The Source and Substance of Liberalism in the Protestant Episcopal Church

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THE SOURCE AND SUBSTANCE OF LIBERALISM
IN THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

by

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B. A. June 1972 Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT

THE SOURCE AND SUBSTANCE OF LIBERALISM IN THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Jo Ann M. Hobart
Old Dominion University, 1979
Director: John W. Kuehl

This essay seeks to discover to what extent Episcopalians were a part of liberalism's attempt to answer the questions to doctrine presented by science, biblical criticism and the complexities of modern life. Phillips Brooks, a popular preacher; Alexander V. G. Allen, an acclaimed historian and seminary teacher; and William S. Rainsford, an architect of the institutional church pattern of social service are discussed as representative figures of those different ministries. These men found answers to the challenges of the late nineteenth century within traditional orthodoxy by interpreting old doctrines by the light of modern knowledge. Because of this they have been called Evangelical or Christocentric liberals. They were successful in changing the position of their own communion toward the ideas of science and criticism and in making it more responsive to the needs of the downtrodden at the end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth.
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INTRODUCTION

The late nineteenth century confronted Americans with a host of challenging problems. Besides the trauma of the Civil War and the frustration of Reconstruction, many other difficulties were created by rapid change and development in the physical environment. Families that had lived in a town for generations were rent by the lure of Western lands or the attractions of the city. Immigrants were also crowding into the cities and changing the once nearly homogeneous complexion of America. New technological developments accumulated faster than they could be assimilated and they often radically altered ordinary life. Stable community life was threatened by corruption in politics and finance. And finally, personal morality seemed to be declining at the same furious pace. The generation after the Civil War has been characterized as a "time of great economic exploitation and waste, grave social corruption and ugliness" when the "dominant note in American political life was complacency."¹

The problems created by the rapid transition from an agrarian culture to an urban one were not the only challenges to American sensibilities during this period. Intellectual developments in science, especially the theory of evolution, and in religion, notably the development of the Higher Criticism, undermined the very foundations of American life. Suddenly people had to adjust not only to an altered

landscape and to a changing social order, but they had to defend or redefine the very substance of their faith.

The theory of evolution was the most important idea Americans encountered between the Civil War and World War I. Its impact has been compared to that of the "Copernican Revolution" of the sixteenth century, which resulted in "a change in man's views of himself, his origin and ancestry and his relations with his fellow man."² Few other scientific theories have had such far reaching influence in molding the thought and the social structures of people as did the theory of evolution and its philosophical variants.³ Unlike other new ideas in physics and astronomy which bypassed the public because of their technicality, the discussion of evolution was not restricted to scientific or religious circles. Popular preachers, lyceum speakers and the press carried the discussion to the public where it had a more profound influence on everyday thought patterns than previous "scientific revolutions."⁴ And because evolutionary ideas permeated so many areas of life and thought, the unrest of the era was reflected in intellectual and religious confusion.

The theory of evolution did not arise suddenly, it had been germinating in the scientific community for some time. While the publica-


tion in 1859 of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* was the fruit of that germination, geological investigations and taxonomical studies prior to 1800 had already suggested the earth's antiquity and the possibility of speciation. What has been described as "the most dangerous journey of all" began with these early studies; Darwin's theory was one of the "great acts of scientific synthesis." Given the existence of a great time span Darwin perceived that organisms would change and develop as a result of environmental pressures and the struggle for survival. Thus the necessary elements—time, struggle, variability and adaptation—were combined into an evolutionary theory of biological development. Acceptance of this theory seemingly contradicted creation by design, disputed God's personal activity in the world, denied the uniqueness of man, negated traditional concepts of sin and raised questions about the authority of Scripture.

While British natural science undermined the Old Testament foundation of Christianity, German philosophy and biblical criticism tarnished the credibility of the New Testament record. The early nineteenth century was dominated by the philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) who attempted through a dialectical process to prove the truth of Christianity. For more than a generation German philosophy and theology was a response to Hegelianism. The principles of Hegel's dialectical methods were most thoroughly employed by a group of scholars at Tübingen University who became known as the "Tübingen School." Its

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founder Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1834) and his disciples "forced a revolution in the field of biblical criticism" in the 1820s developing a method known as the Higher Criticism. Baur and his followers tried to apply Hegelian principles to their studies of early Christianity. Using the dialectical method, they saw the Petrinists (the Jewish Christians) as "thesis," the Paulinists (the Gentile Christians) as "antithesis," and Catholicism as "synthesis." They believed that the contrast in the New Testament books were products of a conflict and as such were more representative of the second century synthesis of the church than of the period they ostensibly described. Baur also applied these principles to the study of various doctrines including the Atonement, the Trinity and the Incarnation.  

His study of the Pastoral Epistles in 1835 and of Paul in 1847 sought to show that Paul was in conflict with the older disciples and that he could not be the author of any of the Epistles except the first chapter of Galatians, II Corinthians and Romans. Baur also doubted the Apostolic origin of the book of Acts. The result of these studies cast doubt on the credibility and authority of the New Testament writers, who were suspected of synthesizing variant schools of thought rather than reporting the events of the life of Christ and the earliest days of the church.

An attack on the person of Jesus was not long in coming out of the Tübingen School." David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74) a student of Baur explained the life of Christ as a myth in Leben Jesu (1835-6).

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He denied the historical foundation of the supernatural elements of Christ's life, believing they evolved as myth in the second century before the story was actually written down and accepted by the church, which had been the result of the dialectical process of development described by Baur. *Vie de Jesus* was a similar work published in 1863 by Joseph Renan (1823-92), a French philosopher who had studied German theology as well as semitic languages. Renan portrayed Jesus as a mere Galilean preacher, ignoring his moral teaching and repudiating the supernatural elements of his life.  

Even though German scholars led the way in scrutinizing the Bible, biblical criticism also developed in England. In fact, one of the earliest literary studies of the Scriptures was completed by Robert Lowth who later became the Bishop of London. In 1753 he published a study of parallelism in Hebrew poetry which was influential in England and on the continent. While English acceptance of biblical criticism was still decades away, a few individuals of great intellectual liberality opened the doors of the Anglican Church to the new learning.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), often called the father of the Broad Church movement, introduced German biblical criticism to England. Coleridge was a foe of "bibliolatry," insisting that the Bible should be read as any other book. In his *Theological Lectures* of 1795, he took pains to subject New Testament Christianity to the light of reason. This attitude was also encouraged by a group of scholars

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at Oriel College, Oxford, who were known as "Noetics" for their emphasis on the intellectual study of the faith. These men, including Thomas Arnold (1795-1842), Renn D. Hampden (1793-1863), and Richard Whateley (1787-1863), were critical of traditional religious orthodoxy and sought to encourage comprehensiveness of opinion and practice in the Church.

Finally, in 1860, German scholarship was more generally introduced with the publication of *Essays and Reviews*. Immediately controversial, *Essays and Reviews*, proposed little that was new and may, in fact, have been "far too negative to make it a real contribution to theology." Yet its influence was as widespread as the furor it created. Written by six clergy and one lay scholar it "provoked violent resistance and resentment on both sides of the Atlantic." The theme of their work, which was not a group effort but a collection of individual essays, was that the only danger to Christianity was the unreasonable opposition to scientific or historical discoveries. As Frederick Temple (1821-1902) wrote in his essay, "The Education of the World," the one "who fears the result of any investigation, whether philosophical, or scientific, or historical" is the one "guilty of high treason against the faith." Benjamin Jowett (1817-93) was just as succinct in his essay, "On the Interpretation of Scripture" when he wrote, any true doctrine of inspiration must conform to all ascertained

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12 Frederick Temple, cited by Addison, *The Episcopal Church* p. 245.
facts of history and science. . . . the same fact cannot be true in religion when seen by the light of faith and untrue when looked at through the medium or evidence of experiment. For a volume that was little more than a summary of current ideas, Essays and Reviews certainly shook the foundations of the Church. The authors were frequently called the "Seven against Christ."

Only two years later John William Colenso (1814-1888), the Bishop of Natal, South Africa, published The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined. For denying the Mosaic authorship and the chronology of the Pentateuch, Colenso was deposed (the decision was later overturned by the Privy Council) and made an object of obliquy.

The "faith once delivered" was thus seriously threatened. Natural science had exploded the biblical cosmogony, questioned the veracity of the Old Testament story of creation, negated God's activity in the world and destroyed the uniqueness of man. Biblical scholars added to the doubt about the credibility of the Scriptures with studies of authorship, languages and comparative religion. Coupled with the philosophy of Hegel, biblical scholarship diluted the Christian Gospel to a moral tale. In Europe and England religious thinkers responded almost immediately to these questions, but in America the response to these crucial issues was delayed.

America, occupied with the exigencies of war and reconstruction, did not confront these issues until the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Writings of that period, however, are replete with the attempt to relate evolutionary ideas to the thought and life of the country and to salvage the truth of the Christian faith from the resi-

\[13\] Benjamin Jowett, cited by Addison, The Episcopal Church, p. 246.
due left by science and biblical criticism. Ideas about individuals and their relationship to one another and to society, which had been formed by a basically English, religious, agrarian culture, were severely tested. Since the dislocations created were as much mental as physical, there could be no amelioration of these problems without a re-evaluation of basic beliefs. The basic belief system in America being derived from Protestant Christianity, Protestant thinkers and Protestant churches played an important role in the accommodation of science, both physical and historical, to American thought and the adjustment of social structures to modern life.

The response of Protestantism to the challenges of science and biblical criticism was not uniform, but almost as varied as the denominational pluralism which characterized American religion. Chronologically the response has been divided into two periods: "Acrid polemics" from 1859 to 1880, and the "Conversion of vocal opinion" and educated acquiescence from 1880 to 1900. But the chronological division does not begin to suggest the multiplicity of viewpoints in each period. However, these can generally be divided into three groups. The most vocal of these was probably the dogmatic response of conservatives who refused to acknowledge the scientific evidence of evolution viewing it as a speculative theory or a philosophy of design. They believed that "to remove the miraculously creating and intervening deity from the world and to rob man of his unique place in nature meant that the

14 Bert J. Loewenberg, "Darwinism Comes to America," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 28(number 3, December, 1941), p. 341.

whole theological house would come tumbling down about his ears."

The most well-known spokesman of this opinion was surely Charles Hodge, Presbyterian minister and professor of Biblical History at Princeton Theological Seminary. Hodge and others like him were fervent defenders of the theory of verbal inspiration and biblical inerrancy.

Nearly as vocal in their response were those who accepted the theories of science and criticism wholeheartedly. The "scientific modernists" may be seen as the left wing of the liberal movement. While some of these men came from traditional backgrounds most came from the more likely fold of Unitarianism. Modernists did not even try to maintain a semblance of continuity with the traditional faith. When the claims of science pressed too hard they cast tradition aside. They turned to science for the investigation and authentication of religious truth, being "less concerned with a distinctively Christian witness and more interested in general religious affirmations based on a 'scientific world view.'" Representative of this opinion were George Foster, a Baptist and Shailer Mathews, a Unitarian. They and others like them were greatly influenced by the "rabid evolutionists" and anti-religionists Herbert Spencer, Aldous Huxley, Ernst H. Haeckel and John Tyndall.

A more moderate response than either of these was that segment of Protestantism that has been called Evangelical Liberalism. These conservatives of the liberal movement sought to preserve the essentials of the historic faith, adjusting to modern knowledge without abandoning


or warping its true meaning. The roots of this reconciling theology may be found, as were the first systematic attacks on religious orthodoxy, in German philosophy and criticism.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) established the foundations of the New Theology, as the broadened understanding of the faith came to be called, with his criticism of rationalism. By distinguishing between pure reason and practical reason Kant "delivered religious belief from the throttling grip of rationalism."¹⁸ In maintaining that religious truth could not be known through pure reason he liberated theology from the criteria used by scientists to investigate the phenomenal world. The verification of religious truth was found to be in experience and especially, for Kant, in moral action. While Kant's epistemology raised questions of its own, it did create a framework in which theological thinking was possible.

Kant's ethical idealism was amended by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). Instead of emphasizing moralism, Schleiermacher insisted that the essence of religion was emotional experience, as he phrased it, "a sense and taste for the Infinite."¹⁹ Schleiermacher thought faith could not be based on a philosophical system but only on a feeling of "absolute dependence on God in Christ."²⁰ Thus religious truth is self-authenticated as one participates through faith in the Chris-


²⁰ Bernard M. G. Readon, Liberal Protestantism, p. 17.
Christian experience.

Schleiermacher was an important influence in assuring the Christo-centricism of Evangelical Liberalism and the Evangelical Liberal's emphasis on the community of the Church. Whereas Kant had viewed Christ symbolically, and the Church as individualistic, Schleiermacher saw Christ as the redeemer and the Church as the fellowship in which Christ and the "God-consciousness" of which he is the source are found.

A student of both Kant and Schleiermacher, Albrecht Benjamin Ritschl (1822-1889) was the most influential theologian of his day and certainly one of the most important single figures in the development of liberalism. He combined the essentials of their thought into a unified system. From Schleiermacher he maintained the idea of religious experience as the normative test for judging religious truth. From Kant he retained the emphasis on the ethical element of Christianity. Differing from Schleiermacher, however, Ritschl believed the Gospel record was a more trustworthy testimony of Christian experience than intuition alone. Ritschl's perception of the Christian faith was that of a life facing both God and man. While other German theologians and teachers, especially Adolph von Harnack, Isaak August Dorner, Hermann Lotze, Julius Kaftan and Wilhelm Herrman, were influential among American liberals, most were essentially interpreters or followers of Kant, Schleiermacher or Ritschl. It was Ritschl's synthesis which provided the primary elements of liberal theology: a respect for experiential knowledge, a devotion to the historical method, an insistence upon the centrality of Jesus, especially the historical Jesus, the necessity of the Church as the historic community of redemption, and the importance of the ethical element in Christianity implied by the doctrine of the
Kingdom of God. While the essential theological and critical work of early liberalism was centered in Germany, there were others, especially Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Frederick Denison Maurice in England, who contributed significantly to the New Theology.

As noted earlier, Coleridge introduced German biblical criticism to England. Having been one of the first in England to study Kant, Coleridge was also of the opinion that Christian truth could not be determined by reason. However, he did believe that Christian truth could not be contrary to reason and attempted to reconcile philosophy and theology. Because of his role in interpreting German philosophy and biblical criticism to America, an early chronicler of the liberal movement described him as "the philosopher of the progressive school in theology in America." His most influential book, *Aids to Reflection* was published in America in 1829. Coleridge's defense of intuition, as the means of knowing spiritual truth, his belief in man as a moral being, and his confidence in living religious experience gave American liberals a basis for reinterpreting the historic faith. His emphasis on experiential religion, teaching people that the Bible was not the Christian religion, but the recorded history of its followers, was especially important in the acceptance of biblical criticism. He believed the truth of Christianity was in no way diminished by the insights of biblical criticism. Secure in his faith that the Christian religion derived its authority from truth and not its truth from authority he could write, in his *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* that,

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Difficulty after difficulty has been overcome from the time that I began to study the Scriptures with free and unboding spirit, under the conviction that my faith in the Incarnate Word and His Gospel was secure, whatever the result might be.  

Coleridge's influence was spread by Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872) who was often called "the Prophet" or "the Master" by his followers. He is regarded by many as the most important English theologian of the nineteenth century. He was essential to the development of liberal theology, especially among Episcopalians, even though he did not allow himself to be called a Broad Churchman, saying that "their breadth seems to be narrowness, they included all kinds of opinion." Among Maurice's most important books were the Kingdom of Christ (1838), which emphasized the church as a community that transcended opinions, and Theological Essays (1853), in which he detailed his view of the relation of religion to politics and his doubts about miracles. Of great importance in the early dedication of Episcopalians to social Christianity was Maurice's work with Charles Kingsley developing that movement in England during the years 1848 to 1854. The influence of Coleridge and Maurice in transmitting and shaping German theology and criticism to suit the Anglican mind cannot be underestimated. Since very few Episcopal clergy studied in German, the interpretations of Coleridge and Maurice may be almost as significant as the primary work of the German writers. There were also other English

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24F. D. Maurice, cited by Bernard M. G. Reardon, Liberal Protestantism, p. 53.
thinkers who contributed to the reconstruction necessitated by science and the Higher Criticism. Of special significance were biblical scholars J. B. Lightfoot, B. F. Westcott, F. J. A. Hort and Edwin Hatch; poets Matthew Arnold and Alfred Lord Tennyson; and F. W. Robertson, "one of the greatest preachers of the century," who made the new learning acceptable and even exciting to many people, from young clerics to workingmen.25

Not all the sources of liberal theology were foreign. American William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), a contemporary of Schleiermacher, may be considered as having begun the liberal movement in America. Of course, Ralph Waldo Emerson had a great influence on some liberals. But Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) who continued within the fold of orthodoxy had the greatest influence on those who became Evangelical Liberals. Influenced by Coleridge, his main contribution was to "deliver the religious life of his day from the bondage of inflexibility and obscurantism that fettered it and to restore to it naturalness and reality." His emphasis on intuitive spiritual knowledge destroyed the barriers that Calvinism had erected between nature and the supernatural. He brought all of life into the realm of religion by insisting upon the priority of spirit over nature and showing "that man himself belongs primarily and chiefly to the supernatural realm."26 As such, man shares in the moral power of God as the personality of Jesus brings him redemption and moral renovation. This was the message of his most inspirational work, Christian Nurture (1847), which expressed his faith


26 John Wright Buckham, Progressive Religious Thought in America, p. 8, p. 21.
in man to respond to the nurture and moral examples within the corporate body of religious life.

This was the intellectual inheritance of the post-war religious thinkers who were attempting to interpret Christian truth to an uprooted and confused nation. Interpreters and reconcilers were found within most of the mainline denominations: Henry Ward Beecher, George A. Gordon, Theodore Munger and Washington Gladden were Congregationalists; William Newton Clarke and Walter Rauschenbusch were Baptists; and James McCosh, William J. Tucker and Newman Smyth were Presbyterians. These men believed in the immanence of God, they had faith in the credibility of personal religious experience, they rejoiced in the uniqueness of the human personality and they had confidence in human reason. They insisted that science could not harm the faith because nothing was inimical to Christianity which was true, since all truth was from God. They saw their task as one of preserving the truth of the Gospel by illuminating it with the fruits of modern knowledge. They have been called Evangelical or Christocentric liberals to describe how firmly they adhered to the traditional orthodoxy of the church. The most well-known representative of Evangelical liberalism is probably Henry Ward Beecher, a Congregationalist minister and for thirty years the most popular preacher in America. It was the evangelicals in the mainline denominations who made the reconstructive theological efforts necessary to answer the questions created by urbanization, industrialization, evolutionism and biblical criticism.27

It is the purpose of this essay to determine to what extent Episcopalians were a part of Evangelical Liberalism. References are frequently made in both general religious histories and Episcopal Church histories to "liberals" or Broad Churchmen in the late nineteenth century. By analyzing the substance of what was preached from the pulpit, taught at the seminary and practiced in the parish, the principles of liberalism as it was conceived and practiced within the Episcopal Church may be discovered. Phillips Brooks, A. V. G. Allen and William S. Rainsford have been chosen as representative figures for each of these areas. Other clergymen whose thought follows that of the major figures will be discussed in an attempt to illustrate that the liberal movement was fairly extensive within the communion. A survey of the Church's governing body, the General Convention, will show how influential liberal Episcopalians were in changing the position of their own communion in regards to science, biblical criticism and social reform. It will be seen that the Episcopal Church was part of this integrative, reconciling movement within Liberal Protestantism.

Some of the most well-known of the liberal Episcopalians were preachers. Their sermons were often reprinted and analyzed in newspapers or magazines and they were frequently invited to give lectures outside the pulpit. The sermon or other public address was often the most important part of a clergyman's ministry.28 Their task given the fact that most Christians believed in the verbal inspiration of an infallible Bible, was not easy. Episcopalian Phillips Brooks was one of those immensely popular preachers who led people to a new appreciation of the Christian Gospel.

CHAPTER I

THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM IN THE PULPIT

In an age of great preachers Phillips Brooks was second only to Henry Ward Beecher in reputation and influence. He was acknowledged by contemporaries as the preeminent liberal among the Episcopal clergy and was perhaps "the greatest preacher and the most impressive personality which the Episcopal Church has yet produced."¹ Yet his evangelical New England background differed only slightly from that of other less well-known evangelicals who would bear the liberal stamp. He was none of the things men are usually remembered for, not a colorful missionary or exciting leader of social reform. The strength of his reputation was based on the power he had to impress people with his words and the force of his personality. A contemporary wrote that when preaching he exhibited "a singular absence of self consciousness, a spontaneity of beautiful thinking clothed in pure English words, a joy in his thoughts, and a victorious mastery of the truth he was telling, combined with humility and reverence and love for the congregation."² He was well-known in America, in England and Europe for more than a generation even though he did not write any books and his sermons and lectures were not published until after his reputation was established.

¹James Thayer Addison, The Episcopal Church, p. 262.

²William Lawrence, Life of Phillips Brooks (New York: Harpers, 1930), p. 44.
On the surface his life does not appear particularly eventful or out of the ordinary. He had a happy home life, he was well educated, he was ordained to the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1859, which he served in three parishes, and he was elected a Bishop eighteen months prior to his death in 1893. Yet historians have singled him out as the Episcopal clergyman of his time, according him a place next to Bushnell and Beecher as one of the "most liberalizing and far-reaching voices in American theology." 

Phillips Brooks was born into a New England family of moderate accomplishments and means. Both sides of his family came to New England during the 1630s. His mother's ancestor, the Reverend George Phillips, was Chaplain on the ship that brought John Winthrop and his company to Massachusetts Bay. Nearly every generation of the Phillips family boasted a clergyman or at least an active lay leader. The family remained devout Congregationalists, steadfast in the Westminster Creed. The Brooks side of the family arrived in New England in 1636 in the person of Thomas Brooks. Except for their relationship by marriage to Puritan leader John Cotton, there were few religious leaders in the family. In the generation prior to Phillips Brooks' birth the family followed the Unitarian branch of the Congregational Church.

Phillips Brooks' parents, William Gray Brooks and Mary Ann Phillips were married in 1833 and eventually had five sons. Phillips, the second, was born in December, 1835. The family was close and their mother's

3 Brooks served at Church of the Advent in Philadelphia from July, 1859 until November, 1861 and then at Holy Trinity Church, also in Philadelphia, from 1862 until 1869 when he began his long tenure at Boston's Trinity Church. This pastorate lasted until his election as Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts in 1891.

4 John W. Buckham, Progressive Religious Thought in America, p. 41.
deep piety insured a religious atmosphere in the home. Because of Mrs. Brooks' concern over Unitarian influences in the Congregationalist Church, she joined the Episcopal Church when Phillips was only four. Eventually her husband and all five sons would be confirmed in the Church and three sons would become its ministers. At St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Boston, the family came under the influence of Dr. John Stone and later Dr. Alexander Vinton, both leading evangelicals of their day. Dr. Vinton became a family friend and the years of his association with the family were important ones for Phillips Brooks.

Brooks attended public school until age eleven when he entered Boston Latin School, a rigorous preparatory school. At fifteen he entered Harvard but continued to live at home on weekends where he was still under the influence of Dr. Vinton even though his tutors at Harvard included Longfellow, Asa Gray and Louis Agassiz. He was a good student who was elected Phi Beta Kappa in his senior year and won several prizes for his essays. Harvard's course of study emphasized the Classics and during his last two years Brooks concentrated on language and literature. He does not seem to have been much influenced by Emerson even though he surely must have read his work or heard him lecture. Nor does he appear to have been swayed by Theodore Parker, another preacher of unorthodoxy, despite the fact that Parker often preached in Boston. While Brooks never alludes to any religious doubts he had while in college, his biographer A. V. G. Allen believes his delay in seeking Confirmation, the rite of initiation in the Episcopal Church, may have been a reflection of some religious questioning.

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5 Asa Gray was a botanist and proponent of Darwinism and Louis Agassiz was a naturalist and opponent of Darwin's theories.
Brooks was not actually confirmed until after his first year in seminary.

After graduation from Harvard Brooks taught at the Boston Latin School. Fired because of his inability to maintain discipline, he spent the next few months brooding about his future. It was Dr. James Walker, President of Harvard, who advised him to study for the ministry, but his own realization of that calling was slow to materialize. Among young men of his day there was a feeling that the ministry was a confining profession where good learning was forfeited to the defense of ecclesiology. Furthermore, the prestige of the ministry had declined for a number of reasons, but especially because the churches had generally refused to take a resolute stand on the issue of slavery. Nevertheless, after consulting with Dr. Vinton, he left suddenly for Theological School at Alexandria, Virginia, arriving late in the first term. After Harvard, Brooks was disappointed with the academic quality he found at Theological Seminary. Under the influence of the "new Evangelicalism," learning was overshadowed by personal religious experience and reason was subordinated to feeling. In this unstimulating academic environment he did a great deal of independent reading and began the life long discipline of keeping journals recording his reading and later his sermon preparation.6

Brooks' family background, his early religious training under evangelicals in the Episcopal Church and his attendance at the most evangelical of Episcopal seminaries would seem to insure that he would have remained in the conservative evangelical fold himself. In the most basic sense he was orthodox; he never denied the fundamental truths of Chris-

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6 Most of the information about Brooks' personal life comes from the minutely chronicled and often doting biography by A. V. G. Allen, Life of Phillips Brooks (Boston: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1900).
ianity. Yet in a more profound way he was liberal in his intellectual openness and tolerance. He had an abiding faith that truth was of God. Because of his orthodoxy, Brooks was able to provide leadership in the struggle to assimilate scientific and intellectual progress to Christian belief.

That he realized the peculiar trauma faced by his generation can be seen in the description of their world found in his Thanksgiving Day Sermon of 1874. Of the times he said,

If is certainly one of the most interesting times in which a man could have been sent into the world to live. On the one hand, it has accumulated an immense knowledge of details and second causes which have made it hard to look beyond to principles and the first origin of things. On the other hand, it has struggled with the principles of life with most ambitious curiosity. It combines immense material development with great susceptibility to spiritual influences. It has disowned forms of authority, . . . and at the same time it has become so conscious of the largeness of truth that it is willing to listen to any confident charlatan who claims to be its teacher, -- the most practical and the most visionary, the most hard-headed and the most soft-hearted, the most positive and the most perplexed, the most desponding and the most eager, the most independent and the most credulous of all the ages. . . .

We are in the habit of hearing this character of our age summed up in the statement that it is a "transition time." It rather gets its character from its relation to what has gone before it, than from what it contains within itself. This is what gives it so much of an aspect of restlessness and unquiet. It is full of the sense of having in many ways broken with the past, and of having not yet thoroughly apprehended the future that is to come. It is not the happiest frame of life. 7

Brooks sensed that the confusion caused by science, historical criticism and modern life could lead to intellectual and spiritual despair. In the same sermon he went on to compare his generation's frame of mind to that which Matthew Arnold, whom he called the "most representative poet of our age," had sketched for himself in "Dover Beach."

Wandering between two worlds, one dead
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere to rest my head
Like these on earth I wait forlorn.  

Even though Brooks was keenly aware of this crisis of faith, it was unusual for him to bring controversy into the pulpit. The pulpit, he believed, was for "preaching Christ," not for preaching about Christ. When he gave the Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale Divinity School in 1877, he bemoaned the existence of so many preachers who seem to do nothing else, always discussing Christianity as a problem instead of announcing Christianity as a message, and proclaiming Christ as a Savior. . . . such discussions are not the type or ideal of preaching. . . . Definers and defenders of the faith are always needed, but it is bad for a church when its ministers count it their true work to define and defend the faith rather than to preach the Gospel.  

In fact, as his biographer A. V. G. Allen has pointed out, Brooks' reticence to discuss theological controversies in the pulpit led many to assume that "he had none, and some even thought he was incapable of forming theological conclusions."  

Yet, infrequently on Sunday and more often in public lectures, his enthusiasm for the insights of natural science and biblical criticism were revealed. That enthusiasm, however, was based more on the new freedom of inquiry which had resulted than the specifics of science or biblical criticism. In "Healthy Conditions of a Change of Faith," (1883) he exulted that

For the first time in many centuries the hand of external restraint is absolutely taken off from theological thinking. Neither painful
penalties nor social disesteem -- hardly, except in the extremest cases, even ecclesiastical reproof -- will attach themselves to free speculation in theology. To many people this state of things seems full of danger. To many others it seems full of hope. But those who hope the most from it must be supremely anxious that those who feel the spirit of the age should feel it worthily, and move from conviction to conviction, . . . always valuing each special movement only as a stage in the long, never-forgotten search of the soul after the perfect truth of God.\(^{11}\)

Though he rejoiced in the new found freedom of thought, Brooks did not turn himself to discussions about the specific discoveries of evolution or the Higher Criticism. In fact it is nearly impossible to find in his public addresses or sermons references to Darwin, evolution or the issues of German criticism. These topics were usually addressed within discussions on religious doubt or skepticism. He answered the questions posed by the new knowledge with the historic doctrines of the faith--Incarnation, Trinity, Atonement.

Of the newest theories of nature he wrote "that the whole present tendency of physical science, which with its theories of evolution, dwells upon the presence in the world of a continuing active formative force, is in line with Christianity."\(^{12}\) This was not an effortless accommodation to science out of necessity, but a well informed embrace of knowledge which, he believed, was "letting us see more deeply into the real meaning of those things which our fathers believed."\(^{13}\) The idea of evolution or development, as it was often called, was not inimical to a theology based on the Incarnation. While previous eras may have empha-


sized the transcendent nature of God and consequently lost the sense of His presence in the world, evangelicals, with their stress on personal religious experience, reaffirmed the immanence of God in creation. The mechanic of His creative presence was not as important as the fact of His presence through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. For evangelicals the immanence of God was most palpable in the universe through the person of Jesus, "full of humanity, full of divinity and powerful with a love for man which combines in itself every element that enters into love of the completest kind." It was only through the person of Jesus that men could understand their true relationship to God which was that of a child to its father. As Phillips Brooks often proclaimed it,

Man is the child of God by nature. He is ignorant and rebellious, --the prodigal child of God; but his ignorance and rebellion never break the first relationship. It is always a child ignorant of his Father; always a child rebellious against his Father.\(^{14}\)

Brooks saw a recognition of the divine immanence in the new theism, presented by John Fiske's *Idea of God as Affected by Modern Knowledge*, even though Fiske failed to see Christ as the pure manifestation of that immanence. Fiske's realization that "the infinite and eternal power that is manifested in every pulsation of the universe is none other than the living God,"\(^ {15}\) finds its corollary, according to Brooks, in the doctrine of the Trinity. That doctrine, he wrote,

is a protest against the hard, tight personalness of the conception of God which thinks of Him as a big individual, with definite limits to His nature, and almost to a visible frame in which he lives. The doctrine of the Trinity is an attempt to give


richness, variety, mystery, internal relation, abundance, and freedom to the ideas of God. . . The new theism, filled with the sense of a divine life in the very being of the universe, furnishes the bath of a great general conception into which special doctrine must now and then be plunged for the renewal of its truth and freshness. . . The Incarnation brought into union with God's supremacy the sacredness of man. There may be a yet unreached though often anticipated theism which shall bring into union with God's supremacy the liveness of the world.16

Brooks defended such views against the charge of pantheism, pointing out that the New Testament "is always just on the brink of pantheism, and is only saved from it by the intense personality of Jesus. . ." 17 What he does fault is the protest against anthropomorphism which is implicit in the writings of Fiske and other interpreters of the new science. He insists that the concept of anthropomorphism is not useless because it has been badly used, but can help men understand the true meaning of their creation in the image of God as well as something of the personality of God. And defining the personality of God cannot be avoided; it is a necessity for any system of thought which suggests divine immanence as an element of creation. Since it is easier to know something of the nature of man by looking at a particular man, so it is reasonable that knowledge of God can be gained by looking at man who is made in His image. In this way Brooks answered two of the most crucial questions—What is man? and What is his relationship to God?—suggested by evolutionary science.

Yet Brooks' view of man did not lead him into the trap of optimism, into which so many of the later liberals stumbled. He was ever conscious of the fallen nature of man stating that,

17 Ibid., p. 158.
I have no patience with the foolish talk which would make sin nothing but imperfection, and would preach that man needs nothing but to have his deficiencies supplied, to have his native goodness educated and brought out in order to be all that God would have him be. The horrible incompetency of that doctrine must be manifest enough to any man who knows his own heart, or who listens to the tumult of wickedness which rises up from all the dark places of the earth.

Sin is a dreadful, positive, malignant thing. What the world in its worst part needs is not to be developed, but to be destroyed. Any other talk about it is shallow and mischievous folly. 18

No one reading this could accuse Brooks, as Charles Hopkins has done, of preaching an emasculated Calvinism. 19 Brooks consistently preached that man is a child of God not only by creation but by redemption also.

The death of Christ has saved the world! Not merely His character and teaching; for historically, from the very first, the violent death of Jesus has had a prominence in religious influence which will not allow us, even as faithful students of history, to leave it out of view when we speak of the great formative power of modern human life. Always and everywhere the Christ whom Christianity has followed has been a Christ who died. 20

The manner in which Brooks met questions raised by science, explicating existing doctrine, is instructive of the position of evangelical liberals. No material philosophy or theory could dilute for them the spiritual truth of God's authorship of creation. Only the fundamentalists who tenuously built their claims on the literal inerrancy of the Scriptures would scream infidelity at Darwin's theories.

Brooks' response to biblical criticism was similar to that he gave to science in its measured assessment of the contribution of the new

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learning to the historic faith. He was well versed in the most recent opinions and insights of the Higher Criticism, but since he rarely cited biblical scholars in his sermons, some contemporaries thought he was either indifferent or ignorant of the subject.21 However, as with other topical issues, Brooks always sought to present the eternal or the practical rather than the abstract. Even when acknowledging that the Bible was "a gathering of many wonderful books" whose authorship may be doubtful, he emphasized the eternal character and purpose of which they told--"the revelation of the Eternal Father to mankind in Jesus Christ."22 And yet when required he could be outspoken in the defense of the Higher Criticism as in opposing Bishop Potter's silencing of R. Heber Newton's lectures on "The Right and Wrong Uses of the Bible." While the Anglican Church never insisted upon a theory of verbal inspiration or the inerrancy of the Scriptures, Newton's lectures tested the allowable limits of interpretation. Brooks' in supporting Newton praised the fact that the "world will never go back again to the old ideas of verbal inspiration," knowledge of the "nature of the Bible" had set men free to study it in a new and profound way.23

Normally Brooks discussed biblical criticism in relation to the message and authority of Scripture. In his biography of Brooks, Allen reproduced the notes for a Wednesday evening lecture in 1880 on "The Doctrine of the Bible." Beginning with the assumption that God would want to communicate with His children, Brooks asked in what form God

23Ibid.
would choose to reveal himself. His conclusion was that God, a "Person" would reveal himself through a "Person." The real value of books then is in what they record. . . . Thus Christ is the true Revelation of God, and the Bible gets its value from being the description of Christ. The story of a revelation, more properly than a revelation itself. And so its various parts differ with the quality of what they have to tell of. So the Revelation lies behind the Bible, and the Bible is to the Revelation like the sunshine to the Sun.24

Brooks judged the discoveries of science and history by what they revealed about God. Did they lead to truth or falsehood? For Brooks, as a disciple of the one who proclaimed "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," truth was the greatest test of any idea or doctrine. Brooks continually emphasized freedom of inquiry and toleration in his sermons as well as in his public lectures.

The challenges of science and criticism were essentially challenges to authority. Brooks sought to show that real authority depends on something less changeable than theories or books. In an address to the Church Congress in 1884 on "Authority and Conscience," he denounced the idea that external authority could provide the basis of faith. He pointed to John Henry Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism as an example of mistaking the trappings of authority for authority itself. Brooks found both the Roman declaration that the Church is the "oracle" of authority and the Protestant insistence on the infallibility of the Bible destructive as well as useless in the process of finding true authority. "In proportion as the search for a seat of infallibility occupies the attention of a Church, the oneness of many men of many minds must grow weak within her, a Church bound to the doctrine of authority

24Ibid., II:511.
cannot be a comprehensive Church."\textsuperscript{25} Let the Church give up the search for infallibility, he pleaded, and trust once again the individual conscience. True individualism, he thought, was not that of Robinson Crusoe, but the individualism of St. Paul. . . . To use authority for evidence; to feel the power of reverence beauty which belongs to ancient goodness; to distrust ourselves long when we differ from the wisest and the best; to know that the whole truth can and must come, not to the one man, but to the Whole of humanity; and to listen to that whole as it groans and travails with its yet unmastered truth -- to do all this and yet to let ourselves call no conviction ours till our own mind and conscience has accepted it as true.\textsuperscript{26}

While this was not the search of the solitary soul for truth, but that of one who participates in the community of the faithful, he felt that the individual must test that which claims authority through his own experience and with his own conscience. "It is the soul, the conscience, which turns the dogma back again to truth. . . . Only the dogma which can be opened into truth can live. Only the truth which the soul appropriates gives life." If Christian truth exists not only in the Church or the Scriptures, but also inherently in man as a child of God, then conscience, not authority, is "the final warrant of all Christian truth."\textsuperscript{27}

In a later essay on "Orthodoxy" read to the Clericus in 1890, he further denounced the dogmatism that would deny individual conscience and responsibility. In this essay he defined orthodoxy as "truth accepted and registered by authority" and described it as "in the Church, very much what prejudice is in the single mind. . . . the premature conceit of certainty." Orthodoxy, he concluded, can never substitute for truth


\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., pp. 112-13.

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., p. 114, p. 117.
because it is almost always incomplete and often incorrect. He believed it was a danger to freedom and that it provided "a false standard of life," encouraging men to "aspire after soundness in faith rather than after richness in the truth." He was dismayed that the term "free-thinker" had become one of disdain instead of respect. And, he suspected, it was the rigidity of orthodoxy rather than the simple truths of Christianity which had spawned the "defiant liberalism" of his own times. A liberalism that was deliberately destructive, "which not only disbelieves the orthodox dogma, but disbelieves it with a sense of attempted wrong and of triumphant escape." 28

In the skepticism of his times Brooks saw the coming death of orthodoxy. He believed that doubt would force men to search for truth outside of orthodoxy and that they would find it by exercising their own private judgment. The Church had a role in helping men find that truth. In his Lectures on Preaching given to the Divinity School of Yale College, in 1877, Brooks shared with the future clerics what he believed they could in all honesty preach—the truth. "The preacher must mainly rely upon the strength of what he does believe," he proclaimed, "and not upon the weakness of what he does not believe." He castigated the clergy who preached about things of which they knew little, neglecting the things which are part of the minister's knowledge—"the spiritual verities." 29 Many of the clergy, he thought, gave too much attention to modern science, applauding it all too readily or attacking it without understanding. But it is possible, he stated, for a minister taking the facts of the spiritual life, to declare them with as

28 Ibid., p. 185

true a certainty as any preacher ever did in what men call the "ages of faith." They are as true today as they ever were. Men are as ready to feel their truth. The spiritual nature of man, with all its needs, is just as real a thing, and Christ is just as truly and richly its satisfaction. To speak of it and offer Him is your privilege and mine. And yet not to be unregardful of what men are thinking by our side, to watch it with a desire to see, not what it will overthrow, but what it will say to strengthen and enlarge the truth we preach; to watch it with a feeling that it may modify our conception and statement of the truth, but with no fear at all that it can ever destroy the truth itself; . . . Our truth stands on its own evidence, but it has connections with all the truth that men are learning so wonderfully on every side. To listen to what they learn, not that we may see whether our truth of the soul and God is true, but that we may come to truer and larger ways of apprehending it -- this is our place.30

If a minister took this position in regard to modern knowledge, he would
not only be able to free his people from the "uselessness of doubt and
the uselessness of bigotry," but would be able to lead them into a larger and truer conception of their faith.

The deep skepticism of the times required that the clergy meet doubt not with arguments on a variety of doctrines or discoveries, but with the living faith of Jesus Christ. Only the person of Jesus could answer the deep despair that seemed to engulf the souls of men. As Brooks pointed out in "The Pulpit and Popular Skepticism," which appeared in the Princeton Review in 1879, the "skepticism of today does not suggest any substitute for the religion which it disbelieves, and which in its active moods it labors to destroy." The only effective antidote to the poison of skepticism was the "building up of faith."31

While the times were fraught with danger for the faithful, Brooks was optimistic about the simplifying of theology and the enlargement of the

31 Phillips Brooks, Essays and Addresses, pp. 61-2.
faith. He felt that the fundamental truths—that all men are the children of God, that God was the author and sustainer of the world and that God through Jesus Christ was a living presence in the lives of all who believed in Him—were being rediscovered and revalidated through the discoveries of science and the insights of biblical criticism and historical studies. There was no need to protect the truth; it was constantly being revealed to men by God. His faith that the essentials of Christianity were being strengthened gave Brooks the marvelous freedom to rise above the skepticism and despair caused by materialism and to offer people an old faith transformed by eternal truth into a "new theology" fit for the times. Brook’s influence was not to be found in the practical application of this new theology to the social problems of the times. As if anticipating future critics, he wrote that differences of personality and aptitude must be allowed for among the clergy. While he enthusiastically endorsed the concern of the pulpit for the social order, believing that preachers ought to address "the right use of wealth," "the extravagance of society," "impurity and licentiousness," and "political corruption and misrule," he did not think every preacher had to do this work. He knew that each person was different, some seeing sin as an "all-pervading spiritual presence" and others only seeing it "incarnated in some special vicious act." But one was not just a "pietist" nor the other a "mere moralist;" each had a special ministry to renounce evil as they saw it. However, he felt it necessary that there should be men to preach "of truth in its pure, invariable essence, and of duty in its primary idea, as it issues a yet undivided stream from the fountain of the will of God."32 This sort of devotion to the pure truth of the

Gospel was Brooks' contribution to the theological thought of the day.

It was in his expansive and confident commitment to the truth that Brooks can be considered a preeminent voice for the New Theology. In his own person he demonstrated that "liberal religion" does not always include a rejection of tradition and dogma. As Brooks' friend and biographer A. V. G. Allen recognized, religious and intellectual freedom for Phillips Brooks was founded on dogma. "For him all knowledge that deserved the name of knowledge was theology. He was no dogmatist, but he got rid of dead dogmas, not by burying them or burning them, but by filling them with life." In this description of F. D. Maurice, the English theologian, Brooks described his own influence on religious thought.

While Brooks was the most illustrious Episcopalian among the day's popular preachers, there were a number of others whose influence extended beyond the confines of their own parishes and whose ideas were similar to those of Brooks. Thomas March Clark (1812-1903), a close friend of Brooks' mature years, was also from an evangelical background. He retained that evangelical spirit even while assimilating the new knowledge of science and biblical criticism. As early as 1869, when he wrote Primary Truths of Religion, he attempted to answer the growing skepticism of the day. He tried to show that the Bible's disclosures of Divine truth are made in accordance with the laws and limitations of our intellectual being. It reveals God to us through the types of natural analogy, because we could comprehend no other style of revelation; and its modes of representation vary according to the degree of culture attained by those to whom they are addressed. God is revealed to the patriarchy, in conformity to patriarchal habits of thought; to the Jew, on the level of the

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Jewish plane of culture; to the disciples of Jesus, in all His fulness.34

As this passage shows he was aware of the trends of biblical criticism, especially the idea of the development of Scripture. He exhibited as did his fellow Evangelical Liberals, an awareness of the eternal nature of truth and the changeless message of the Gospel. He realized that

All great truths, in order to be effective, must adapt themselves to the age upon which they are brought to bear, and in some way recognize its prevailing modes of thought, its tendencies and necessities. Christianity is always the same and is always changing. . . . the Church which Christ established was meant to be a living stream, for the renewal and refreshment of the world -- never at rest, and gathering volume and strength from all the affluents of science, art and culture.35

Clark was convinced that the influence of modern knowledge had not diminished any of the essential truth of Christianity; if anything it had led to deeper knowledge. Science and philosophy had discovered wonderful confirmations of the essential truths of revelation, and the supernatural is no longer in conflict with the profoundest thought of the age. It is no longer necessary to harmonize science and religion -- they give each other mutual support. The one is the complement of the other, and neither is conceivable alone. The spiritual finds its terms of expression in the material, and the material is the outgrowth of the spiritual.36

Since Clark was elected Bishop of Rhode Island in 1866 and Presiding Bishop of the Church in 1899, his acceptance and propagation of the New Theology was of some consequence in the general acquiescence of that communion to the ideas of Evangelical Liberalism.

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36 Ibid., pp. 53-4.
Another important figure in the Episcopal Church's accommodation to the New Theology was William Reed Huntington (1838-1909), considered the leading presbyter of the Church in the late 'nineties. Huntington's background was different from other Episcopalian liberals in that his family was of the Anglo-Catholic tradition of the Church rather than the evangelical. It was only in college that he came under the influence of evangelical teaching which he claimed saved him from agnosticism. He was, like his evangelically raised brethren, orthodox in the essentials of the faith. His personal reputation for nonpartisanship lent great credibility to liberal preaching.

He was particularly concerned about the conflict between science and religion. In *Four Key-Words of Religion*, he wrote that there would be no controversy about the Bible, "if instead of trying to make it a manual of paleontology," people would view it as a "sketch" of the stage upon which the drama of life is played. The Bible, according to Huntington, was never meant to be a treatise on geology but a guide to life. "The only philosophy of evolution which Christianity is bound to fight," he claimed, "is that which invites us to contemplate the universe as a seed-plot, and then forbids us to believe that any sower ever went forth to sow."37

Yet another popular preacher and Bishop of the Church was David Hummel Greer (1844-1919). Raised in an evangelical home, Greer was one of the few Episcopalian liberals to study in Europe. His studies there led him to theological liberalism, but he remained firmly anchored in Christ. He, like Brooks, thought that the skepticism of the day

was especially virulent because it permeated all areas of life and all levels of society encouraging the suspension of belief. Materialism, which Brooks had faulted for its emphasis of secondary causes and mechanisms, made people believe religious truth was an endless search because there was no "verifiable knowledge." Materialism also encouraged the idea that religion was other worldly and not concerned with the real world. Greer insisted that the "ministry touches and includes within its compass all sorts and conditions of things, . . . things human, . . . things divine; things physical; things metaphysical, things natural; things supernatural; mental, moral and spiritual." Because the ministry of Christ was of the world and because all truth was of God, the division between secular and religious truth was false. He felt that the church in seeking to give God's truth greater authority had "diminished the sacredness of all other truth." He felt that the clergy could stem the tide of skepticism by acknowledging that the search for truth in all fields was a sacred pursuit. "All truth is sacred," he wrote, "all truth is religious and it is all a revelation of God." 38

The most common principle shared by Brooks, Clark, Huntington and Greer was faith in Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God in the world. His incarnation was the central truth of Christianity and it did not need to be defended. Their tolerance of modern knowledge was not the tolerance of indifference but of confidence in the incarnation. They sincerely believed that the truth of Christianity stood upon its own evidence and was neither buttressed by creedal affirmations or shaken

by rumors of unbelief. While they felt it was important to reassert God's claim over all the earth and the creatures therein, they did not think polemics could save men's souls. And that, the saving of the individual soul was still the most important task of the evangelical preacher, however liberal was his theology. His belief in man as a child of God led him to stress the sanctity of each individual and the personal message of the Gospel for each individual.

While popular preachers were carrying the reconciling comfort of the New Theology to the public, teachers at one Episcopal seminary were engaged in original theological work that provided a historical understanding of the major principles of the New Theology—the Divine Immanence. Because the liberal thinkers of the period were basically located in New England and New York, the men knew each other and were often close friends. Most of the seminary professors were members of the Boston clericus, which Phillips Brooks had been instrumental in organizing, so there were numerous occasions for them to share their work with the other clergymen.
CHAPTER II
THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM IN THE SEMINARY

The center of academic theological liberalism in the Episcopal Church was the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was founded in 1867 to provide a moderate atmosphere at a time when General Theological Seminary in New York was considered too "high" church and Virginia Theological Seminary was considered too "low" church. ETS was dedicated to "personal piety and open-minded theological inquiry"\(^1\) and was quite influential in the eventual acceptance of modern scholarship by the Church. The school's commitment to theological inquiry was quite radical for the times and it was continually under criticism. In fact, some Bishops would not allow their ordination candidates to study at ETS.

Its most well known and influential teacher was Alexander Viets Griswold Allen (1841-1908). Born into an old Massachusetts family, Allen's background was evangelical. His father, a teacher, was ordained to the priesthood of the Church at the age of forty. His mother, of Puritan stock, was a deeply pious woman. An indication of the strong evangelical piety which infused their home is the name they gave to their son. Alexander Viets Griswold was an early evangelical leader in the Episcopal Church. Allen's father served several small parishes in Massachusetts and Vermont, never earning more than a few hundred

\(^{1}\)Norman Pittenger, "Modernism in America," Modern Churchman NS 13 (October, 1969): 105.
dollars a year. So while his family religious background had similarities to that of Phillips Brooks, his physical circumstances were considerably less comfortable.

It is not known where he received his early education, but it was probably from his father. At eighteen he enrolled at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. He must have been an able student as he graduated at the head of his class. He continued his studies at Bexley Hall, the theological seminary at Gambier. Like Virginia Theological Seminary where Phillips Brooks studied, Bexley Hall was exceedingly evangelical and suffered from many of the same excesses. For Allen, the insistence on personal religious experience as a test of conversion nearly undermined his faith, leading him to consider renouncing traditional Christianity. In the library at Gambier he became acquainted with eighteenth century rationalism and nineteenth century German philosophy and biblical criticism through the pages of the Westminster Review. His reading so shook his faith that he wrote a disquieting letter home confessing his depression and his feelings of hypocrisy in remaining a ministerial student. But it was also in these pages that he found Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the first answers to his skepticism. "From that time," he wrote, "I took Coleridge as my guide, philosopher, and friend."² Here also he found Frederick Denison Maurice, another guide and solace to so many young men. The knowledge of a larger conception of the faith led him to seek a more intellectual atmosphere and he transferred to Andover Theological Seminary. It was here that his intellectual horizons were expanded and his faith restored.

While still a student at Andover he was ordained a deacon and began to assist the Reverend George Packard at his parish in Lawrence, a few miles from Andover. At Lawrence, Allen called on parishioners, led the Sunday school and the Sunday evening services. There was surprise among his classmates, according to his biographer Charles Slattery, that he did parish work, since he had a reputation as a reclusive scholar. By 1866 he was ordained to the priesthood having come through his period of doubt into a larger and livelier faith. Writing to a friend he recounted his struggle with skepticism saying that,

I was tired and wearied with endeavoring to construct a religion for myself. ... I felt a yearning for something substantial, time-worn, honoured with the devotion of past generations.... It was from such a basis as this that my respect for the past began to grow upon me and an historical Church to impose its necessity upon my mind. A spiritual Church does not go deep enough for the sinfulness of men. By a spiritual Church I mean one that evolves from the spiritual consciousness the data upon which its spiritual life rests. It may satisfy one side of our natures, but it is only a half truth. The historical Church, which comes up from a vale of tears, bearing about her the groans and confessions of all her children, and offering to them and us all the only consolation suited to one age and to all ages -- forgiveness and a firm hope of salvation through the blood of the Lamb. This is the other side of the truth without which no Church can stand. It really amounts to justification by faith ... I should say, it is God's love as revealed to us in Christ. ... which is the essence of Christianity. Christ is the great central truth not only in Christianity, but also in the history of the world. On some points I am skeptical, on some rationalistic. I am a thoroughgoing Broad Churchman of the old school.3

In this letter the confusion felt by young evangelicals in their first confrontation with German philosophy and British natural science is evident. Their faith was too important to them to ignore the challenges of science or philosophy or for them to do any less than seek the truth. Allen was fortunate in that his period of spiritual despondency seems to have been quite brief. He apparently synthesized the evangelical

faith of his youth with rationalism and German idealism while still in his early twenties. The major tenets of evangelical liberalism, faith in Christ as the incarnation of God in the world, a sense of the historic process of a continuing revelation, a need for personal religious experience exercised within the historic community of faith, a recognition of the fallen nature of man and his need for salvation are all found here. Though Allen's studies would lead him to concentrate on the history of the doctrine of divine immanence, these other facets of evangelical religion remained.

Allen's intellectual abilities were recognized at Andover and he was asked to stay on after graduation for a year or two of graduate study. They were pleased to have a student interested in modern philosophical thought. During this extended period of study he read more of the German scholars, Kant, Fichte, Lessing, Dorner, Schleiermacher; the English rationalists, Locke, Bacon, Mill, Whately; the English liberals, Kingsley, Stanley, Arnold and of course Coleridge and Maurice. In 1867 he was asked to be the instructor of Church History at the newly established seminary in Cambridge. Two years later he became a full professor and spent the remainder of his life at the Episcopal Theological Seminary. According to the testimonies of students he was a well loved and respected teacher. One recalls that he "was unsurpassed in all of Cambridge as a lecturer."¹

Living in Cambridge he became acquainted with the New England clergy. He was soon part of the circle that formed around Phillips Brooks, joining the Clericus in 1871 and participating in the planning

of the first Church Congress in 1874. Of that meeting he wrote, "The Congress is at present the great hope of the Church. Broad Church ideas are peculiarly fitted for the republican mind and temper..." The following year he was also invited to join the Ministers Club, a group composed of the more prominent Protestant clergy in the Boston area. They shared, presented and discussed essays at their monthly meetings.

He gained a reputation as a fine scholar with the publication of his first book, The Continuity of Christian Thought (1884). It was "hailed in England as the most significant book on theology so far written by an American." The Continuity was an interesting book on several accounts, but primarily because of its rejection of the Latin tradition. Allen began his history of the church with the Greek fathers. Bishop Lawrence writing of the impact of the Continuity said it wrought a great change in the attitude of scholars, ecclesiastics and religious people. To a generation which had been educated to think that the Latin, Augustinian, Calvinistic interpretations of the Christian faith were final, he revealed... the fact that throughout the Church's history there had run a continuous stream of Greek interpretation: through history the principles and methods for which Coleridge, Maurice, and Bushnell stood, heretics, in their day, were justified.

As Sidney Ahlstrom has noted, Allen in The Continuity of Christian Thought "made historical studies an evocative vehicle for liberal theological themes." Allen believed that the nineteenth century emphasis on the divine immanence was the renewal of the most ancient Christian doctrin of God. Allen thought the traditional concept of God as a

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5 A. V. G. Allen, cited by Slatter, Allen, p. 64.
6 James Thayer Addison, The Episcopal Church, p. 224.
7 William Lawrence, Memories, p. 62.
8 Sidney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, p. 778.
transcendent being had been developed during a period "when free inquiry and intellectual activity were struck with decline." The theology developed by Augustine, he wrote,

... rests upon the transcendence of Deity as its controlling principle, and at every point appears as an inferior rendering of the earlier interpretation of the Christian faith. Augustine is the most illustrious representative in history of a process very familiar to our own age, by which men of considerable intellectual activity, wearied with the questionings and skepticisms which they cannot resolve, fall back upon external authority as the only mode of silencing the reason and satisfying the conscience.  

Augustine and the Medieval Church fostered the idea of a God outside the world and the Protestant Reformation, where it was influenced by Calvin, perpetuated the concept. The skepticism of the nineteenth century, according to Allen, was a reaction against such a concept of God. "Modern infidelity" was not a protest against Christianity so much as it was a rejection of a Latinized Christianity which the thought of the world had outgrown while it is still perpetuated in the formal attitude of the Churches. The traditional doctrines concerning the nature and method of divine revelation, the atonement, and the final destiny of man, are called into question, not because they are irrational in themselves, but because they no longer spring by an inward necessity from that changed conception of God which is consciously or unconsciously postulated by the mind.  

The conception of God being postulated by the nineteenth century mind then was not new but older than the one which had supplanted it in Western Christendom.

The theology of God’s immanence was formulated by the fathers of the early Greek Church. These men, whom Allen thought occupied an age

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10Ibid., p. 8.
intellectually similar in spirit to his own, had been inspired by the idea of a God whose presence totally pervades the world. In the earliest Christian theology God was recognized as an indwelling presence. When the Latin image of God supplanted that of the Greek Church, He was viewed as an external moral governor who revealed himself to depraved men, living in an evil world, through the Scriptures as interpreted by the Church and through his messenger Jesus Christ, who came to earth, lived, died and returned to heaven. Greek theology in Allen's analysis presented an opposite opinion, one more true to the origins of Christianity and certainly more compatible with the modern temper. The Greek theology of the early Church proclaimed that God was an immanent presence revealed through nature and experience as well as Scripture, acknowledged man as a creature made in God's image, believed the world to be good because created by God and saw Christ as God in the world, loving and guiding men.

Allen did not claim to be original in his exposition of the differences between the Greek and the Latin concepts of God. As he wrote in the preface to the Continuity, he used Neander, Baur, Maurice and Dorner so much and they were such an inseparable part of him that it almost seemed unnecessary to render them the tribute of indebtedness."^{11} He viewed the work of modern science and thought as the recovery of early Christian theology. There is "hardly a point on which there is today a disposition to diverge from the traditional theology, which has not been anticipated by the Greek fathers."^{12}

While Allen, like Brooks, did not write any discourse specifically addressed to the controversies of evolution or the Higher Criticism, his

11Ibid., p. x. 12Ibid., p. 19.
attitude toward those issues can be deduced from his historical analysis of Christian theology which emphasizes the doctrine of the divine immanence represented by early Greek Christian thought and the new theology of his own century. The religious thought of the nineteenth century beginning with Kant's assertion that religious authority must be certified by man's experience and Schleiermacher's intuition of the possibility of a personal relationship with God had set the stage for the reclamation of the faith. Their philosophies made it possible to answer the skepticism which "regarded God as immovably fixed at a distance from the world, which inclined to deny a special Providence, or the value or significance of prayer, . . ." ¹³ Allen, as did Brooks in his sermons, opened new vistas upon a larger faith. Evolution was not antagonistic to a theology that saw God as a continuing creative presence in the world. Nor were any truth seeking tools anathema when God was believed to be revealing himself through man's knowledge and experience as well as through the Holy Scriptures. Allen eagerly utilized the discoveries of German biblical criticism although he was never as rationalistic as the Tübingen masters.

Allen's Continuity introduced the use of historical criticism as a natural method of learning God's truth. He was perhaps the first to relate so consistently the parallels of thought found between the second and the nineteenth centuries. His castigation of Augustine and the Latin Church was severely criticized, but no other work gave liberals such hope. It demonstrated that their ideas had a substance and reality in the past as well as in their own experience. Phillips Brooks was one of the many who depended on Allen's historical and theological expertise as this

¹³Ibid., p. 375.
extract from a letter in regards to some criticism of the Continuity shows. Brooks confided to Allen that,

You see I am thinking as much about my peace of mind as of your fame for accurate scholarship but the two go together. . . . Shake the "Continuity" and I am in ruins. But I count it among the things that cannot be shaken and I am safe.  

Others looked to Allen for guidance and inspiration; John Fiske acknowledged his indebtedness to Allen's Continuity in his book The Idea of God. So, too, did M. H. Alden whose book God In His World (1891) was very popular. It was unusual, in fact, for American religious books to attract widespread attention. But Bishop Clark felt that "nothing had been produced to arrest the notice of scholars and teachers of thought like Professor Allen's Continuity of Christian Thought, Professor Mulford's Republic of God and Phillips Brooks' Lectures on Preaching."  

Elisha Mulford's The Republic of God (1881) was reviewed by Allen in the Princeton Review and one can learn as much about Allen's own thought as of Mulford's Republic in the two part essay. Elisha Mulford (1833-85) was a parish priest for only three years when increasing deafness forced him to retire from the parish ministry. In his solitary retirement he studied constantly and published The Nation in 1870. Allen described him as "the ablest and profoundest student of political philosophy that the country had yet produced." When Mulford moved to Cambridge in 1880, he and Allen became quite intimate. Mulford would often visit Allen late at night to expound upon some idea or read from The  

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15. Thomas March Clark, Reminiscenses, p. 38.

Republic of God then in preparation. While Allen's major theological interest was the idea of God, Mulford's was the idea of the state. In The Nation (1870) he explained his conviction that the state is a divine institution and that God was present in the idea of the nation as a force in human history. In The Republic of God, a title suggested by Allen, Mulford continued that theme implying that

the redemptive work of Christ is closely connected with the highest political ideals; that the life of God in humanity has for its end the upbuilding of a social fabric, not dominated by external authority but ruled by a spirit from within, . . . 17

Allen's review of The Republic was entitled "The Theological Renaissance of the Nineteenth Century," and he began by placing Mulford's work in line with the whole of "modern religious thought" beginning with Schleiermacher and Coleridge. He then described the background of modern religious thought in what is almost a summary of the Continuity. The underlying principle of Mulford's work was the doctrine of divine immanence which he had demonstrated "is more respectable in its antecedents than that by which it has been supplanted" 18 in the theology of Western Christianity. The doctrine, in fact, had been fully developed in the Greek Church by the second century. It was only in the third century that the idea of Divine transcendence gained authority. This different idea of God's relation to the world, thought Allen, led to two quite different theologies. For the Latin Church God was an "extra-mundane" authority; in the Greek Church he was present in human history as Jesus Christ incarnate. Thus, for the Greek Church the world took on a highly personal character, and the moral life was an important part of the reve-

17 Ibid., p. 67.

lation of God.

When the doctrine of the incarnation is received in its fulness, and God and humanity are seen in its light to be joined by an indissoluble tie; ... when God is conceived as present, actively engaged in the redemptive forces of human life, ... The world itself becomes sacred because the abode of indwelling Deity, and all days are consecrated to a divine purpose; ... heaven becomes a present reality, the ideal of human society in the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.¹⁹

This perception of God as a moral agent in history became the foundation of social Christianity. God's righteousness became the pattern for human behavior and the whole of men's existence was sanctified. Thus the dictum that "Christianity is not a religion, but a life,"²⁰ found echoes among all the Social Gospel leaders of the next few decades.

Allen's feelings toward the tendencies of modern religious thought were summed up in the Lowell lecture, Religious Progress, delivered at Yale in 1892. He like most men of his age, believed in progress. Thus neither the readjustment of doctrine or the reinterpretation of history seemed threatening. There was a larger vision of human life to be gained through knowledge. Change was welcomed as a "larger trust in some distant good which beckons us onward, as if this faith were the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen."²¹ The doctrine of development, proposed in the scientific world long before Darwin, had resulted in a method of historical scholarship that when applied to religion "assumes that God is educating the human race just as children

²⁰Ibid., p. 75.
are trained by tutors and governors, or by the experience and observation of life."22

Another ETS scholar whose historical essays justified the principles and methods of modern theology was Henry Sylvester Nash (1854-1912). Nash began teaching at ETS in 1882 as an instructor of biblical studies and church polity. He wrote the *Genesis of the Social Conscience* in 1897 to explore the origins of the idea of social reform and individual rights. Nash went even further back in time than Allen did to show how the perception of God and His revelation conditions the way in which men view themselves, their world and their relationships to one another. Nash contrasted the Old Testament idea of God, "prophetic monotheism," with the idea of God, "metaphysical monotheism" in classical Greek philosophy. In Greek philosophy God was outside the physical world, not related to history or society; for the Hebrews God was a creative force in history. This paralleled the contrast that Allen had described between the early Latin and Greek Churches with the Greek Church having maintained the Old Testament idea of an immanent God. Hebraic monotheism became identified with the world, including the social order. In Hebrew thought "God is an infinite missionary force. His entire purpose is bound up in the moralization of man."23 As Allen found in his study of theology, an understanding of the immanence of God gives to the visible world a permanent value of its own. The Incarnation was the ultimate expression of God's identifying Himself with the world and with man. As Nash explained,

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22Ibid., p. 45.

The Old Testament dogma of creation cut the root of dualism; it expelled from the human mind the thought that there is anything in the universe that can permanently resist the best. The New Testament dogma of Incarnation is the logical climax of the dogma of creation, in that it describes God as giving His own very best, in order that the commonwealth of goodness may be grounded. And by the dogma of the Second coming nature and history are put into the hands of the Christ who is God's best.24

Nash describes, as did Allen, how this sense of divine immanence was supplanted by the idea of God's transcendence rather early in the history of Christian thought. However, he adds the explanation that such a distinction was perhaps indispensable given the meanness of the times and the necessity to identify the individual with something of value outside the world. By the middle ages God's transcendence was the dominant doctrine as is illustrated, thought Nash, by the development of monasticism, "the declaration that the world was worthless and so must be abandoned."25 Nash placed the rebirth of the doctrine of divine immanence earlier than Allen, seeing in Puritanism the reassertion of God's activity in the world. Allen found the Protestant reformers, especially those influenced by Calvin, to be mired in the Latin doctrine of transcendence.

Many other strains of thought contributed to the process of re-claiming the world for God; eighteenth century rationalism, nineteenth century romanticism and of course, nineteenth century natural science. The result of this historical process was to restore the ethicized world of Hebrew thought, a world where "the primary task of the social order was individualization of the man at the bottom and the moralization of his functions."26 Nash concluded that the worth of the individual was established with the Christian world view. The doctrine of God's imma-

24Ibid., p. 94.  
25Ibid., p. 162.  
26Ibid., p. 13.
nence morally unifies all things and creates a "social question" by
imbuing man with all sorts of potential rights. The question that
should occupy modern theology Nash thought was "What is the meaning of
the Gospels for the social order?"27

In Ethics and Revelation, delivered as the Bohlen Lectures in 1899,
Nash answered that question. The Bible, he proposed, outlines the path
of conscience for those who take life seriously and believe that history
has a moral end. Christianity as the historical religion must continu-
ally interact with human experience to help men respond to God's reval-
eration. The Higher Criticism, for instance, allows the past to speak for
itself and sets the Scriptures free to answer men's needs in any genera-
tion. In answering those needs he states,

We must put the Bible face to face with that experience. We are
to set aside, for the time being, all those theories of inspira-
tion and canonicity which the Church has conceived to be the
Bible's safeguards. With unanxious confidence in our Scriptures
we are to permit them to recanonize themselves by giving saving
unity and ennobling hope to the deepest experience of mankind.28

Nash's historical study of Christianity was not abstract but was based
on a profound desire to see the Kingdom of God established.

Another colleague of Allen's is of interest here because he was
involved more personally with social Christianity than most academic men.
George Hodges (1865-1919) was Dean of ETS from 1895 to 1908. He was in-
fluential as a social reform leader in Pittsburgh before he came to the
seminary. As the Dean of ETS he was concerned with defending the diver-
sity and comprehensiveness for which the school was already known. And

27 Henry Sylvester Nash, Ethics and Revelation (New York: The
28 Ibid.
while he was not as recognized as a scholar himself, he did support the study of history as practiced by Allen and Nash. He considered the task of the Seminary to be "not so much the discovery as the interpretation of truth. We are in search not of new truth, but of new meanings and applications of that eternal and unchanging truth which was revealed in the words and in the life of Jesus Christ."²⁹ For twenty five years, when few other seminaries dared be so bold, ETS taught theology and Church history, accepting the newest discoveries of science and scholarship without anxiety for the truth to which they were dedicated. The theological training they gave the men who passed through their doors as well as the wider influence they exercised on the religious community was always one of confidence in free inquiry based on faith. Even though ETS was always devoted to the spirit rather than the letter of the faith, to a living Christ rather than to creeds or institutions, no professor was ever brought to trial. In 1906, ETS professors, including Hodges, Allen and Nash endorsed the Higher Criticism by signing an English statement on modern theology.

More fully than the pastoral clergymen who gained reputations as preachers, the professors of ETS, especially A. V. G. Allen and Henry S. Nash sought to discover the foundations of the new theology in the past. They stressed particularly the origin of the doctrine of divine immanence because they realized that the idea of God was determinative of a number of other questions. By showing that the idea of God as a creative force in the world was not a new concept but one which had been overshadowed by a later theological insight, they erased doubt and confusion in the

minds of many. The emphasis on the doctrine of the incarnation, the climax of the divine immanence, gave modern religious thinkers the answer to many of the questions raised by scientific and skepticism. The doctrine of the incarnation proclaimed that man was made in the image of God and that God cared for and was active in his creation. The doctrine of the incarnation was the basis for the dedication to the social order found among so many Episcopal clergy. The doctrines of theological reconstruction developed in the pulpit and in the seminary were put into practice by the churchmen who took the lead in the social reforms of the period.
CHAPTER III

SOCIAL LIBERALISM

The social application of Christianity which characterized the last decades of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century was "America's unique contribution to the great stream of Christianity." The Social Gospel as it came to be called after 1900 did not achieve such a distinct form nor achieve such success in any other country. It was a "typically American movement" in its "attempt to re-orient the historic faith . . . to an industrial society."¹ It was also the result of the intellectual, religious and scientific thinking of the era. As such it was a demonstration of the major tenets of reinterpreted orthodoxy, which stressed the immanence of God, the humanity of Jesus and the ideal of the kingdom of God on earth. The reaffirmation of the divine immanence in the incarnation of Jesus Christ made each individual sacred in a new and profound way. This new concern for individuals manifested itself in the church's approach to social problems.

The Episcopal Church began to demonstrate some concern for the social order in the early nineteenth century. Examples of this concern would be the work of Bishop William White of Pennsylvania, the Reverend Joseph Bend of Baltimore and the Reverend E. M. P. Wells of Boston who championed various causes and organized benevolent societies and chari-

table works in their respective cities. The two major reform movements of this period, abolition and temperance, garnered only little Episcopal support. As William Manross points out, the Episcopal Church remained "officially neutral" because of its "ecclesiastical and social character." The radical nature of most abolition propaganda, he notes, was "foreign to the genius of Anglicanism." That spirit of tolerance and forebearance kept the Church on the sidelines during the abolition debate, but it also kept the Episcopal Church from the sectional schism that occurred in most other Protestant denominations over the issue.

Even so, there were several prominent Episcopalian clergy and lay people among the abolitionists including the Reverend E. M. P. Wells, John and William Jay, William Henry Seward and Salmon Portland Chase. Similarly, the temperance crusade garnered the support of individual Episcopalians, but the Church refrained from taking an inflexible position on the issue of spirits.²

These early activities concerned with the welfare of the poor and oppressed and with upright living were to be expected of any Christian body. However, social Christianity was not a one issue crusade, but a challenge to live the Christian life in a way that had not been proclaimed since the days of the early church. It has always been acknowledged that ethics should not be divorced from personal piety; ideally the faith permeates the whole of the Christian's life. Needless to say this was not everywhere and always practiced by individual Christians or even by the church as represented by its several communions. In the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century much more emphasis

was placed on personal religion than on corporate responsibility. The separation of church and state during the early national period and the concern of the churches for the evangelization of the frontier had led them to neglect the social order except for the various reform efforts aimed at specific vices or works of charity.

The problems presented by the new era were different. The pains of tenement dwelling or the disillusionment of wage earners could hardly be ameliorated by the traditional good stewardship approach. The problems created by industrialization and rapid urbanization begged for the modification of doctrine and the restructuring of society. The social inertia of the 'seventies and 'eighties, noted by many chroniclers of the period, was due in part to a reluctance to change long standing methods. But "during the 'seventies the Protestant Episcopal Church began to show the deep concern in social problems that has characterized its significant contribution to the growth of American social Christianity."^3

While Charles Hopkins contends that the "social gospel was an indigenous American movement deriving its dynamics and its ideology from the social context in which it grew"^4 there were external influences. Of special importance in the study of Episcopal liberalism was the influence of Christian Socialism developed by English thinkers such as Charles Kingsley and Frederick Denison Maurice during the years 1848 to 1854. Many of Maurice's books were widely read in America, especially Faith and Action (1886) which included a preface written by Phillips Brooks. Maurice, who lost his professorship at Kings College for his activities, wrote that his faith "was in a living and righteous God who rules even

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^4 Ibid., p. 326.
Another influence was Thomas Chalmers, a Scotsman, whose *The Application of Christianity to the Commercial and Ordinary Affairs of Life* (1820) and *Civic Economy of Large Towns* (1821) were important in the development of the institutional church.

The beginning of the institutional type church, one whose activities encompass more than those normally associated with parish life, can be seen as early as the ministry of William Augustus Muhlenberg (1796–1897). His parish, Church of the Holy Communion, New York, foreshadowed the pattern of the large, urban institutional churches of the 'eighties and 'nineties. Church of the Holy Communion had a fresh air fund to send weary men, women and children from the slums to the countryside in the summer; it and an employment agency for poor women; it ran an infirmary and dispensary, had a day school for boys and girls. Muhlenberg built a community of involved lay people who supported these ministries. In 1852 he organized the Sisterhood of the Holy Communion, the first order established in the Anglican communion since the Reformation. Its members worked at the parish infirmary and later at St. Luke's Hospital established by Muhlenberg in 1858. Muhlenberg's last project was the founding of St. Johnsland, an unsuccessful utopian community on Long Island.

From this early attempt by William Muhlenberg to serve the downtrodden, the Episcopal Church's social outreach blossomed to such an extent that in a few years it was generally acknowledged to have given "birth to the first and most effective social gospel organizations."5

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The problems created by urbanization and industrialization were discussed quite early by Episcopalians, a number of books appearing in the 'seventies. Edward A. Washburn, an admirer of Muhlenberg and an early leader among evangelical liberals, wrote Moral Responsibility and Physical Law (1874) to show that the physical conditions which crushed the spirit of people had to be improved before they could be uplifted morally or spiritually. The following year he published the Social Law of God based on the Ten Commandments and describing the conditions in slums and factories which people had to endure. R. Heber Newton, "second only to Washington Gladden in prominence in the early movement," presented a series of lectures on the Morals of Trade in 1874 condemning and documenting a number of unsavory business practices. By 1880 the major areas of social concern had been identified: unrestricted competition, the antagonism of labor and capital, the deplorable business ethics, and the intolerable urban living conditions of the poor. The response of Episcopal clergymen went beyond preaching and writing; many became leaders in the development of parish social services and in the organization of labor.

An important leader in the development of the institutional church which incorporated social services into the parish program was William S. Rainsford. Born in England in 1850, he grew up in Dundalk, Ireland where

7Charles H. Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel, p. 34.


10Ibid., pp. 201-3.
his father was the Vicar. His was a happy and loving family, secure in what he called "the narrow enclosure of the evangelical fold." His father took a mission in London in 1866, and the young Rainsford became interested in the problems of the poor on the East Side. After his graduation from Cambridge, he was ordained and began preaching at evangelical missions and serving as the assistant to the rector at St. Giles in Norwich. In these early years he began to analyze the evangelical message he had learned. He concluded that it was a message meant to save souls, a "message of pardon for the sinner who repented, and new strength and hope for the reborn man." He believed that this simple gospel was the core of Christianity and always would be, but he found it could not explain the theological inconsistencies his own studies were discovering as he began to follow the truth. Nor, he felt, could it answer the needs of the poor to whom he had preached in London. He thought that the Evangelical party in England had deserted the poor at a time of great need and thus had deserted its Master. He came to believe the message he and other evangelicals preached was only "half of a great truth," "a purely individualistic message" that was so intent upon "saving men's souls from a distant Hell," that they were left "to suffer in a very real and present Hell."\(^{11}\)

the supernatural," since it was becoming evident to him "that there is no such thing as the finally supernatural at all." While doubt and inchoate understanding were thus comingling in his mind, he visited America on a two year preaching mission. There he spoke, badly from his accounts, at the Church Congress in 1876, but Phillips Brooks out of kindness asked him to preach at Trinity, Boston the following Sunday. From that moment Rainsford was devoted to Brooks and sought him out a few years later when he had problems with his parish in Canada.

Shortly after his return to England he was called as curate to St. James, Toronto. Finding no sympathy in England for his changing conception of the faith, he accepted the position. Later, he realized that there "were already gathering, a band of men who must have stood about where I did. They grew into the Broad Church Party, but I knew none of them." He spent five years at St. James, Toronto and only left because the new Bishop would not accept the vestry's decision to call him as rector after the elderly Dean died. By this time he had assimilated the ideas of Robertson, Lightfoot, Tennyson, Arnold, Stanley, Coleridge, Maurice, Fiske, Giuseppe Mazzini and Darwin with his evangelical faith. His questions, he found, had been resolved at last by an understanding of evolution. He had learned that "Christian doctrine was an evolution" and that revelation was a "continuous process," that "must be continually made by men to men." Evolution explained "how man, natures last product, emerges from the long welter of cosmic struggle, in order that he should, as leader, guardian, savior, and brother, change and order nature to his will."¹² These insights gave him "a new meaning to life, a new call to service," and reasserted "the Golden Rule . . . in new and compel-

¹²Ibid., p. 121, p. 116, p. 117.
ling terms." When he received a call to St. George's, New York, he was eager to put his new vision into practice.

In accepting the position at St. George's, Rainsford ensured that he would have a free hand by demanding of the vestry that they "make the church absolutely free... abolish all committees in the church except the vestry" and establish "an annual fund of $10,000 for three years, independent of... salary, to spend... on church work." Fortunately for the bold young clergyman, the vestry, including J. P. Morgan, agreed to all his demands. St. George's did not have hopeful prospects. In fact, there had been some thought of selling it because the neighborhood had changed character. Many parishioners had moved uptown as working people had begun to overflow the tenements and tiny parks. These people were not church members even though missions had been established. Rainsford believed that most of the missions inspired by the evangelical message of future salvation had failed because they did not help the poor, did not "save them or rather help them to save themselves" from "the cruel despotism of an unjust economic condition and an environment that made a mockery of all hopes of home." Rainsford would not retreat from this challenge and began to build "a great free church, ... a truly democratic church." Rainsford built his congregation and his programs slowly and within a few years the church was used daily for neighborhood programs such as athletics, workingmen's clubs, women's groups and child care. By 1897 St. George's had an annual budget of $60,000 and employed four assistants and four deaconesses who were supplemented by scores of volunteer workers. The parish had 6,690 people on its rolls.

only half of whom were communicants. William Rainsford had succeeded in
drawing the poor into the midst of St. George's parish life by creating
a church which gave men Jesus. Not the Jesus of dear dead saints but
the man who declared men were brothers . . . the man who taught
that the best way to please God was to serve men . . . the man
who, living spoke the truth, and willingly died to back what he
lived for.

It is this man, this whole man, men want and will follow
. . . the life of Jesus countering materialism, God in human
nature, standing for justice, mercy, peace, and reverencing
loving service -- these things are the very essence of Chris-
thianity. 13

Rainsford's mature thought, displayed in this quotation from a letter
written in 1918, expresses most explicitly the heart of social Chris-
tianity--belief in an immanent God involved in the lives of His people
through His son Jesus Christ, who calls his followers to love and serve
their fellow man.

There were numerous other Episcopal clergy for whom this credo of
loving service formed the basis of parish organization. Henry Potter,
who would later become Bishop of New York, had made Grace Church, New
York, one of the "finest early examples of an institutional church." 14
William Reed Huntington, who succeeded Potter, expanded the programs be-
gun at Grace Church. David Hummel Greer was well-known for the many com-
munity services he instituted at Saint Bartholomew's in New York City
from 1888 to 1904. The church's clinic is reported to have treated
6,500 people a year in the late 'nineties. 15 George Hodges, who later
became Dean of the Episcopal Theological Seminary, was the "foremost ex-

13Ibid., p. 356.

14William W. Manross, A History of the American Episcopal Church

ponent of the Social Gospel" in Pittsburgh where he was rector of Calvary Church from 1889 to 1894. While there he established missions in industrial areas and opened a settlement house. Hodges was an outspoken supporter of the view that Christianity was "interested in everything which is meant to make earth like heaven . . . with what is commonly called religion . . . but just as much with society and just as much with politics." When he became Dean of ETS he continued his own social ministry by presiding over "South End House," a settlement house in Boston, and supporting several Boston area reform efforts. ETS was the first Episcopal seminary to include Christian Sociology in the curriculum when Hodges appointed Robert Woods to the staff in 1895. The reforms advocated by these men were not especially radical and they have properly been called "conservative reformers." Nonetheless, it was widely recognized that "the Episcopal Church, the church of wealth, culture, and aristocratic lineage" was leading the way in the social work of the period.

In the same paradoxical fashion the Church also led in the establishment of organizations to aid the laborer. As we have seen, individual clergymen had already begun to minister to the working class through parish programs. The labor unrest of 1877 had shocked church leaders, and the General Convention of that year appointed a committee to investi-


18Christian Union (November 28, 1891), cited by Henry F. May, Protestant Churches and Industrial America, p. 185.
gate the alienation of the working class from the Episcopal Church. That committee found that in order to reach the worker, the church needed to be more forceful in reminding society that "property and culture, and social and official positions, have no rights that do not impose equivalent obligations." Thus even the official body of the Church was beginning to realize the causes of the cleavage between the classes. Bishop Henry Potter the "most prominent ecclesiastical figure of his day," made one of the first official statements on the proper relationship of the Capitalist and laborer in a Pastoral Letter entitled The Laborer Not A Commodity, published in 1886. "What the laborer wants," Potter wrote, "is fair and fraternal dealings, not almsgiving, and a recognition of his manhood rather than a condescension to his inferiority. . . . capitalists and employers of labor," he insisted, must dismiss "the fallacy, . . . that labor and laborer are alike a commodity." Potter believed that the church being "the witness of an eternal moral governor" had to speak out on social issues to fulfill her mission as a teacher of morality. He often preached on the misuse of wealth, the indifference to people's needs, the mistreatment of children, and the wretched conditions of urban living that the poor suffered.

Bishop Potter and Bishop Frederic Dan Huntington were instrumental in the establishment of one of the most important organizations in the history of social Christianity, the Church Association for the Advancement of the Interests of Labor. CAIL, as it was called, was established


in 1887. It was suggested by the socialist priest W. D. P. Bliss, but Father James O. S. Huntington, founder of the Order of the Holy Cross, was its most tireless worker. Bishops Huntington and Potter were the first two presidents. CAIL was founded upon the principles of the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the stewardship of creation and the worth of labor; its purpose was to bring the ministry of Christ's church to the social problems of society, especially the labor problem. CAIL required its members to read one labor periodical and to study social questions "in the light of the Incarnation." Its basic methods were prayer, sermons, articles and letters, but it also sponsored public meetings, appointed study committees, mediated strikes, published a journal and in 1899 established the Actors Church Alliance.21 Among its accomplishments during the early years of its existence were the securing of better conditions for women and children in retail work and helping to remove manufacturing from the tenements. Its mediation committee chaired by Bishop Potter arbitrated a dozen strikes in one year. Potter gained a reputation for fairness in these arbitrations and considerable "prestige in radical circles."22 In fact, when Potter died in 1908, Samuel Gompers, president of the A F of L said that the movement "for the social betterment of all the people had no stauncher advocate nor more earnest worker than Bishop Potter."23

Perhaps because of the activist posture developed by CAIL some of the same men founded the Episcopal Christian Social Union in 1891 to promote the study of labor and social problems. The Union published a journal,

held conferences and sponsored lecture series at numerous colleges and theological schools. It disbanded when the General Convention created a permanent secretary of the Commission of Social Service in 1911. The Church Association for the Advancement of the Interests of Labor also disbanded when the General Convention established the Division of Industrial Relations of the National Church in 1928.

Like the institutional church, the Church Alliance for the Advancement of Interests of Labor and the Christian Social Union were reasonable extensions of the concern for individuals created by the new theology. Their purposes were for the most part gradually incorporated into the programs of the Church's national organization. Social action became a respectable part of the function of the ministry even though it was by no means approved or practiced in every parish. There were those in the communion like Joseph Rylance, R. Heber Newton and W. D. P. Bliss, who found socialistic implications in the new theology and some Episcopal clergy even became socialists, but these were not in the mainstream of the Church’s commitment to social justice. Even though Bliss' socialism was based on the practices of the church—prayer, sacraments and Scripture—his parish, the Mission of the Carpenter in Boston, failed to gain great support and eventually became "a club for intellectual radicals."24 While his democratic socialism was repugnant to most in the church he did have an important influence, not only on the Episcopal Church, but also on the movement of social Christianity as a visionary and a gadfly.

Sidney Ahlstrom believes that Bliss "more than any other prominent Christian reformer of the period... anticipates the secularized urban mis-

sion of some mid-twentieth century activists."

The efforts of these men on behalf of the poor and the laborer demonstrates how the principles of the new theology became active in the daily life of the Church. The ideas of divine immanence, of following Christ, of praying and working for the realization of the kingdom of God were not pretty notions to be scattered through sonorous sermons; they had real and vital meaning in the lives of the evangelicals who welcomed the liberalization of theology and doctrine. And while the Episcopal Church was "undoubtedly the first major denomination to receive the new doctrines with any general welcome," it was also foremost in upholding the historic faith. This is illustrated in the history of the Church's governing body, the General Convention, whose acceptance of the new theology was less timely and more partial than its extremer advocates would have desired.


26Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America*, p. 182.
CHAPTER IV

LIBERALISM IN CHURCH POLITY

The General Convention is the legislative body of the Protestant Episcopal Church. It consists of the House of Deputies, constituted of representatives, both clerical and lay from each diocese, and the House of Bishops, including the Bishops of each diocese. When these two bodies meet in General Convention, triennially, they consider a variety of matters of concern to the Church; support of the ministry, missionary efforts, Christian education, Christian family life, Christian moral standards, liturgy, doctrine and practice of the Church, ecumenical relations, and in the late nineteenth century economics, social problems and international affairs were frequently added to the agenda.

While the Convention seems to have avoided too much acrimonious debate over controversial issues, the resolutions passed and the Pastoral Letters issued after each convention by the House of Bishops provide the only insight into the official position of the Episcopal Church. Neither the resolutions of the General Convention or the Pastorals have absolute authority on practice or doctrine. Only canons passed by the General Convention are considered as legally binding. However, since resolutions of the Convention and the letters of the House of Bishops must be approved by a majority of their respective members, both have been considered as being representative of the mind of the Church. Even so, the representational nature of the Pastoral Letters must not be regarded too
uncritically. The House of Bishops itself may not be a very representative body, tending naturally to be composed of the older clergy. Their letters, however, form a State of the Church message and must be considered as being indicative of the general opinion of that body. With only three exceptions from 1808 to 1916 Pastoral Letters have been issued for each General Convention. In addition letters have been drafted after special meetings and issued as Pastoral Letters. Canon law requires that Pastoral Letters be read to each congregation.

These resolutions and Pastoral Letters are interesting for what they show of the Church's religious philosophy and its consequent relation to society. One study, which compares the correlation between contemporary religious philosophy and that expressed through the Pastoral Letters concludes that the officially expressed philosophy lags approximately one generation behind that of the leading thinkers. The "religious philosophy in a given generation," in fact, "nearly always corresponds to that expressed by American philosophers during the preceding generation."¹ It is no wonder that the "official" pronouncements about topical issues seem to be quite late in coming even though the Episcopal liberals discussed above were in the forefront of the accommodation of the New Theology and in the vanguard of social action. Rather than inspiring those who made the Church a leader, the Pastoral Letters of the bishops and the resolutions of the General Convention show how the Church was influenced by the liberals.

Prior to 1865 there were several statements of misgivings about the new direction of theological inquiry and the so-called advances of science. "Infidelity" and "unbelief" were common epitaphs. The controversy in England over Bishop Colenso's writings was addressed in the Pastoral Letter of that year. His deposition was approved by the American bishops in the Pastoral Letter written by Bishop McIlvaine and titled "Rationalism as Exhibited in the Writings of Certain Clergymen of the Church of England." Both the essayists of 1860 and Colenso were severely criticized. Furthermore, the bishops stated that Scripture alone was sufficient for knowledge of God. This year's Pastoral was one of the exceptions to the committee authorship that generally characterized the letters, but it was approved by a majority of the bishops.

In 1868 the usual topics were discussed with an added emphasis on the doctrinal and liturgical problems presented by the High Church/Low Church strife, called the "Ritualistic Controversy." This battle was at its peak during the 'sixties and 'seventies and there were several attempts to control the spread of ritualism by resolution. The same arguments characterized the Convention of 1871 where several resolutions were passed condemning High Church practices. By 1874 the Low Church party finally succeeded in passing a canon forbidding certain ritualistic practices. This dissension occupied much of the Church's energy during this period.

1877 brought the usual topics of the Convention back into the forefront and by 1880 little party spirit was exhibited. In fact, the dissension was over by the turn of the century and many of the Anglo-Catholic

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innovations were commonly practiced. It was also in 1880 that the bishops made their first positive statement about the Higher Criticism, urging the clergy to study the Scripture "in the original tongues" and to be familiar with the "results of the ripest criticism." It was also suggested that the clergy "deal kindly and candidly with the doubter." The General Convention of 1883 witnessed the first favorable reference to the problems of labor. This Pastoral acknowledged that "this church has in recent years been awaked to increased practical sympathy with the worker and the suffering classes; victims of social wrong, of unequal wealth, of intemperance in drinks and unscrupulous traffic in them, and sometimes of merciless wealth." The Convention of 1886 did not discuss these crucial issues, but the Pastoral Letter of that year did confidently remark that the "cross remains unshaken" in spite of science and speculation.

But in 1889 an even more tolerant attitude was displayed regarding both science and the Higher Criticism. The bishops agreed that science that "with the clearest vision reads the record written on the world of nature, is still willing and ready to render its homage to the Lord of nature, the Logos, the Reason of the Universe." Their attitude toward biblical criticism was even more positive taking "heartfelt satisfaction" in the work "by which sacred scriptures is brought home to man." "The advances made in Biblical research," they conceded, "have added a holy splendor to the crown of devout scholarhip."

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However, in 1894, a year before the regularly scheduled General Convention the House of Bishops held a special meeting to discuss certain theological opinions of the liberals which cast doubt upon the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth and the physical Resurrection of Christ. They appointed six Bishops to write a letter condemning such doctrines. Their defense of the traditional creeds could not have been disputed by any except the most extreme liberal, but the bishops went one step too far in declaring that "fixedness of interpretation is the essence of the creeds." This statement, contradicting as it did the spirit of previous Pastorals, was unacceptable to many who did not even wear the label of liberal. It was condemned not only for its inflexibility but also for the fact that it was called a "Pastoral Letter" when it was not even approved by a quorum of the small number of bishops present. Only forty-seven of the seventy-nine bishops attended this special meeting. The bishops "elevated the creeds to the level of gospels," protested one contemporary. Given the circumstances, this Pastoral Letter should probably not be regarded as representative. But, the Convention the following year did not repudiate the Letter of 1894 and seemed to support its defensive tone by speaking of the "attacks upon the strongholds of our faith." Apparently the House of Bishops was uncertain about the influence of science and criticism at this point. By 1897 though the House of Bishops finally agreed that "a faith which is always or often attended

7James Thayer Addison, citing the Pastoral Letter of 1894, The Episcopal Church, p. 252.


by a secret fear that we dare not inquire lest inquiry should lead us to results inconsistent with what we believe is already infected with a disease which may soon destroy it."\textsuperscript{10}

Having come to an official recognition of the necessity of the critical study of the Scriptures and the need to remain unanxious in the face of modern knowledge, the House of Bishops and the General Convention turned more of their attention to the needs of society. The early years of the twentieth century were dedicated to supporting and enlarging upon the social ministry already begun by individual clergy and laymen. One of the General Conventions most important steps in that direction was the appointment, in 1901, of the Committee on the Relations of Capital and Labor. This committee was a direct outgrowth of the work of CAIL. By 1922 this committee became a department under the auspices of the Presiding Bishop and the Council. The resolutions passed during these years on virtually every social problem which the liberals had already addressed: municipal corruption (1901), trade rights (1907), child labor (1913), social justice (1914, 1916, 1919) and the opium traffic (1919) indicate a growing awareness of the Church as a whole to the problems of the times. Resolutions from the years 1913, 1916 and 1919 clearly demonstrate that the Church had committed itself to the idea of a just social order. It aligned itself against the "social cause of poverty and gross human waste."\textsuperscript{11} It declared that the "nation that in some quarters, for the sake of gain, still chains to the wheels of industry little children, that allows human life to be sacrificed to the inventions of speed and production . . . is not at peace even though she be not at war."\textsuperscript{12} And

\textsuperscript{10}Raymond Albright, Protestant Episcopal Church, p. 308.
it urged "upon capital and labor alike the acceptance of the 'principle of partnership as the business aspect of brotherhood.'"13 Of Christians the Church asked that they behave so "that present prejudice and injustice may be supplanted"14 and to give "moral support and prayer to every just effort to secure fair conditions and regular employment for wage earners, and the extension of true democracy to industrial matters."15

The Church was not led to this position only by the influence of the prominent evangelical liberals acting as individuals. During the most crucial years of the period the liberals organized and supported the Church Congress, an un-official, but influential meeting of the clergy of the Church.

The Congress grew out of the groups which had been formed by Phillips Brooks in Philadelphia and Boston, known as the clerics, and by Edward A. Washburn in New York which was known as "The Club" by its members. These men planned the first Church Congress in 1874 to provide a forum for the discussion of contemporary issues. There were to be no resolutions or voting and all interests of the Church were to be invited. They wished to avoid the party strife that had characterized so many General Conventions and they wanted to encourage church leaders to think about the problems of the day.

The topics over the years of its meeting show the diversity of interests within the denomination; they ranged from church doctrine and government to biblical criticism and the conflict of science and religion. The Church Congress brought these issues to the attention of the

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13 *Journal*, 1919, p. 82, p. 162.  
14 *Journal*, 1913, p. 309.  
15 *Journal*, 1916, p. 401.
of the Church consistently earlier than they were addressed in the General Convention. The substance of Church Congress discussions appears to be about fifteen years ahead of that of the General Convention. Although it was open to all opinions in the Church, the overall impact of the Congress was definitely liberal. Through the Congress, as much as through their individual activities, liberals had a considerable impact on their own communion as the acceptance by the General Convention in the early twentieth century of most of the principles of Evangelical Liberalism, both in its theological and sociological facets, demonstrates.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Episcopal answers to the challenges to doctrine implicit in evolutionary science and biblical criticism were grounded in the recovery of the idea of God as an immanent force in the world. The theory of evolution supposedly destroyed the concept of creation by design by negating the necessity of God's personal involvement in the process. If He had any part in creation it was that of the distant watchmaker, assigned to Him by the eighteenth century rationalists. But the position of Brooks, that the new science documented the "presence in the world of a continuing active formative force,"\(^1\) denied this negation of God's presence. Brooks applauded the "new theism" found in a work such as John Fiske's Idea of God because it recognized the "divine life in the very being of the universe."\(^2\)

The historical investigations of A. V. G. Allen added more credibility to the assumptions of the "new theism" by showing that the idea of God as an immanent creative power in the world was not a new one. His writings and teaching demonstrated that the doctrine of the immanence of God was central to the theology of the early Christian Church. But, as Allen's historical investigations show, the Latinized church of the third century had emphasized the transcendent nature of God, and that

\(^1\)Phillips Brooks, cited by Raymond C. Albright, Focus on Infinity, p. 238.

vision of Him had come to dominate Christian theology. The discoveries of science were, thus, reclaiming the primary truth of the Judaeo-Christian experience.

The ultimate expression of the indwelling of God in his creation was the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. As God had become more distant from the creation in the minds of believers so, too, had his Son. In the medieval church the divinity of Christ had taken precedence over his humanity and various mediatrix figures had been interposed between Jesus and his followers. The recovery of the idea of God in the world made the doctrine of the incarnation particularly relevant. For it was through Christ that God was present in the universe and according to Allen, when "the doctrine of the incarnation is received in its fulness, . . . God and humanity are seen in its light to be joined by an indis-soluble tie." The doctrine of the divine immanence answered the major problem of God's relation to the world. It also suggested answers to the other problems, the nature of Christ, the revelation of knowledge, the image of man, and the relationship between men.

However, without the aid of the tools and the spirit of inquiry created by the Higher Criticism these questions could not have been answered. The investigations of the linguists and historians supplied other pieces to the puzzle. Their emphasis on the historical Jesus and on criticism as a means of finding truth shifted the sole burden of revelation from the Bible. The accumulating record of the physical sciences had, as much as Darwin's theory of development, cast doubt on the authority of the Scriptures. When geological or historical facts in the Bible

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were proved erroneous the entire Book was undermined. Biblical criticism by demonstrating, as Phillips Brooks stated, that the Bible was a "gathering of many wonderful books from many times . . . bearing on one great religious process . . . the revelation of the Eternal Father to mankind in Jesus Christ," restored to the Scriptures their credibility as a witness. The real revelation was not in books or for that matter in science for they were just records, but in Jesus Christ. Christ was the true revelation of God and his incarnation "brought into union with God's supremacy the sacredness of man."

In this discovery was also the answer to nineteenth century man's questions about the nature and purpose of man and his relationship to other men. The incarnation of God in Christ was an unmistakable echo of the first words of Genesis, that man was created in God's image. As A. V. G. Allen wrote of the doctrine of the incarnation, "When God is conceived as present, actively engaged in the redemptive forces of human life, . . . the world itself becomes sacred." It naturally follows that "heaven becomes a present reality, the ideal of human society in the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." The realization of the sanctity of the world and the men within it was the cornerstone of the doctrine of the kingdom of God. This doctrine was pregnant with the idea of the moralization of the social order. As Henry Nash explained in the *Genesis of the Social Conscience*, God gave his best in the incarnation so that the "commonwealth of goodness" could be established. The belief in God's immanence morally unified all things. Gone was the dualism that called one

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thing sacred and another secular.

The meaning of the Gospels then was that men working with one another as God's co-creators could bring about the kingdom of God on earth. It was this insight that led Potter to call the Church the witness of an "eternal moral governor," William Rainsford to find a "new meaning to life, a new call to service," George Hodges to proclaim that "Christianity is interested in everything which is meant to make earth like heaven," and W. D. P. Bliss to deduce that "the teachings of Jesus Christ lead to some . . . form . . . of Socialism." And yet Episcopal liberals never lost sight of the fact that this potential existed because of the incarnation. With Phillips Brooks they continued in the evangelical claim that "the death of Christ has saved the world!" They believed in progress, but never in the "foolish talk which would make sin nothing but imperfection." It is perhaps for this reason that much of the social work done by Episcopalians was carried on within the parish church. The institutional church could not have existed without the devotion of many lay people, nor would the effort have been sustained without the preaching of "Christ crucified." Episcopal social action was always directed at individuals as well as problems. It affirmed individual worth because it was as concerned with a man's soul as with his body. That the importance of personal salvation was never forgotten is probably due more to the evangelical roots of these liberals than any scientific or historical discoveries.

The discoveries of English natural science and the insights of German philosophy and criticism posited as many solutions as problems.

From science and the philosophy of Hegel came the idea of development, which was applied not just to the ladder of life but also to social, intellectual and spiritual growth. Most importantly, science inspired the recovery of the doctrine of God's immanence in creation. But it was primarily the philosophical climate of idealism which made science such a fruitful source of truth rather than a stonewall of contradiction. The importance of Kant's and Schleiermacher's emphasis on personal experience as well as the Higher Criticism which tended to deemphasize the physical and material objects of faith cannot be underestimated. The change from belief in an infallible Bible to trust in individual conscience was essential to the discussion of theology in the nineteenth century. Other than Kant and Schleiermacher, who entered American thought largely through the agency of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, few of the German philosophers seemed to be of special importance to Episcopal liberals. A. V. G. Allen specifically mentions Isaak August Dorner (1809-84), a Lutheran theologian, a student of Baur at Tübingen and an interpreter of Kant and John August Wilhelm Neander (1789-1850), an ecclesiastical historian and a student of Schleiermacher, as being essential to his development. However, the German influence can be overstated since only one of the Episcopalians discussed actually studied in Germany. What they knew of German philosophy came through reading, perhaps the original source, but often as not an interpretation by someone else.

For the American members of the Anglican communion, the mediation of German philosophy and criticism through English theologians may have been more important. Coleridge was undoubtedly the most important of those mediators. He is credited with introducing Kant and Schleiermacher
to the English Churchmen as well as introducing them to the Higher Criticism. But Coleridge was not just an interpreter; he contributed original theological insights himself. Of great importance was his attempt to reconcile theology and philosophy by insisting that Christian truth could not contradict reason. Of course, reason for Coleridge included intuition and experience as suggested by Kant and Schleiermacher.

Next to Coleridge, the individual most referred to by the Episcopal liberals as having a formative effect on their faith was Frederick D. Maurice. Most of the Episcopalians truly did think of Maurice as a "prophet." As a disciple of Coleridge he carried on his vision of the spiritual reality of the world, adding his own portion to it by identifying that reality with the incarnation. Maurice also had a most significant influence on the development of social Christianity in America. His work with Charles Kingsley among the working men of London and his many books examining the relationship of Christianity and society were widely read in America and not just by Episcopalians. The influence of English social Christianity on American liberals of all denominations cannot be underestimated because the early leadership of Episcopal clergy in the social reform of the period gave the English thinkers highly visible exponents. Nor should one underestimate the influence of English literary figures, particularly after 1860. The most often quoted, of course, were Tennyson and Matthew Arnold, but Browning, Wordsworth, Shelley, Carlyle and Ruskin were also favorites of the young Episcopal liberals.

In addition to the more overt influences of people and their ideas, there was the subtle effect of Anglican heritage, which has really never been acknowledged as the ultimate source of toleration exhibited by Episcopal liberals. The Elizabethan settlement declared the English Church
to be both Catholic and Reformed. The essential nature of Anglicanism consists in "loyalty to a Catholic past in creed and polity, and glad appropriation of the fruits of reform." Thus, there is no Anglican faith, only "an Anglican attitude and an Anglican atmosphere." While there is not a distinctly Anglican body of doctrine, an important feature of the Anglican attitude is the emphasis on historic continuity. This factor may have given Episcopal liberals a broader perspective from which to few the theory of biological development.

Seeking to be comprehensive, the Anglican Church has always sought to appeal to a broad spectrum of people in its theology; necessarily it has been unabashedly eclectic. Always suspicious of "elaborate speculative systems," the Church has insisted upon the vast difference between "fundamentals" and "accessories." Perhaps tolerance as it was exhibited by the evangelical liberals in the Episcopal Church is a result of such distinctions, for much of what Brooks said in his addresses alludes to the essentials of the faith rather than the particulars of practice.

It is difficult then to insist upon an Anglican doctrine to explain historical sensitivity or tolerance. What one finds in the Anglican theology of any period is not doctrine but direction. The direction of the Church in the late nineteenth century can be summed up by William Temple's statement about another period of church history, that "faith is

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8 James Thayer Addison, The Episcopal Church, p. 8.

9 Stephen Neill, Anglicanism, p. 418.

not the holding of correct doctrines, but personal fellowship with the
living God.\textsuperscript{11} Thus Anglican tradition includes trust in the reliability
of personal religious experience, believing in the guidance of the Holy
Spirit and reliance on the authority of God. These characteristics of
faith are most predominant among those in the Church who have called
themselves evangelical.

Not surprisingly, the most commonly held trait of Episcopal liberals
is their evangelical backgrounds. Perhaps the forefathers of American
Episcopalian were all influenced by Wesleyan enthusiasm. Whatever
the origin of their family's evangelical ethos, the life stories of
Brooks, Huntington, Greer, Newton, Rylance, Allen, Nash, Hodges and even
Rainsford from England are remarkably similar. They included an evan-
gelialical home where deep personal poity, especially of the mother, was
evident, and generally, an educational experience at one of the more
evangelical seminaries. One major exception to this pattern was Thomas
M. Clark who came from a "high church" family but who by his own ad-
mission was saved from agnosticism by the evangelical fervor of a teach-
er. There are a few other exceptions, but these are notably found among
those who were social activists. James O. S. Huntington, a leader of la-
bor reform, was one from the Anglo-Catholic school. His type of liberal-
alism was not always theological but was based more on an elevated con-
ception of the sacred purpose of the priesthood. William R. Hutchison's
study on the subconscious motives of liberals shows that of all factors,
those of "family influence and nurture, or religious conversion experi-
ence, of education" are more important in understanding liberals

\textsuperscript{11} William Temple, cited by Robert J. Page, \textit{New Directions in Angli-
can Theology}, p. 39.
than traditional social displacement theories. He also found that the homes of liberals had been nurturing ones where the idea of change was not a threatening one. The family lives of the Episcopalians discussed here seem to fit that pattern very well.12

One more influence which cannot be ignored was that of Horace Bushnell. It was through Bushnell that many came to know the thought of the German and English theologians; yet Bushnell was more than an interpreter of foreign influence. He made an original attack on the already disintegrating rationalistic New England theology. He exerted an important influence on Phillips Brooks and his Boston friends of other denominations, Theodore Munger, Newman Smyth, George A. Gordon and Washington Gladden, who developed the "progressive orthodoxy" in their own churches. Bushnell added to the overwhelming trend of nineteenth century theology to emphasize the Christocentric nature of the Faith. His stress on experience and intuition enabled those confronted with the questions of science to deny the necessity of rationalistic answers. His belief that man belonged more to a spiritual than a material realm found expression in Phillips Brooks' Lectures on Preaching when he told his young listeners that the "facts of the spiritual life are as true today as they ever were."13

The school of thought which evolved from these sources and of which Phillips Brooks was so illustrious a spokesman came to be known as the Broad Church Party. This was a misnomer, however, since their views were not related to churchmanship as were the designations of high and

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and low church partisans, but to doctrine. Latitudinarian would have been a good term but was already used to describe an earlier movement in the English Church. Liberalism is a difficult term to employ when speaking of orthodoxy because its identification with the later liberals or scientific modernists implies a rejection of tradition. A description adopted by the Andover liberals, "progressive orthodoxy," seems most apt as do the terms "evangelical" or "Christocentric" used by recent historians to modify liberal. Whatever name was used to describe the Episcopal liberals during their own time was rejected by them. They always claimed they were not a party. The influence of this party or spirit, as they would prefer, is not altogether easily assessed. An early historian of the Church felt the liberals had "a wide influence over both thinking and practical men," drawing many to the Church "whom ecclesiasticism repels, and who the subjective individualism of the Evangelical system does not satisfy."14 However, the responses of the General Convention and the House of Bishops are, perhaps, the only remotely objective test of how much the liberals affected the Church's thought and practice. As noted in Chapter IV, "Liberalism in Church Polity," explicit discussion of the primary issues of theological controversy were not given a great deal of attention. Certainly there was little awareness of those issues demonstrated until the last two decades of the century. The Church Congress was influential in bringing contemporary problems to the attention of the Convention, but it was not until 1889 that there was a positive statement about the discoveries of science and biblical criticism. Science, the Bishops noted, which "with the clearest vision reads the

14 Charles C. Tiffany, History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), p. 541
record written on the world of nature, is still willing to and ready to
tender its homage to the Lord of Nature." And the discoveries of bibli-
cal criticism, they agreed, "have added a holy splendor to the crown of
devout scholarship." Discounting the backsliding exhibited in 1894 by
the infamous "fixedness of interpretation" Letter, the Bishops, by 1897
had finally agreed that "a faith which is . . . by a secret fear that we
dare not inquire lest inquiry lead us to results inconsistent with what
we believe is already infected with a disease which may soon destroy
it." This sentiment was echoed by the Bishops of the entire Anglican
Communion meeting in Lambeth in the same year.

On what were perhaps the more difficult questions about the church's
role in society, the response was even later. But by 1901 the Church had
established a Committee on the Relations of Capital and Labor which event-
tually, in 1922, became a department under the direction of the Presiding
Bishop. The Convention passed resolutions from 1901 through 1919 which
clearly committed to a concern for the social life of the nation. After
World War I the Church reorganized, establishing the National Executive
Council to continue the work of the Church between the triennial meetings.
Thus the commitment to be involved in meeting the needs of people
could be organized and carried out by permanent agencies.

Thus it would seem that the leadership of Episcopalians in the move-
ment how known as the Social Gospel had an impact on the restructuring
of the national organization of the Church. It had also contributed to

the "enlightenment of a small but increasing proportion of middle-class Church members." 17 The effort, if it can be called that, to win the wage earner to the Church does not seem to have succeeded. And, indeed, the churches that attracted the laborors were not those that preached the Social Gospel. The Methodists as well as other evangelical bodies were slow in joining the efforts at social reform. Even though the earliest social work was the result of the concern of a few inspired individuals, the point was won that the Church and its people have the right and more importantly the obligation to be involved in the solutions to social problems. However, the general character of the Church did not change, as Bishop Clark wrote, while "the windows have been enlarged" and the "doors move more readily upon their hinges," the Church has remained on the "same old foundations." 18

The ultimate accomplishment of Episcopal liberalism was reconstructive. Science had had a corrosive effect on religious faith. The evangelical liberals of the Episcopal Church insured that the Faith would survive in all its essentials, stripped of false accretions and eccentricities and preaching the truth, "Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, and today, and forever." 19 These liberals in contrast to Unitarians or the later liberals known as "scientific modernists" were primarily apologists restating fundamental Christian truths in the light of new knowledge. As A. V. G. Allen described them, they were

17 James Thayer Addison, The Episcopal Church, p. 288.
18 Thomas March Clark, Reminiscenses, p. 57.
fearless men unterrified by the discoveries of science or the results of Biblical criticism. . . . they refused to join the cry that 'the Church is in danger, . . . They aspired after a larger freedom and were interested in all methods for bringing the influence of the Church to bear more directly upon the people in the upbuilding of Christian character. They did not form themselves into a party, but they had a common sympathy with the open mind, in their belief in free inquiry, in their emancipation from the shackles of traditional interpretation. . . . If they had a motto it was this: 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'

The evangelical liberals defended Christianity by showing that its fundamentals were not threatened but illuminated and enlarged by the trends of contemporary thought. Liberalism, at least Episcopal liberalism, was a conservative movement, as one early historian phrased it, "a liberal movement among the orthodox."21

This was also the character of the early liberal movement among other Protestant denominations. Episcopal liberals meet the criteria, determined by Smith, Handy and Loetscher in their study, American Christianity, for "Christocentric" liberals. Besides accepting the theory of evolution, the methods of biblical criticism, the insights of philosophy, especially those of idealism and recognizing the ethical character of the Gospels, these liberals were completely loyal to Christ. Not a Christ so humanized that he was not also savior and redeemer of mankind. The confusion in terminology does not obscure the fact that Liberal Protestantism contained a large number of adherents with similar ideas and questions about the character of God, the nature of man, the person of Christ and the creation of the kingdom of God, who did not reject orthodoxy.22

Perhaps C. C. Brown has a point in insisting on the use of the

"scientific modernists" to describe those who rejected orthodoxy in favor of the new learning and maintaining liberal as a description of traditionalists with an unusual tolerance toward new ideas.23

In general the Episcopal Church was not rent by the fundamentalist/modernist controversy that stirred other major Protestant bodies in the first quarter of the new century. The major issues raised by evolution, the infallibility of the Bible and the acceptance of miracles, had already been resolved. Nor was the Episcopal Church challenged much by neo-orthodoxy because it had not really lost its vision of the fullness of the incarnation, even though the immanence rather than the transcendence of God had been particularly stressed during this period of theological reconstruction. In fact, by the 1920s Christocentric liberalism had become widely accepted and was "a real element with considerable influence among Episcopalians."24 Two movements, Liberal Evangelicalism and Liberal Catholicism, both originating in England and then coming to America, continued the work of the nineteenth century Episcopal liberals. It was their purpose, as it was of the early liberals, to preserve the truth of the past and to embrace the truth of the present. Thus Episcopal liberalism must be seen as a reconciling, integrative attitude, aiding its followers in adapting the fabric of faith to the tailors of modern knowledge without allowing any destructive alterations to the pattern to occur. The significance of evangelical or Christocentric liberalism lies in the very fact that it is an orthodox yet progressive agent of change.

23 C. C. Brown, "Christocentric Liberalism in the Episcopal Church," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church XXXVII:5-38.

24 Norman Pittenger, "Modernism in America," Modern Churchman 13:106
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Begins with English background of American Church, concentrates on early period of Church's organization and expansion. Devotes chapter to Phillips Brooks, but characterization of liberalism is superficial and not related to wider movement.


A massive survey of religion in the experience of the American people. Relates religious movements to one another and to national events and currents of thought.


A factual account of Brooks' life, presenting newly uncovered biographical data, but lacking a thorough analysis of Brooks as a religious thinker and moulder of men's minds. Important information on Brooks' Civil War activities and his many charitable concerns.


A History of the Church from the perspective of its institutional development. Shows Allen's own theory of the importance of Greek theology in the spiritual life of the Church and its influence on structure.

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Allen's most hailed book. A history of theology emphasizing the contribution of the early Greek fathers and the nefarious influences of Augustine and the medieval Church. Examines the results of the contrasting ideas of God contained within these traditions.

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A detailed, loving biography of Brooks by one of his closest friends. Important chapter on Brooks' theological thought by a contemporary who understood the particular challenges of the time.

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An early attempt to answer contemporary skepticism.


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   An affectionate, but useful biography.

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   Comprehensive study of the institutional development of religious bodies. Relates movements within denominations.

   One of the few collections of the writings of major liberal Protestant thinkers. Background sketches on each writer included.

Tests status theory explanation of liberal Protestantism.
Draws statistical portrait of liberals based on 250 profiles.

A summary of what the "new theology" wrought and what was essential to the faith.

Includes a record of the transactions of each triennial meeting.

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Examines the role of the Protestant Churches in meeting the problems of industrialization. Discusses the impact of the Social Gospel on American progressivism.


Assesses the role of ministry in American culture and surveys the intellectual background of the nineteenth century.

Describes the leadership of Episcopal clergy in the early days of social Christianity and their displacement by other denominational leaders after the end of the century.


A history of the seminary with important information on professors Allen, Nash and Hodges. Highlights Broad Church spirit of school.


Argues the necessity of reinterpreting the foundations of Christianity, since as a historical religion it speaks to men through experience. Discusses the new apologetics which responds to the "commerce of life."

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Traces the development of the concept of individual rights spawned by monotheistic religion. Another view of how the idea of God forms the individual and his social responses.


A classic survey of the Anglican communion. Presents the theological thought of each era succinctly and the prominent personalities.


Surveys a fruitful theological period and analyzes the contribution of liberalism to Anglican doctrine.


A discussion of the spirit of "modernism," its view of the supernatural and the miraculous. Explores the purpose and intellectual integrity.


Concludes that there were three currents of thought, denominationalism, democracy and naturalism, which formed the substance of modernism.
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