



**If, as you have said, the only persons authorized by Christ [the Bishops in the Apostolic Succession as a body] to make the binding decision about the validity of the ordination of women are overwhelmingly opposed, why are there so many women priests and bishops in The Episcopal Church, and here [in this diocese] they even seem to be the norm?**

Most contemporary historians, I believe, would say that the answer to your question lies in the European Renaissance (*circa* 1500–1650) and the era which followed it known as the Enlightenment (*circa* 1650–1800). More immediately the answer lies in the American cultural revolution of the 1960's and the values of the Baby Boom generation (b. 1946–1964) that initiated it.

As you may remember my pointing out in Adult Theology Class, modern science as we know it originated in the Renaissance. What was revolutionary in that era was the radical change in the questions people asked. For millennia previously people had asked *why* things happen (e.g. “*why* did God create the world” ... “*why* do people get diseases”); that is a religious and/or philosophical question. In the Renaissance people began to ask *how* things happen (“*how* did God create the world” ... “*how* do people get diseases”). Modern science arose to answer the question of *how* things happen. (That, incidentally, is why I say there is no conflict whatsoever between Genesis and the theory of evolution. They are “apples and oranges” ... Genesis deals with *why*; the theory of evolution deals with *how*.)

The rapid and revolutionary development of modern science in the Renaissance led to the development of a much broader intellectual movement, the Enlightenment, which dominated intellectual circles in the Western world for the succeeding 150 years and has been a controlling influence throughout our culture ever since.

One historian has written, “its adherents distrusted all authority and tradition in matters of intellectual inquiry, and believed that truth could be attained only through reason, observation, and experiment. ... The thinkers of the Enlightenment often came into conflict with the Church. Some were dogmatic atheists, others rejected religion less vehemently. ... the movement as a whole was undoubtedly hostile to orthodox Christianity.” Thus the Enlightenment was the origin of today's Western secular culture and its widespread rejection of traditional authority.

Many historians hold that the Protestant Reformation of the 1500's was also a contributing factor in the development of the Enlightenment because of Protestantism's belief in the spiritual self-sufficiency and ecclesial supremacy of each individual and its rejection and subsequent loss of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and thus Bishops in the Apostolic Succession as the Dominically-instituted *magisterium*.

The 300-year debate between those committed to the values of the Enlightenment and believers in the traditional sources of authority reached explosive proportions in 1960's America, when the first of the post-World War II Baby Boomers came of age. As social scientists have pointed out, two of the most prominent characteristics of the vast majority of Baby Boomers are (1) a rejection of any authority external

to themselves and (2) “cocooning,” i.e. having little or no interest in things beyond their own immediate community. This has now developed into what these social scientists call a “culture war” between those who reject authority and those who believe in the traditional sources of authority and traditional values, a cultural conflict that has spread to much of the world and in some places has become very bloody full-blown warfare.

As the disproportionately large Baby Boom generation began in the mid-1970’s to take over positions of authority in the American Episcopal Church (as in all other areas of American life: educational, political, economic, etc.) the majority, who are heirs of the Enlightenment, began to bring their values to bear on the life of the Church. This has meant a rejection of anything that is perceived as limiting unbridled freedom to do whatever one wants as long as it does not appear to hurt others and the belief that the authority of the “Larger Church” and its teaching have no relevance to one’s own local church community.

Thus the American Episcopal Church, controlled for the most part by “Enlightenment Baby Boomers,” has been increasingly conformed to the values of contemporary secular American society ... to the point that, in some places, it seems difficult to distinguish between the two. In practice this means that where the teaching of the Bishops in the Apostolic Succession conflicts with the values of the secular culture, the Bishops are dismissed as “irrelevant” and “out of touch with reality” and ignored. (This, however, is not true with the overwhelming majority of Anglicans world-wide. Though materially wealthy, the American Episcopal Church is in reality a very small part of Anglicanism and is, tragically, a part which continues to shrink in size.)

In his last Bishop’s Address before retirement, to the November 2007 Diocesan Convention, the Rt Rev. William D. Persell reviewed his goals and achievements during his tenure as Bishop of Chicago. Among the successes he pointed to was the accomplishment of his goal of making feminists and openly gay men and lesbians prominent in the leadership of the diocese. Inasmuch as many—though not all!—goals of the more radical feminists and homosexuals are in conflict with the historic teaching of the Church, it is quite natural that in this “culture war” they would be on the side which opposes traditional sources of authority and their values. Thus, in this diocese where homosexual and feminist “affirmative action” has been an official policy for the past 20 years, it is not surprising that their values and aspirations would often appear to be the norm.

As I have said so many times, one of the saddest parts of being engaged in a war—whether cultural or military – is that very quickly the war takes on a life of its own with destroying the enemy as an end in itself, and the unbiased search for truth becomes difficult if not impossible. Very rapidly the goal of the conflict becomes not the establishment of truth and goodness for the benefit of all but victory over the opposing side at any cost for the sake of winning.

St Paul’s has a culture which respects traditional sources of religious and ecclesiastical authority and honors their teaching, but St Paul’s is not a community which is engaged in warfare. The goal at St Paul’s is the search after truth, and the ultimate Truth and source of all truth is the Triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The goal of St Paul’s community is not a partisan victory in a culture war but *Theosis*, sharing in the Divine Life of the most glorious and blessed Trinity.