one of several legitimate denominations on the American landscape. Although proud of the structures and orderly worship of Anglicanism, they cooperated with other denominations both civically and spiritually.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, both the high and the low church parties evolved. After the publication of the influential *Tracts for the Times*, many high churchmen moved still higher and adopted the theology and liturgical practices of Anglo-Catholicism, the British movement that emphasized not the primitive first centuries of catholic Christianity, but the more elaborate late patristic and medieval periods. Simultaneously, the revivalism of the Great Awakenings affected the low church party, which began to emphasize the necessity for personal conversion and the forsaking of worldly amusements. The two branches of the Episcopal Church grew apart both liturgically and theologically.

In a church polarized by party division, William Augustus Muhlenberg founded a school and then a church that were difficult to classify. He taught evangelical doctrine, but enhanced his environment with catholic decor and ritual. At the same time, Muhlenberg was aware of the pressing needs of the new urban class, and, through both personal and corporate good works, he showed others how to begin to address those needs. Detractors did not always agree with him, but they always respected him. William Augustus Muhlenberg became one of the most influential reformers of the nineteenth-century Episcopal Church, breaking down barriers between parties and setting Episcopalians' sights on the needs outside the church door.

As Muhlenberg was advancing in age, another reformer was practicing his preaching skills in a small parish in Muhlenberg's own home town. The grandson of the wealthy Phillips and Brooks families of Massachusetts, the young minister of classical and evangelical training sought for the right words to express both his adoration of God and his loving embrace of all of God's creation. And Phillips Brooks always seemed to find those right words to say to audiences facing the uncertainties of the modern world.

An encourager and an optimist, Brooks soon moved on to Boston, but even that city was really only a home base for his frequent preaching trips and overseas voyages. He had an ever-expanding mind, and he was willing and able to share his broad vision with the world. Although sympathetic (like Muhlenberg) to evangelicalism, Brooks turned his back on its fear of new ideas and explored what

modern thinking had to offer: Darwinism, progressivism, ecumenism, theological liberalism, tolerance. His forward-looking ideas shone through his flowery Victorian diction, and thousands of congregants responded to his message: “Let us look forward and believe in men.”

The Episcopal Church of the late twentieth century is in some ways a synthesis of Muhlenberg and Brooks, although a small and vocal Anglo-Catholic wing is a reminder of the party that both of them rejected. Primarily urban and open-minded, it appeals mainly to society’s elites, yet it recognizes a mandate to reach out to the disenfranchised. It has sought to be socially relevant, sometimes at the expense of orthodoxy. It values toleration and recognizes the need to communicate and cooperate with other churches. And it keeps one foot planted in traditional worship while with the other it explores the limits of modernity.

“Something deep in me responds to the sweet and tempered ways of the Episcopal Church,” wrote a Southern Baptist minister who joined the Episcopal Church in the 1920s.

Its atmosphere of reverence, its ordered and stately worship, its tradition of historic continuity, linking today with ages ago . . . ; its wise and wide tolerance; its old and lovely liturgy. . . . It is the roomiest Church in Christendom, in that it accepts the basic facts of Christian faith as symbols of transparent truths, which each may interpret as his insight explores their depth and wonder. Midway between an arid liberalism and an acrid orthodoxy, it keeps its wise course, conserving the eternal values of faith while seeking to read the Word of God revealed in the tumult of the time.¹²²

¹²² Joseph Fort Newton, *River of Years: An Autobiography* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1946), 234.

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