

Your Story in His Story

The 2015 Evangelicals Concerned Autumn Weekend in Ocean Grove

October 9 – 11, 2015 Thornley Chapel

Commemorating the Centennials of Anna Bartlett Warner, Fanny Jane Crosby,

William Howard Doane and Booker T. Washington

Including Three Teachings by Dr. Ralph Blair

“The Bible Tells Me So”, “This is My Story” and “To God be the Glory”

It's 1915

It's 1915. “The Great War” rages in Europe while the U.S. resists involvement, though 123 Americans are among over a thousand dead in Germany's sinking of the *Lusitania*. All warnings were ignored, believing that a passenger liner carrying civilians was safe in an active war zone. There'd not even been a lifeboat drill.

The Ottoman Caliphate slaughters millions of Armenian Christians. Ignored, this genocide will spur Hitler's pursuit of his “Final Solution” against the Jews, sneering: “Who remembers the Armenians?”

A hundred years hence, Islamic claimants to the allegedly final Caliphate, will kill thousands more Christians in one year than the Romans killed in 300 years, and they'll leave millions homeless. The Ayatollah of Iran's theocracy will call for annihilation of Israel, death to America and to all who will not bow to worldwide Shariah.

Meanwhile, amid the dead in Belgium, surgeon and poet John McCrae pens memorable lines while he mourns the death of his beloved young friend, Alexis. “In Flanders fields the poppies blow, / Between the crosses, row on row, / That mark our place; and in the sky / The larks, still bravely singing, fly / Scarce heard amid the guns below. / We are the Dead. / Short days ago / We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, / Loved and were loved, and now we lie / In Flanders fields. / Take up our quarrel with the foe: / To you from failing hands we throw / The torch; be yours to hold it high. / If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders fields.”

It won't end until the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918. In its wake, 9 million are dead, 21 million wounded and millions more die of disease and starvation. Even then, it won't end. From 1939 to 1945, unresolved self-righteous resentment will break out in still more deaths and destruction called World War II. That will give the present conflict its lasting designation, “World War I”. After that, there'll be *yet more* “wars and rumors of wars” – in Korea, Southeast Asia, the New Middle East and elsewhere. (Matt 24:6)

In Philadelphia, what's called the League to Embrace Peace is launched. It's a precursor to the League of Nations and of what will replace that failed effort, the United Nations. But, in spite of naïve optimism at the beginning of what liberal Protestants foolishly herald as, “The Christian Century”, and what mid-20th-century clergy will embrace in ludicrous “*Death of God*” theology, we'll still be exposed to more “wars and rumors of wars” until Jesus returns to reign – or, until he calls for each of us, before he finally comes to reign for *good*.

He calls for our four honorees in 1915. It's with gratitude that we here, in 2015, remember these forebears of Christian faith, called Home 100 years ago. Anna Bartlett Warner, Fanny Jane Crosby, William Howard Doane and Booker T. Washington. One way or another, each of their lives has influenced ours.

Others who die in 1915 are Scottish missionary to Nigeria, Mary Slessor, who rescues hundreds of discarded infants left to die in the jungles, Amanda Smith, former slave and "The Colored Evangelist", Seventh-day Adventist prophetess, Ellen G. White, English poet Rupert Brooke, neurologist of dementia Alois Alzheimer, Sanford Fleming, deviser of time zones, Fannie Farmer, famous for her chocolates, and Anthony Comstock, crusader against public vice.

1915's newborns: Bob Rayburn, who, 60 years later, will be the first evangelical leader to support EC. Charlie Shedd, who'll keynote EC connections in 1997 and 1998. Joy Davidman, who'll marry C. S. Lewis, Black Gospel singer Rosetta Tharp, Catholic mystic Thomas Merton, Fred Hoyle, who'll coin the term, "The Big Bang", Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday and David Rockefeller, who'll outlive them all.

Idaho elects America's first Jewish governor while Jews are expelled from Austria. American women march for the right to vote, but they must wait another 5 years to get the right to vote.

Transcontinental telephone service begins when, from New York City, Alexander Graham Bell calls his assistant, Thomas Watson, in San Francisco. Bell repeats what he'd said in the first telephone call ever made: "Mr. Watson, Come here, I want you." This time, Watson replies: "It will take me five days to get there now!"

Thomas Edison invents telephone recording. Others invent gas masks, neon tube signage and Pyrex. Off-the-rack clothes replace tailored clothes and the U. S. Coast Guard is launched.

1915's bestsellers are Willa Cather's, *Song of the Lark*, and W. Somerset Maugham's, *Of Human Bondage*. On Broadway we can see Hamlet, Richard III, The Merchant of Venice, two productions of Romeo and Juliet as well as The Mikado, HMS Pinafore, Treasure Island and, of course, the Ziegfeld Follies of 1915.

Hit songs of 1915 reflect coping on the Western Front: "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary" and "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-bag and Smile, Smile, Smile." But German- and Irish-Americans are singing a *different* tune: "I Didn't Raise My Boy to be a Soldier": "Let nations arbitrate their future troubles, / It's time to lay the sword and gun away. / There'd be no war today, / If mothers all would say, / 'I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier.'" "If" – it's that old trapdoor to *fantasy* and *failure*. And besides, these "peace" lyrics of German- and Irish-Americans hide their *hatred* of the Brits. Even *pacifism* can encrypt "wars and rumors of wars".

Anna Bartlett Warner **August 31, 1827 – January 22, 1915**

Soon after Anna Bartlett Warner's birth in 1827, her mother died. Her loving father, Henry, a successful New York attorney, was now a *single* parent and still devoted to Anna and her older sister, Susan.

Also born in 1827 were two little English boys, William Holman Hunt, the artist we honored in 2010 and Joseph Lister, father of antiseptic surgery. Ellen G. White was born

that same year, a twin, on a farm up in Maine. The SDA prophetess would not only share her *birth* year with Anna but also the year of their deaths.

In the Panic of 1837, Henry Warner lost most of his financial worth. So, he and his daughters left their five-floor mansion at St. Mark's Place and moved to Constitution Island in the Hudson River at West Point. He'd bought that island just the year before, for the family's *summer* retreat. Now it would be their home year round, though he'd not live long after that. The Island's Revolutionary era house would be home to his daughters for the rest of their lives. For Anna, who'd outlive Susan by three decades, it would be 78 years on Constitution Island.

In need of earning money, Anna and Susan began to write for pay. They'd write over a hundred novels, books of poetry and children's books, some as co-authors.

Susan's first novel, *The Wide, Wide World*, was published in 1850. It was her most successful novel and only *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was more popular.

Among Anna's works were two collections of verse, *Hymns of the Church Militant* and *Wayfaring Hymns*, a book on the Bible and amusements called, *Tired Church People*, and *Gardening by Myself*.

Without a doubt, though, her most famous poem was, "Jesus Loves Me". It first appeared in her 1,013-page novel, *Say and Seal*. In the story, a little boy, Johnny, is dying. With a useless father and no mother, a young woman named, Faith, and Linden, a teacher who boards with Faith and her mother, are taking care of Johnny in his final days.

Johnny, resting in Linden's arms, is carried "to and fro" across the room. "After a while, [Johnny says], 'Sing' – Mr. Linden did not stay his walk, but though his tone was almost as low as his footsteps, [Faith and Johnny] heard every word. 'Jesus loves me – this I know, for the Bible tells me so; little ones to him belong – they are weak, but he is strong.'" Three more verses follow that one. Then we read: "There were a few silent turns taken after that, and then Mr. Linden came back to the rocking-chair, and told Faith in a sort of bright cheerful way – meant for her as well as the child – that Johnny wanted her to brush his hair and give him something to eat. Which Johnny enforced with one of his quiet smiles."

A few pages on, we read: "It was no time for words. The gates of the city seemed too near, where the little traveller's feet were so soon to enter. The veil between seemed so slight, that even sense might almost pass beyond it, – when, the Heaven-light was already shining on that fair little face! ... But earth was having less and less of her little immortal tenant; and as the hours of the afternoon began to tell of failing light and a fading day, it was plain that the little spirit was almost ready to wing its way to the 'city that hath no need of the sun.'"

In the novel, "Jesus Loves Me" has no chorus. And, of course, there's no tune. But two years later, William B. Bradbury, whose tune for "Just As I Am" will accompany every Billy Graham altar call, wrote the chorus and the tune for "Jesus Loves Me".

Until 1915, his Bradbury Pianos showrooms were in the Bradbury Building on Fifth Avenue at 19th Street in New York City. The back wall of the building, visible from 19th Street, still displays faded remains of the signage for "Bradbury's Pianos".

On August 2, 1943 in the pitch-darkness of the dangerous South Pacific, a Japanese destroyer crashed into torpedo boat, PT-109. It exploded. Survivors, including a young John Kennedy, were stranded for a week in remote stretches of the Solomon Islands until two natives found them. These two carried a note from Kennedy to an American outpost.

The next summer, in *The New Yorker*, one of Kennedy's friends, John Hersey, wrote that, after the rescue and on their way to Bird Island on August 8, two "roly-poly, mission-trained natives" embraced by crewmember Bill Johnston, sang with joy, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so". Hersey's 8-page essay, "Survival", ends with an ellipsis after five lines of "Jesus Loves Me".

The island's natives first heard of Jesus in 1894 after one of them was converted in Australia and brought the Gospel back to his people. He was met with hostility from his family and others, but that didn't stop him from sharing with them *all* that he knew – which was *only* John 3:16 and Anna's hymn, "Jesus Loves Me".

In 1962, during theologian Karl Barth's only American tour, he was in Chicago. He was asked to summarize in one sentence, his life's great work in theology. Without hesitation, Barth replied: "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

While studying at Westminster Seminary, I was privileged to ride with Cornelius Van Til, Barth's outspoken critic, to hear Barth give the Warfield Lectures at Princeton. It was just a week after his "Jesus Loves Me" comment in Chicago. He didn't repeat that line at Princeton, but I did get to see him meet Van Til, shake hands and, with a feigned displeasure, he teased: "Ah! You said some bad things about me but I forgive you, I forgive you."

Since Jesus loves us, as all should know, for the Bible tells us so, why should we all not love one another?

For years, the Warner sisters hosted West Point cadets for Bible study and tea. In summers the young men would sit on what were called "sit-upons" on the grass in front of that old farmhouse. It was usually Susan who did the teaching. Anna served the tea.

After Susan died, Anna lived there alone, except for her longtime maid and her maid's husband. Anna spent many hours in her gardens, tending her "flower friends" in her own distinctive way. With her typical wit and wisdom, she'd often remark: "People who have not tried, know so much about gardening! – and so little."

She regularly received guests – good friends as well as strangers. One of her good friends was the widow of financier Russell Sage. He died in 1906 and she inherited \$63,000,000 to use "as she pleased." Today, that would be around \$1.5 billion. She gave much of it away. And, she bought Anna's Constitution Island to give it to the U. S. Military Academy with the proviso that Anna would be allowed to live in her house on the island until she died.

Anna passed into the nearer Presence of Jesus at the age of 87. She and Susan are the only civilians whose remains are buried in the United States Military Academy's cemetery at West Point.

Fanny Jane Crosby

March 24, 1820 – February 12, 1915

As familiar as is Anna Warner's "Jesus Loves Me", there are *many* well-known and well-loved poems by Fanny Crosby.

Poetry by 19th-century *women* endured over millions of sermons by *men* who preached under the privilege of ordination forbidden to women. Providence has countered the male chauvinism of church authorities that insisted it wasn't God's will for women to preach. These women poets *out-preached* those preacher men.

What *preacher's* words have been memorized for generations by poetic repetition, as with Sarah Flower Adams', "Nearer, my God, to Thee", Mary Lathbury's, "Break Thou, the Bread of Life", Annie Hawks', "I need Thee every hour", Lydia Baxter's, "Take the Name of Jesus with you" or Frances Ridley Havergal's, "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee"? So it's been with *even more* of Fanny Crosby's lyrics, sung across the world, week after week and year after year, for well over a century now.

Fanny was already 7 years old when Anna Warner was born, 12 when William Howard Doane was born, and 36 the year Booker T. Washington was born. Yet, all four passed away in the same year.

Her 94 years were spent in *visual* darkness, yet, she reflected, "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. . . . I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things around me." And she always strove to achieve no less than those with sight.

Fanny was born into poverty, sixty miles north of New York City, in the village of Brewster, just west of Sodom Reservoir, since renamed, for some reason, East Branch Reservoir. The family's house was on Gayville Road, since renamed, for some reason, Foggintown Road.

Out in western New York, Joseph Smith was claiming to have had a vision. It would lead to Mormonism. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. 1820 was also the year that Susan B. Anthony, Florence Nightingale and Jenny Lind were born.

Fanny Crosby descended from Puritans, including a founder of Harvard. Her father died the year she was born and her mother and maternal grandmother reared her. They read to her from the Bible and other books and she'd memorize what she heard. Later, she'd write poems, memorize them and dictate them all in one sitting. She wrote her first poem when she was 8 years old.

Her mother remarried and had two more daughters with whom Fanny would live in Bridgeport in her last 15 years on earth.

At 14, she enrolled at the Quaker-founded New York Institute for the Blind, between 32nd and 33rd Streets, where the big Post Office now stands. She was bored with the trivial tasks typically taught to the blind and so, she was glad when a teacher, impressed with her poetry, asked her to write poems to publicize the Institute. In this role, she became the first female to address the U.S. Congress.

Her first published poem appeared in P. T. Barnum's *Herald of Freedom*. (His grave is just a few feet from hers in Bridgeport's Mountain Grove Cemetery.) Fanny's poems were published in many papers and periodicals, including the *New York Herald* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Her first book, *A Blind Girl and Other Poems*, was published when she was 24.

Three years later, she began teaching at the Institute. Two years after that, a cholera epidemic hit New York. She cared for the school's sick and made hundreds of opium-mercury pills – the only treatment at the time. Every night, the "dead wagon" came for the corpses. This dread experience awakened in her a sense that she'd neglecting the care of her soul and she began to pray fervently.

On the night of November 20, 1850, in the Thirteenth Street Methodist Church, she knelt to the strains of Isaac Watts' hymn, "Alas! And did my Savior bleed, and did my

Sovereign die! Would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?" Then and there, she surrendered herself to God's grace in Christ.

Eight years later, she resigned from the Institute to marry another blind teacher, Alexander van Alstyne. Their daughter, born the next year, soon died, probably of SIDS. They were, of course, devastated.

The couple lived together on Varick Street and then on East 9th Street, but often lived separately. In 1884, she lived alone at East 79th and First Avenue. In 1896, she lived alone in Bed-Stuy. Van died in 1902. She never talked much about the marriage except, later on, she did say that both had contributed to their difficulties.

Relations between her supporters were sometimes self-servingly competitive and complicated her life. Friction led to confrontation between her wealthy friend Phoebe Palmer Knapp and Will Carleton, her biographer and popular homespun author as well as with her publishers, Biglow and Main. But Fanny tried to steer clear of all of that.

"Aunt Fanny", as she was known affectionately, had a playful sense of humor. She said she often was asked silly questions such as, "How do blind people manage to get food to their mouths?" She said she'd patiently explain to these folks that this amazing feat was nicely accomplished with a string tied to the table and food would be worked up along the string to the mouth.

Her collaboration with musicians was probably most successful with the industrialist, William Howard Doane, whose avocation was music. But she also teamed with Robert Lowry, Ira D. Sankey, William J. Kirkpatrick, William B. Bradbury, George Stebbins and Phoebe Palmer Knapp, daughter of the Holiness leader, Phoebe Palmer.

Knapp wrote the tune to which Fanny linked one of her best-loved lyrics. Phoebe Knapp was the wife of Joseph Knapp, Metropolitan Life Insurance founder. It was the top insurance company and they lived in luxury at the center of New York's high society.

In their grand mansion at Bedford and Ross in Brooklyn, Phoebe played one of her new composition on her pipe organ, finished playing and asked: "What does this tune say to you, Fanny?" Instantly, Fanny replied: "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine!" In that day, businesses such as Knapp's were called "Assurance" and "Insurance" companies, interchangeably. But, Fanny had in mind *assurance* that no mere company can deliver.

Fanny Crosby was so prolific that her publishers insisted on pen names for many of her poems, for customers wanted hymns from *many* writers. This marketing ploy resulted in some 150 of her poems being printed under pseudonyms, e.g., "Louise N. Tilden", "James Apple", "Sallie A. Smith", "Sallie E. Smith", "Sally Smith", even just initials, as well as, "Henrietta Blair". And given MetLife's later "Snoopy" mascot, would you believe it, one of Fanny's pseudonyms was "Charles Brown"?

Crosby lived among the poor, never spent much on herself, and she gave away much of what she was paid. Frequently she ministered to the homeless at rescue missions. After one such service she wrote the words to, "Rescue the Perishing, Care for the Dying". As always in EC, we give our Sunday offering to others. This week, yet again, it goes to the now 143-year-old New York rescue mission where Fanny used to minister.

She spent many summers right here at Ocean Grove Camp Meetings, sharing her faith with her public and escaping the city's heat for the cool breezes and the sounds of ocean waves and sea gulls.

On the night before she died in Bridgeport, she dictated her last poem. Later that night, when her nephew looked in on her, she nodded: "All right, Governor!"

Then, in the early hours of the morning of February 11, 1915, she left her bed and collapsed in the hallway. That “silver cord” of which she wrote years earlier, was now broken, and in the words she’d written just hours earlier, it was “the morn of Zion’s glory, / ... the clouds have rolled away, / And my faith has dropped its anchor / In the vale of perfect day.”

She was given the biggest funeral ever held in Bridgeport. The building was crammed with palms, flowers and streamers and her casket was covered in violets, her favorite flower. The choir sang her favorite hymn, “Faith of Our Fathers”, which wasn’t one of her own. Then, the whole congregation joined in singing *her* song, “Safe in the Arms of Jesus”. But all of that was as *nothing* to her *seeing* her Savior, “face to Face”.

William Howard Doane

February 3, 1832 – December 23, 1915

William Howard Doane was born in 1832, the same year as Gustave Dore, Horatio Alger, Louisa May Alcott and Lewis Carroll. It was the year that Charles Carroll died at 95. He was the only Roman Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence and he outlived all the other signers.

On the day before Christmas Eve, 1915, at age 83, Doane was called Home. He’d been ill for many months. Early that year, he’d mourned the loss of Fanny, his friend and collaborator of 47 years. He’d recalled that, at their first meeting in 1868, she was mourning the loss of her friend and late collaborator, William B. Bradbury.

Another of Fanny’s friends and collaborators, Brooklyn Baptist preacher Robert Lowry, composer and lyricist of, “Nothing But the Blood of Jesus” and “Shall We Gather at the River?”, had advised Fanny to send some of her lyrics to Doane. Doane was a wealthy manufacturer of woodworking machines *and* a prolific composer of hymn tunes. He was always looking for good verses for his tunes.

Doane was impressed with her poems. So he took the train from his home in Cincinnati to meet her in New York. He was shocked to find her in a rundown tenement on the Lower East Side and doubly shocked that she was blind. They chatted a while and then he pressed into her hand what she thought, from its crinkled feel, was a \$2 bill. He then left, urging her to mail him more of her poems. When she went to the local grocer to spend that “\$2 bill”, she was shocked to learn it was a *twenty* – \$350 in today’s money.

Six years before he met Fanny, Doane had suffered a near-fatal heart attack. He vowed that, if he made it through that crisis, he’d devote his musical talent to Gospel ministry. He gave away to God’s work, all the money he ever made from his music.

In teaming up with poets, Doane typically composed the music before they wrote the words. A few months after meeting Fanny, he came rushing into her humble quarters announcing: “I have exactly 40 minutes before my train leaves for Cincinnati. Listen to this melody. Can you write words for it?” In 20 minutes, she gave him the words for “Safe in the Arms of Jesus”. This hymn would be sung at the funerals of Presidents Grant and Garfield as well as at her own funeral, 47 years later.

The popularity of her lyrics owed much to Doane’s melodic tunes. Along with “Safe in the Arms of Jesus”, the team produced, “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior”, “Though Your Sins be as Scarlet”, “I am Thine, O Lord”, “More Like Jesus Would I Be”, “Will Jesus Find Us Watching”, “Rescue the Perishing”, “Near the Cross”, “Savior, More than Life to Me” and many more. Oddly, their now familiar song, “To God be the Glory”, never

caught on until Cliff Barrows found it and it was sung throughout the Billy Graham Crusade in London in 1954.

One of Crosby's best poems, "Never Lose the Golden Rule" was never popular, perhaps because someone of a lesser talent wrote the tune, for the words were very good: "Never lose the Golden Rule, Keep it still in view, Do to others as you would, They should do to you. Love the Lord, the first command, with thy soul and mind; Love thy neighbor as thyself, both in one combined."

Doane and Crosby collaborated on secular projects, too. And they wrote Christmas Cantatas called, "The Frost Queen and Santa Claus" and "Santa Claus and the Fairies". Some Christians found Santa Claus, fairies and such to be inappropriate in Christmas Cantatas. But our two writers thought Santa and fairies were just fine.

Doane partnered with other poets: Lydia Baxter with "Take the Name of Jesus With You", Elizabeth Prentiss with "More Love to Thee, O Christ" and Kate Hankey with "Tell Me the Old, Old Story". He wrote tunes for anonymous works, such as these wise words: "Follow not the angry throng, Better to be wronged than wrong, Therefore sing this cheery song, Let it pass, Let it pass." He composed some 2,300 hymn tunes. Not bad for an avocation!

In addition to running the big industrial firm, Fay and Company, he was president of Cincinnati's Central Trust and Safe Deposit Company and a director at Barney and Smith [railroad] Car Company. He held 70 patents and, at the Paris Exposition of 1889, Fay and Company was given the Grand Prix and he was brought into the Legion of Honor.

Doane protected Crosby's financial interests and was personally generous to her. She was often a guest at the Doanes' Cincinnati mansion, "Sunny Side", where she wrote, "I am Thine, O Lord". In summers, she was their guest at their "cottage" in Rhode Island's enclave of the quiet wealthy, Watch Hill, where Taylor Swift has just purchased one of those old "cottages" for \$18 million.

Doane was generous to charities, too. Doane Library, Doane Hall and Doane Dance Building are at Denison University in Ohio. Doane gifted the Cincinnati Art Museum and YMCA and there's the Doane Music Building at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

But gifts are not always appreciated. In 1952, Doane's daughter made a big donation to Eastern Baptist Seminary. The gift, from her father's extensive music collection, included autograph manuscripts by Mozart and Beethoven. In 1992, someone stumbled upon those handwritten Mozart manuscripts in the bowels of the seminary campus. They'd been mislaid and forgotten. They were then sold for \$1.7 million.

In 2005, a librarian, cleaning out a dusty cabinet at the seminary, found Doane's gift of Beethoven's 80-page handwritten piano version of his "Grosse Fuge". A billionaire then paid nearly \$2 million for that treasure and he donated it to Julliard.

God has given each of us so much more than whatever's worth millions, including God's taking to himself, in Christ on the cross, the wages of all the world's sin. We constantly fail to appreciate the boundless love of God. We mislay it, we fail to put it to good use, we fail to share it, we fail to invest it, we lose track of it and forget all about it. Meanwhile, we distract ourselves with our self-serving preoccupation in trivia and try to put God in our debt by offering to Him, some filthy rags of self-righteousness.

Booker T. Washington

April 5, 1856 – November 14, 1915

In 1856, when Crosby was 36, Warner 29 and Doane 24, a slave called “Jane” on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia, gave birth to a baby boy. The father was rumored to be a nearby white planter. “Never mind”, this was simply another slave for the plantation.

It’s hard to realize that 1856 was only 100 years before 1956, when I was a college freshman in still *segregated* South Carolina.

And just this August, in the county where that little slave baby was born, two white journalists were murdered on live TV by an angry black who blamed an angry white who’d murdered nine blacks at a Bible study in a Charleston, South Carolina AME church, as the “tipping point” for his rationalized “race war”. “Wars and rumors of wars”!

A month after that slave boy’s birth, pro-slavery gangs looted and burned down a Kansas *free* town, founded by Massachusetts Quakers. South Carolina’s Representative Preston Brooks beat and nearly killed Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, who’d denounced the Kansas-Nebraska Act as “rape of a virgin Territory, compelling it to the hateful embrace of slavery”. Five years later, at Charleston, Confederates – professing Christians – fire the first shots to start their Civil War to keep the slave system. More “wars and rumors of wars.”

But Ohio Methodists start a college for blacks fleeing slavery. They call it Wilberforce, after the English abolitionist. Its motto: “By one’s own efforts”. That insight will be the *life theme* of that man born a slave in 1856.

He’s Booker T. Washington. He was the principal of Alabama’s Tuskegee Institute from its founding, when he was only 25, until his death at only 59. Within a hundred years of his birth as a slave, his image will grace U. S. currency and U. S. postage.

In 2000, the evangelical magazine, *Eternity*, honored his 1901 autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, as one of “The 100 Christian Books That Changed the Century”. He himself said, “Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which he has overcome.”

On the first page of *Up From Slavery*, he wrote: “My life had its beginning in the midst of the most miserable, desolate, and discouraging surroundings.” He lived in a cabin on the plantation, with his mother, brother and sister. Of the father he never knew, he said, characteristically: “I do not find especial fault with him. He was simply another unfortunate victim of the institution which the Nation unhappily had engrafted upon it at that time.”

Washington soberly observed: “When we rid ourselves of prejudice, or racial feeling, and look facts in the face, we must acknowledge that, notwithstanding the cruelty and moral wrong of slavery, the ten million Negroes, inhabiting this country, who themselves or whose ancestors went through the school of American slavery, are in a stronger and more hopeful condition, materially, intellectually, morally, and religiously, than is true of an equal number of black people in any other portion of the globe.”

He went on to explain: “As a rule, not only did the members of my race entertain no feelings of bitterness against the whites before and during the war, but there are many instances of Negroes tenderly caring for their former masters and mistresses who for some reason have become poor and dependent since the war. I know of instances where

the former masters of slaves have for years been supplied with money by their former slaves to keep them from suffering.”

So, he says: “Was it any wonder that within a few hours the wild rejoicing [over Emancipation] ceased and a feeling of deep gloom seemed to pervade the slave quarters? To some it seemed that, now that they were in actual possession of it, freedom was a more serious thing than they had expected to find it. ... Besides, deep down in their hearts there was a strange and peculiar attachment to ‘old Marster’ and ‘old Missus’, and to their children, which they found it hard to think of breaking off.”

Booker, his mother and siblings moved to West Virginia where she married a freedman, Washington Ferguson. Booker took his stepfather’s *first* name as his *last* name. At first the young man labored in a salt mine. However, his intelligence and his desire to learn so impressed the mine owner that Booker was assigned to assist the owner’s wife and she then arranged for him to enroll in school part time.

In 1872, he trudged 500 miles to Virginia’s Hampton Institute and excelled there. Next he studied at the Baptists’ Wayland Seminary (now Virginia Union University). He went on to Tuskegee where he’d spend the rest of his life in administration, teaching, speaking and traveling to raise funds for the Institute, including engagements here in Ocean Grove.

He concluded: “If no other consideration had convinced me of the value of the Christian life, the Christ-like work which the Church of all denominations in America has done during the last thirty-five years for the elevation of the black man would have made me a Christian.” He reported that Tuskegee was “thoroughly Christian. Our preaching service, prayer-meetings, Sunday-school, Christian Endeavour Society, Young Men’s Christian Association, and various missionary organizations, testify to this.”

He married in 1882. He and his wife, Fanny, had a daughter, but Fanny died in 1884. The next year he married Olivia, his Tuskegee assistant. They had two sons. She died in 1889. In 1892, he married Margaret, who’d replaced Olivia on the staff at Tuskegee. Margaret would outlive Booker by ten years.

A highpoint of Washington’s life was his address at the opening of the great Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta in 1895. The morning before, he’d knelt down and “asked God’s blessing upon my efforts. ... The thing that was uppermost in my mind was the desire to say something that would cement the friendship of the races and bring about hearty cooperation between them.”

A most memorable part of his speech was his picturing of a ship in distress. Sighting another vessel, the desperately thirsty sailors cried out: “Water, water; we die of thirst!” The answer came back, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” But, repeatedly, the thirsty sailors, called out for water. Repeatedly, the answer came: “Cast down your bucket where you are.” Finally, they cast their bucket into the sea. And the water they retrieved from what they’d seen as the *salty sea* came from the mouth of the mighty Amazon River.

Said Washington: “To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, ... I would say: ‘Cast down your bucket where you are’ – cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded. Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions.” He urged that none “permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities”. And he received thunderous applause from the assembled of both races.

Sixty-six years later, and three years *before* the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Martin Luther King Jr., followed Washington's lead for black empowerment, telling blacks in what had been a slave state: "We can't keep on blaming the white man. There are things we must do for ourselves." King's call for taking *personal responsibility for empowerment* has been lived out for over half a century by black role models who, like Washington, have emphasized the crucial importance of a good education, occupational obligations and commitment to marriage and a strong nuclear family.

Among them: James Meredith, Ralph Abernathy, Roy Innis, Edward Brooke, Gardner Taylor, Gary Franks, Condoleezza Rice, Denzel Washington, Shelby Steele, Stephen L. Carter, Colin Powell, Alveda King, Jason Riley, John McWhorter, Ben Carson, et al.

But contempt for Washington and black leaders who share his wisdom and are scorned as "Uncle Toms" is historically illiterate and bent on posturing rather than problem solving.

In his book, *My Larger Education*, written in 1911, Washington wisely warned of "problem profiteers ... a class of coloured people who make a business of keeping the troubles, the wrongs and the hardships of the Negro race before the public. Having learned that they are able to make a living out of their troubles, they have grown into the settled habit of advertising their wrongs – partly because they want sympathy and partly because it pays. Some of these people do not want the Negro to lose his grievances, because they do not want to lose their jobs."

Fifty years *after* Washington, the "problem profiteers" were still showing up, now as Rap Browns, Stokeley Carmichaels and Black Panthers. Nowadays, they're the Al Sharptons, Ta-Nehisi Coates and Anthea Butlers who play the *race* cards and *profit*. And Religious Rightwing "problem profiteers" play their cards, too – so-called "traditional marriage" and "Christian America" cards – while LGBTQ profiteers play *queer* and *gender identity* cards and inattentive, anti-Semitic clergy play *Boycott and Divestment* cards against Israel. They're *all* varieties in the stacked decks of *victim culture* cards.

There are always *more cards up mores sleeves* for more *self-righteous* "wars and rumors of wars." It's all "in the cards": this chaos of a *fallen* world. And such chaos cannot be cleaned up, cleared up or canceled by campaigns, "conversation", complacency or kumbaya. Self-righteousness runs too deep for any of that. But self-righteousness is, itself, a house of cards that can't last forever.

Therefore, Jesus told his disciples: "Don't be alarmed! These things *must* happen." He wasn't giving them some sort of abstract predestination explanation. "These things *must* happen" points to the continuing sin in us all. He tells us: "Regime will rise against regime" and those who follow Him can expect what his followers have experienced ever since: "*You* will be handed over for *persecution* and be put to *death*. They'll *hate* you because of *me*, and many will turn away *from faith* and *betray and hate each other*. Many *false* teachers will use *my* name and deceive many. ... *Love for one another* will grow cold. ... Yet the Good News of God's reign will be preached all over the world as a witness to *all*. Then the *end* will come. ... The heavens and the earth (as you know them) will pass away, but not *my words*. *My words* will *never* pass away." (Matt 24; cf. 22:36ff; 7:12) Thank God!

During the earthly sojourn of our sisters, Anna and Fanny, and our brothers, Howard and Booker, they took seriously his "words that will never pass away" and they passed them on to others in their daily lives of ministry and in their continuing influence on us.

They passed away 100 years ago, and yet, they're still with the Word who spoke the words that will never pass away, for He promised He'd *never* leave us. And the Word keeps His word! Forever! Amen.